

## **“Primitive Accumulation” and the Capitalist Mode of Production**

### Introduction

The relationship between theory and history has long been a problem for Marxists.<sup>1</sup> Although the general form of Marx’s critical analysis of class societies is rightly characterized as “historical materialism,” there is an obvious imbalance between his extensive study of class relations in contemporary capitalist society, and limited observations on pre-capitalist class relations.

Marx devoted decades of study and thousands of pages of manuscripts to the capitalist mode of production. Unfortunately, he did not provide a comprehensive and accurate account of any pre-capitalist form of class society, let alone all of them. Indeed, he produced no canonical statement even of what pre-capitalist modes of production he thought had existed. His various statements are mostly off-hand, and sometimes contradictory.<sup>2</sup> Even more to the point, Marx and Engels uncritically credited “bourgeois historians” with having discovered the existence of classes and historical development of class struggles,<sup>3</sup> despite the fact liberal historical ideas about class never included the idea of exploitation, to say nothing of its being defined by specific antagonistic relations between classes that, as “oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another,” in the powerful terms of *The Communist Manifesto*.

Not only has historical knowledge grown enormously relative to what Marx could have known, but a great deal of the liberal historical writing upon which he depended (as well as much since then) was constructed in fundamentally ideological terms.<sup>4</sup> It is necessary, therefore, for the history of class societies to be subjected to the same sort of critique that Marx so powerfully brought to bear on capitalist social relations. To do so, however, requires recognizing the profound difference between pre-capitalist and capitalist forms of society, and that the model of rigorous abstract analysis that he developed in *Capital* is fundamentally inappropriate for earlier forms of class relations.

This unique and historically specific nature of capitalist class relations was captured by Perry Anderson, building upon points articulated in the Sweezy/Dobb debate over the transition from feudalism to capitalism, and crucial passages of Volume III of *Capital*:

*All modes of production in class societies prior to capitalism extract surplus labour from the immediate producers by means of extra-economic coercion. Capitalism is the first mode of production in history in which the means whereby the surplus is pumped out of the direct producers is ‘purely’ economic in form – the wage contract: the equal exchange between free agents which reproduces, hourly and daily, inequality and oppression. All other previous modes of exploitation operate through extra-economic sanctions – kin, customary, religious, legal or political.*<sup>5</sup>

The implications of this qualitative distinction between capitalism and all previous forms of class society are profound. It particularly requires us to recognize that such a fundamental social transformation must be explained, not taken for granted.

### Capitalism and Commodities

At the heart of prevailing conceptions of capitalism is the market exchange of things. Of course, beyond the substantial commodities of agriculture and industry, commodified services became important during the twentieth century, though they certainly existed earlier. The growing importance of information commodities, especially in digital form, is a cliché of contemporary commentary. What truly is significant, however, is less the existence of non-material capitalist products than that capitalist social relations involve far more than just the exchange of material goods.

Indeed, in *Capital* Marx describes the commodity as “a mysterious thing.” What are, in fact, complex social relationships – numbers of living humans, each having a part in meeting the needs of others through highly integrated social processes, extending over time and often great distances – are manifested in what appear to be relations between things: commodities and money. Purchasing a cotton shirt contributes to the viability of cotton growers and a particular network of shippers and producers linking their raw material to the finished product, engaging many paid workers and generating profits in certain locales. Purchasing instead a polyester shirt casts one’s money, like a vote, in favour of a different network, and – with a big enough shift in spending – unseen lives may be ruined.

Commodities, like fetish objects in “the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world” – “endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race” – become bearers of unseeable qualities with profound importance to people.<sup>6</sup> This is what Marx called the “Fetishism of Commodities.” It is not a worship of material possessions, but the seeming power of mundane goods and services to determine crucial aspects of the lives of people, ostensibly beyond human control, through “the market”. The discipline of economics strives to present market exchange as basic to human nature, presenting the global networks of capitalist production as merely their natural extension, differing only in scale. In reality, of course, that this nearly-infinite complexity among interrelated producers and consumers exists at all, and functions with some reliability – though certainly not without problems and contradictions – is every bit as mysterious and astounding as Marx suggested. In all prior forms of human social organization almost all important questions of who will do what, when, and how, are known in advance, established through explicit rules of kinship, custom, or law. The organization of capitalist society through the “invisible hand” of the market, by contrast, is known only through abstract principles, the effects of which economists try to codify and understand like farmers watching the skies and behaviour of animals to predict the weather. Even more mysterious, for those who look beyond the pervasive capitalist social relations that are now second-nature to us, is how such a system came to be.

In the “Introduction” Marx drafted in 1857 for *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, he famously concluded that it was wrong to present economic categories according to the sequence and forms in which they historically appeared.<sup>7</sup> For this reason, *Capital* begins neither with the historical forms of production, nor with money, but with the commodity as basis for market exchange. Yet what Marx sought to describe in *Capital* was not at all reducible to simple profit-making through systematic market-exchange.

Marx recognized from the start – despite beginning *Capital* with the commodity – that capitalism was far more than just making profit through trade. From his earliest thoughts on the subject, he saw it to be an integral system of production that was inherently exploitive, conceiving this initially in terms of “alienated labour.” He arrived at this understanding in only the first seven pages of his first critical analysis of the ideas of political economy, the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*.<sup>8</sup> Not only did he see the inherently exploitive character of capitalist production, he recognized this to be of the greatest historical importance. After drawing out from the words of the political economists themselves the abject misery to which workers were condemned, he proposed “Let us now rise above the level of political economy,” and then put forward perhaps the most fundamental question of historical materialism: “What in the evolution of mankind is the meaning of this reduction of the greater part of mankind to abstract labour?”<sup>9</sup> Of course, much still remained to be developed in his critique of political economy – from the distinction between labour and labour-power with which to explain surplus-value, to the averaging of profit across sectors of production. This early insight into the exploitive character of capitalist production, however, was foundational, and immediately informed his conception of property.

### Exploitation and property

The question of property is taken up, in the section known as “Estranged Labour,” after Marx reiterated: “On the basis of political economy itself, in its own words, we have shown that the worker sinks to the level of a commodity and becomes indeed the most wretched of commodities.”<sup>10</sup> Marx noted that “Political economy starts with the fact of private property; it does not explain it to us,” and against this asserted “Do not let us go back to a fictitious primordial condition as the political economist does, when he tries to explain.” He declared, instead, that “We proceed from an *actual* economic fact. ”

The worker becomes all the poorer the more wealth he produces, the more his production increases in power and size. The worker becomes an ever cheaper commodity the more commodities he creates. The devaluation of the world of men is in direct proportion to the increasing value of the world of things. Labour produces not only commodities: it produces itself and the worker as a commodity – and this at the same rate at which it produces commodities in general.

This fact expresses merely that the object which labour produces –

labour's product – confronts it as *something alien*, as a *power independent* of the producer. The product of labour is labour which has been embodied in an object, which has become material: it is the *objectification* of labour. Labour's realisation is its objectification. Under these economic conditions this realisation of labour appears as *loss of realisation* for the workers; objectification as *loss of the object and bondage to it*; appropriation as *estrangement, as alienation*.<sup>11</sup>

*“Private property* is thus the product, the result, the necessary consequence, of *alienated labour*, of the external relation of the worker to nature and to himself..<”<sup>12</sup>

Marx achieves two crucial objectives in this analysis. First, he establishes that it is through the seemingly simple production of commodities under the capitalist system of wage labour that workers are immediately exploited. Private property in the means of production is a social relationship – not a thing – and the means by which the fruits of previously achieved exploitation are brought to bear, through antagonistic relations of wage labour, to increase the property of the employer without regard to the well-being of the worker. Second, this exploitation realized in the private property of means of production – capital – is the underlying power controlling the processes of social reproduction, a system grounded in its relentless logic of self-expansion.

Capital is thus the governing power over labour and its products. The capitalist possesses this power, not on account of his personal or human qualities, but inasmuch as he is an owner of capital. His power is the purchasing power of his capital, which nothing can withstand.

Later we shall see first how the capitalist, by means of capital, exercises his governing power over labour, then, however, we shall see the governing power of capital over the capitalist himself.<sup>13</sup>

What Marx calls “the movement of property,” its historical development, has culminated in its most generalized form, going beyond its previous limitation of being grounded in land, and so “dealing the death-blow to rent – that last, individual, natural mode of private property and source of wealth existing independently of the movement of labour, that expression of feudal property.”<sup>14</sup>

All wealth has become industrial wealth, the wealth of labour; and industry is accomplished labour, just as the factory system is the perfected essence of industry, that is of labour, and just as industrial capital is the accomplished objective form of private property.

We can now see how it is only at this point that private property can complete its dominion over man and become, in its most general form, a world-historical power<sup>15</sup>

Here, indeed, is the most complete realization of the “reduction of the greater part of

mankind to abstract labour,” and the basis for Marx’s answer to the question he earlier posed. It is communism that is the positive expression of the abolition of private property, ending the realization of human exploitation, and establishing human emancipation at a more highly developed level of social existence.<sup>16</sup>

There is, therefore, profound and obvious continuity between this first work of Marx’s critique of political economy and his mature works. Aside from important developments within his deeper analysis of capitalist social relations, however, Marx also quickly came to conceive the capitalist system of production not simply as the developed expression of private property, but as a distinct form of class society, differing fundamentally from preceding forms. Throughout *Capital* and his unpublished manuscripts, Marx was clear that the social relations of capitalist production were not timeless, but historically bound; not only different, but uniquely different.

For those conceiving capitalism to be no more than the systematic pursuit of profit through commerce, leaving production unexamined and subordinate in importance to trade, this understanding is scarcely possible. Without a clear conception of capitalism as the market-determined production of commodities *through* commodities – above all the commodified form of human labour-power – the self-expansion of capital driven by compulsion of market competition to innovate systematically in the processes of production seeking higher rates of relative surplus-value, it is not possible to understand the specific character of modern “industrial” society. This is not, however, an understanding that can be adopted only when convenient. Marx’s conception of capitalist social relations is not a refinement required only in specialized contexts, nor can it be toyed with or trivialized without consequences. One may, of course, hold up these ideas for critical examination of their internal consistency and external validity, as Marx would himself insist. One may not, however, casually slip from conceiving capitalism as an integral system of production realized in the fetishism of commodities, to conceiving it simply as profit-making in trade.

### The transition from feudalism to capitalism

Although there is little that is directly reliable in Marx’s work with respect to pre-capitalist class societies, he did at times – necessarily – attend closely to differences between specifically capitalist social relations and earlier social forms, and to processes of historical change. As he also wrote in his 1857 “Introduction”, “The anatomy of man is a key to the anatomy of the ape.”<sup>17</sup> Marx’s point, however, as Ellen Meiksins Wood has observed, “is exactly antithetical to the kind of teleology sometimes read into this aphorism.”<sup>18</sup>

His “objective is to free political economy from the habit of reading capitalist principles back throughout history.” He grounds his critique of political economy in historicizing the capitalist mode of production, against ideologically-informed tendencies to universalize its categories and identify seeming historical antecedents as but early realizations of capitalism to come. His purpose is instead “to reveal their *differences* and, in so doing,

inescapably to raise the question of how capitalism, as a specific and unprecedented social form, came into being – not simply as a maturation of earlier forms but as a transformation.” As Wood concludes, Marx’s method both stresses the specificity of each economic formation, and compels us to locate the “principles of motion from one to another” not in universal historical forces, but within the dynamics of each social form itself.<sup>19</sup> This conception of social transformation through internal development, reaching a point of rupture that results in a fundamentally new social formation, with different principles of motion – a transformation *necessarily unintended* from the perspective of the prior social forms – is at the heart of the historicization of capitalism in Marx’s critique of political economy, and the materialist approach to history realized through it.

In addition to the 1857 “Introduction”, there are points in *Capital* where Marx finds it necessary to clarify the distinctiveness of capitalist social relations by means of contrast with pre-capitalist social forms.<sup>20</sup> His chapter on “Genesis of Capitalist Ground Rent” in Volume III offers notable insights into pre-capitalist class relations, and how modes of production should be conceived; but Section VIII of Volume I, “The So-Called Primitive Accumulation,” particularly focusses on the transition to the capitalist mode of production. Close consideration of this transition yields a better understanding of *capital* as the fundamental social relation of our epoch, and motive force behind the fetishism of commodities. This is particularly valuable for distinguishing between social formations in which capitalist relations of production genuinely are present, and those in which the circulation of commodities must be judged to occur in a pre-capitalist context.

There has, unfortunately, been profound and widespread misunderstanding among non-specialists about feudal social relations, and endless, largely pointless debate about the meaning of feudalism.<sup>21</sup> Marxist theorists have for the most part failed even to recognize what Marx himself had to say on the subject, and have focussed on entirely wrong aspects of medieval society. In consequence, they have had enormous difficulty making sense of the transition from feudalism to capitalism.<sup>22</sup> A significant advance in Marxist historical understanding, however, came with historian Robert Brenner’s argument that the primary transformation of social relations of production in the transition from feudalism to capitalism occurred in agriculture, not manufactures.<sup>23</sup> Ellen Wood, particularly, has drawn out the implications of Brenner’s work with respect to the agrarian origin of capitalism, providing crucial perspective with which to approach Marx’s analysis.<sup>24</sup>

Not only have Marxist theorists had inadequate understanding of the nature of feudalism, but also – with far less reason – too often they have failed to take Marx’s analysis seriously, falling back upon a conception of capitalism as merely commercial profit-making and making the transition little more than growth in trade.<sup>25</sup> As Wood has emphasized, such an approach shares with the defenders of capitalism an underlying view of the market as fundamentally an “opportunity”, rather than an imperative, a determining social force that *imposes* decisions and outcomes.<sup>26</sup> It is precisely this role of the market as ineluctable social determinant that led Marx to begin *Capital* with the commodity and its role as fetish-like bearer of social relationships.

In looking for the origin of capitalism, therefore, it is necessary to keep in mind that the development of a new form of subordination was involved. As Wood argues, this is just the point of Marx's account of "so-called primitive accumulation:

The 'primitive accumulation' of classical political economy is 'so-called' because capital, as Marx defines it, is a social relation and not just any kind of wealth or profit, and accumulation as such is not what brings about capitalism.... What transformed wealth into capital was a transformation of social property relations.<sup>27</sup>

While it is not uncommon for private property to be described as a social relation even in mainstream sociology, the pervasiveness of the commodity form in capitalist society tends to suggest property as being in the first instance a "thing", which certainly is consistent with prevailing economic conceptions. If one instead considers that most historically significant form of the means of production, the land, it is easier to recognize the real nature of the social relationship. If a certain portion of our common planet is said to be mine, it is not because I can carry it away, destroy, or otherwise dispose of it. To own land is to have the right to determine what other persons may or may not do in relation to it. It is so with all forms of property: fundamentally, the right of property is a socially enforceable capacity to circumscribe the actions of other people.

In the first instance, the transition to capitalism required that the means of production, initially and most crucially the land – upon which so many generations of peasant families had laboured for their own subsistence, but also the wealth of their lords – had to become property in a form that excluded them fundamentally. As Marx wrote:

The process, therefore, that clears the way for the capitalist system, can be none other than the process which takes away from the laborer the possession of his means of production; a process that transforms, on the one hand, the social means of subsistence and of production into capital, on the other, the immediate producers into wage-laborers. The so-called primitive accumulation, therefore, is nothing else than the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production.<sup>28</sup>

As Marx also observed, "In England alone, which we take as our example, has it the classic form." The history of agrarian social relations was indeed very different in other societies, both European and non-European, as Wood and Brenner emphasize in their work. While, therefore, the analysis set out in *Capital* is both historically accurate and extraordinarily revealing with respect to the processes of social transformation, one cannot generalize from this to developments elsewhere. It is, however, by recognizing in detail the historically specific form of this radical transformation that we can truly come to understand the unique character of capitalist society.

The origin of capital: enclosure vs. socially regulated production

The capitalist fetishism of commodities is a system regulating *production* through the market, not merely exchange. Historically, prior to capitalism, direct producers themselves had immediate control over use of the means of production and, broadly, over what would be produced and how. This immediate control, however, was in turn subject to social regulation, in such forms as custom, community decisions, religious prescription, artisanal guilds, law, and state administration. In both manufactures and agriculture, what was produced, and how, was determined primarily by societal norms. Such social regulation of production was perhaps never so strong as in feudal Europe.<sup>29</sup> While manufactures were closely regulated by guilds in towns, even tighter was the social control over production in the open-field systems of agriculture.

Virtually everywhere, seigneuries imposed feudal exactions and juridical encumbrances on production and economic activity. In thinly settled regions (or for local topographic or historical reasons) agriculture might be relatively less regulated, with greater room for individual discretion. In densely populated northern France and central England, however, the dominant two and three-field systems of arable production left almost nothing to individual decision. In these areas, individual occupiers of the soil held numbers of selions (furrows) widely distributed and interspersed among the fields. Perhaps a few small fields had been enclosed in extending production at the height of population, but almost all peasants – and generally the lord – held all or most of their land (village crofts aside) within large subdivided fields.

Outside closes and crofts, all agricultural production – winter grain and spring crop (where there was one); field rotation, including fallow; pasturing animals on fallow and after harvest; using permanent pasture, meadow, woods, and other ‘waste’ held in common; timing and responsibility for all agrarian activities, including maintenance – was regulated. Because fields were subdivided, coordination in production was inescapable; but bylaws regulated far beyond the minimum. In open-field agriculture, increasing profit through innovation was both impossible and illegal.

Throughout Continental Europe, no legal foundation for landed property outside the seigneurial framework of feudal social relations existed. In England, however, the Normans imposed feudal social relations of production where a strong state existed, claimed by William the Conqueror as legitimately his own. The legal system of English royal courts persisted, in striking contrast to the collapse of central legal authority, and emergent parcellized feudal jurisdictions, in Carolingian territories. This preservation of royal courts in England led to a significant fraction of peasant proprietors being recognized as free and protected by law. This strong and effective Common Law system was then adopted by feudal lords themselves as a means to protect their own interests – far better to trust a disinterested royal judge to ensure a minor heir inherited the family holdings than one’s overlord.

This duality in the law of property was unique to England. Feudal lords in England had little choice but accept that real sovereignty resided in the Crown, yet used its principles of law not only in protection from each other, but against the king as well – witness



Magna Carta. By contrast, under Continental feudalism sovereignty had decisively devolved to regional magnates, and then to individual seigneuries. Seigneurial jurisdiction on the Continent was real, and no “common” law existed.

English manors had courts, but jurisdiction was largely restricted to unfree tenants and bylaws regulating common land and open fields. Free men had recourse to royal courts, where manorial customary law was viewed as just an encumbrance on freehold property. While customary tenures persisted alongside freehold, and freehold might lie either within open fields or outside their regulation, in principle the entire structure of customary feudal holdings and manorial regulation of production could be eliminated, leaving a fully developed property system in place. Where freehold proprietors agreed – or “unity of possession” existed – the system of customary tenures and open-field regulation could simply be extinguished. This was the real meaning of enclosure; fencing or hedging was merely a consequence, where it occurred at all. This explains why the process of enclosure – the single most dramatic transformation in law and social relations of production in early modern Europe – was unique to England.

When enclosures began in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, relatively few customary tenants actually were evicted because population had fallen so dramatically over the previous hundred years, and peasants often exercised newly won freedom to move to more advantageous land. Much less arable land was required for a population one-third or less of that in 1300. Living standards were high, inflation underway, and prices rose more quickly for livestock products than for grain. Despite mistaken ideas of a “natural economy” persisting under feudalism, the many charges levied in money by seigneurs, pervasive re-coinage under seigneurial jurisdiction, and the enormous growth of trade coinciding with unprecedented population growth between 1050 and 1250, all speak to the familiarity with markets of lords and peasants alike before enclosures. In England’s west midlands, the population outside zones of strict open-field production – where less intensive regulation and prior enclosures readily accommodated pastoral production – population levels were sustained, in contrast to the depopulation and many deserted villages in open-field zones.<sup>30</sup> Peasants voted with their feet to engage in more remunerative types of production.

The truly significant transformation, however, occurred where open-field regulation had been intensive, and feudal-era closed fields were rare. When proprietors in these areas enclosed their fields – especially landlords completely replacing open-field peasant production with sheep runs leased to graziers – they were not taking advantage of existing flexibility. Instead, they exercised freehold property rights against the whole framework of established agrarian society. Even where few if any tenants were evicted – perhaps a depopulated hilltop village, surrounded by less-exposed villages with better soil – the fact that centuries-old messuages might be pulled down, and the ancient rotation of fields replaced by large flocks and a few shepherds, supported the view expressed in Thomas More’s *Utopia*: sheep had become man-eating beasts.<sup>31</sup>

Of greater significance was that the obliteration of customary law ended the role of

custom or community in regulating production. Although the Tudor monarchy acquired a guarded view of enclosure – issuing acts to limit it; establishing commissions to study its effects; suppressing regional uprisings opposed to it – freehold rights of property were maintained by its own courts. The great landowners, and even lesser freeholders, were represented in the two houses of Parliament, and the royal power to ruin wealthy individuals necessarily was tempered in relation to landlords as a class.

The real impact of enclosure was revealed after a rebound in population shifted prices back towards grain. Had only existing flexibility in agrarian production (including modest flexibility in the regulation of open fields) been employed in response to the lure of profit in pastoral production – a market “opportunity” – the same flexibility might have brought a shift back towards arable production within the same underlying system. Such flexibility was evident elsewhere in Europe as production responded to population collapse and reflux. Where there had been general enclosure, however, there was no going back. Such enclosures had occurred in less remote areas, suited to arable farming.

Tenants who leased this land might still make a profit with livestock alone, but greater profit could be realized by combining sheep with grain, as Cistercian granges had demonstrated in the feudal era. After 1550, sheep-corn farming offered the greatest potential for profit in much of England, and knowing farmers were willing to offer higher rents for large enclosed farms. With rents rising on enclosed land, the market imposed its compulsion – land suitable for the “improved” husbandry of sheep-corn farming could no longer profitably be rented for pasture alone. And with the general increase of rent for enclosed arable land, the pressure to enclose also increased.

It is in this way that land became capital. Social relations of production no longer were established by custom, law, and mere opportunity. Means of production were stripped of their role as the immediate foundation for social existence. It was not just that production changed. Where production had been the basis for community life, in a variety of forms, it existed now only to create commodities. Niches of specialized agrarian production had previously existed alongside peasant communities in which market production was subordinated to self-reproduction; now even basic agrarian production was separated from community life. How land was used to produce commodities no longer depended on how villages were sustained, and land itself became just another commodity. For the first time anywhere, production of exchange values became so divorced from use values that peasant society itself – the norm since agriculture developed, and basis for “civilisation” itself – became expendable and began to disappear. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, though pockets of small-holding farming survived (mostly in dairy), and people still lived in the country, peasant society was gone.

In place of control by direct producers and the community, enclosure put determination of what was produced and how solely in the hands of the owners of the means of production. After centuries of strict customary regulation, custom was debarred in law. No immediate community rationale existed (though political economy would develop a

defence of market-oriented self-interest as public policy). Production increasingly was conceived in terms of the self-expansion of wealth in commodities, and even before this logic was carried into manufactures, the wealth of England's landlords and capitalist tenant-farmers rose to world-historic levels. This agrarian transformation "freed" most labouring people from the land their ancestors worked, making them available to work for wages in expanded cottage industry, and then capitalist factories.

While enclosure did not result in the immediate subsumption of labour to capital, that essential condition for increasing relative surplus-value would not have been possible had control over the social relations of production not been wrested from producers and their communities. As Marx observed in 1844, capital is power over labour and its products, power by which alienated labour is appropriated. This globally transforming social relation, without which the capitalist mode of production could not exist, was first forged in the so-called primitive accumulation of English enclosures.

<sup>1</sup> Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Democracy against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

<sup>2</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction” to Karl Marx, *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*, New York: International Publishers, 1965.

<sup>3</sup> Marx, “Letter to J. Weydemeyer,” 5 March 1852; F. Engels, “Letter to Borgius,” 25 January 1894.

<sup>4</sup> In addition to the above, see Ellen Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View*, London: Verso, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, London: Verso, 1974, p. 403.

<sup>6</sup> *Capital*, Vol. 1, in *Karl Marx–Frederick Engels Collected Works* [MECW], v.35, New York: International Publishers, 1996, p. 83.

<sup>7</sup> MECW, v. 28, 1986, *Economic Manuscripts of 1857-1858 (First Version of Capital)*, [M-1] “Introduction”, pp. 17-48.

<sup>8</sup> MECW, v. 3, 1975, pp. 229-347.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 270.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 272.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 247.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 291.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 293.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 294ff.

<sup>17</sup> MECW, v. 28, p. 42.

<sup>18</sup> Wood (1995), p. 150.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.

<sup>20</sup> For more on this as it relates to Marx’s method, see George C. Comninel, “*Capital* and Historical Materialism,” *Marxism 21*, vol. 9, n. 4, Winter 2012, pp. 316-44, and “Critical

Thinking and Class Analysis,” *Socialism and Democracy*, vol. 27, n. 1, March 2013, pp. 19-56.

<sup>21</sup> Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*, 2 vols., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961; F. L. Ganshof, *Feudalism*, New York: Harper & Row, 1964.

<sup>22</sup> See Sweezy, Dobb, *et al.*, *op. cit.* On feudal class relations, see George C. Comninel, “Feudalism,” in Ben Fine and Alfredo Saad Filho (eds), *Elgar Companion to Marxist Economics*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2012, pp. 131-137, and “English Feudalism and the Origins of Capitalism,” *Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 27, n. 4, July 2000, pp. 1-53.

<sup>23</sup> T. H. Aston and C. H. E. Philpin (eds.) *The Brenner Debate: Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

<sup>24</sup> Wood (2002).

<sup>25</sup> Robert Brenner, “The Origins of Capitalist Development: A Critique of Neo-Smithian Marxism,” *New Left Review* 104 (July/August 1977), pp. 25-92; Wood (2002), p. 34ff.

<sup>26</sup> Wood (2002), pp. 6-7.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>28</sup> MECW, v. 35, pp. 705-6.

<sup>29</sup> Much of what follows draws on Comninel, “English Feudalism”, which has an extensive bibliography of relevant works.

<sup>30</sup> Christopher Dyer, “Deserted Medieval Villages in the West Midlands,” in *Everyday Life in Medieval England*, London: Continuum International, 2000, pp. 27-45.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas More, *Utopia*, New York: Norton, 1991, p. 14.