

Christopher Cutrone

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INTEREST AREAS

- **Critical social theory**
- **Modern and avant-garde art**
- **Aesthetics and poetics of media**

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION **University of Chicago** Committee on the History of Culture

Adorno's Marxism

Theodor W. Adorno's writings comprise an attempted recovery of Marx for a dialectic of 20th century social and cultural forms. Through immanent critique of modern aesthetic, philosophical, political and psychological forms of social subjectivity and its antinomies, contradictions and discontents, including those of ostensible Marxism, the thought figures of Adorno's essays are modeled after and attempt to elaborate Marx's self-reflexive critique of the subjectivity of the commodity form. Adorno's critical theory considers modern aesthetic form as social form. Following Marx, Adorno's critique of modern social forms is concerned with their potential for emancipation as well as domination: the term "culture industry," for instance, is meant to grasp comprehensively the context for the critical social object and form of aesthetic subjectivity in common for practices of both "hermetic" art and "popular" culture, and is meant to characterize the condition and possibility for critical subjectivity itself, including Adorno's own. In Adorno's essays, objects of cultural criticism become "prismatic," illuminating the formation of subjectivity and providing moments for critical reflection and recognition. However, Adorno's works faced and sought to provoke recognition of the possibility and reality of social regression as well as regression in thinking. Coming after the collapse of 2nd International Social Democracy in 1914 and the failure of world revolution 1917–19, and inspired by Georg Lukács and Karl Korsch's thought from this period, Adorno developed a critique of 20th century society that sustained awareness of the problematic of Lenin, Luxemburg and Trotsky's Marxism. The coincidence of the later reception of Adorno's works with the emergence of social discontents, oppositions and transformations of the 1960s New Left and its aftermath, however, obscured Adorno's thought during two decades of "postmodernism," whose exhaustion opens possibilities for reconstruction of and development upon the coherence of Adorno's dialectic, as expression of the extended tasks and project of Marxism bequeathed by history to the present.

Committee: **Kenneth W. Warren**, chair (English, African-American Studies)
Moishe Postone, co-chair (History)
James F. Lastra (Cinema and Media Studies)

EDUCATION

PhD candidate

Doctor of Philosophy
University of Chicago Committee on the History of Culture

MA

Master of Arts
University of Chicago Department of Art History
Master's thesis: **Photography as Art: Art as Photography**
The ambiguous legacy of Walter Benjamin's writing on photography
(approx. 10,000 words)
Readers: Joel Snyder (Art History) and James F. Lastra (Art History)

MFA

Master of Fine Arts
School of the Art Institute of Chicago Department of Video

BA

Bachelor of Arts
Hampshire College, Amherst, Massachusetts
Major courses of study: Political Science, Video, Creative Writing (Poetry)

TEACHING (selected)**School of the Art Institute of Chicago**

Adjunct Assistant Professor, Departments of: Art History, Theory and Criticism; Liberal Arts; and Visual and Critical Studies

- **Adorno on “Culture Industry:” Critical Theory of Art as Social Subjectivity** [incl. Marx, Luxemburg, Lukács, Trotsky, Kracauer, Benjamin, and Marcuse]
- **Benjamin and History: The Future of the Subject** [Baudelaire, Nietzsche, Bergson, Proust, Kafka, Brecht, Breton]
- **Critical Art: The Philosophy of Modernism** [Kant, Schiller, Hegel, Nietzsche, Lukács, Marcuse, Adorno]
- **Critical Society: Philosophy and Modernity: Marx and Marxism** [Rousseau, Smith, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Lukács, Korsch, Adorno, et al.]
- **Introduction to Critical Theory** [Marx, Lukács, Kracauer, Benjamin, Adorno, Greenberg, Barthes, Foucault, et al.]
- **Media and Modernity: Spectacle and Society** [films by Ruttmann, Eisenstein, Vertov, Buñuel, Hitchcock, Deren, Brakhage, Schneemann, Resnais, Godard, Marker, et al.; and writings by Kracauer, Benjamin, Adorno, Debord, Baudrillard, et al.]
- **Modern and Postmodern Art** [Marx, Nietzsche, Benjamin, Adorno, Greenberg, Foucault, Habermas, Lyotard, Crimp, Foster, Krauss, et al.]
- **The Museum of Art: Postmodernism and Critique** [Benjamin, Adorno, Barthes, Foucault, Crimp, Foster, Krauss, Owens, et al.]
- **Origins of Modernism, France 1848–71: Painting, Poetics, Politics** [T. J. Clark, Michael Fried, et al. on Baudelaire, Courbet, Manet, et al.]
- **Psychoanalysis and Society: Freud and after** [Sigmund Freud, Wilhelm Reich, Anna Freud, Frantz Fanon, and Adorno]

University of Chicago

Lecturer, Social Sciences Collegiate Division

- **Power, Identity, and Resistance I: Social Theory of Capitalism** [Smith, Marx, Durkheim, et al.]
- **PIR II: Liberalism and its Critics** [Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Burke, Mill, Nietzsche, Schmitt, Gandhi, Woolf, et al.]
- **Self, Culture, and Society I: Capitalism and Social Modernity** [Rousseau, Smith, Marx, Weber, Lukács]
- **SCS II: Cultural Meaning and Modern Society** [Durkheim, Foucault, Nietzsche, Kracauer, Adorno]
- **SCS III: The Self in Context** [Freud, Mead, Goffman, Fanon, de Beauvoir, Adorno, Marcuse, et al.]

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES (selected)

2008 • **Book referee**

Theodor Adorno: Key Concepts (2008), edited by Deborah Cook
Acumen Publishing (Stocksfield, U.K.)

PUBLICATIONS (selected)**Essays**

The Child with a Lion: the utopia of interracial intimacy (approx. 15,000 words)

GLQ: a journal of lesbian and gay studies 6.2 (Duke University Press, 2000): 249–285

“The writer discusses black-white interracial homosexuality from his perspective as a white male, recognizing the dubiousness of his attempt. He proceeds as if interracial intimacy were a problem of the text, the inexorable force of racial difference and its traces in writing implicating not only the writer/reader but language itself. Employing the techniques of montage and bricolage, he invokes a potentially infinite series of iterations of one specific stereotype of interracial male homosexuality that forces otherwise heterogeneous textual sources into writing about the situation of a ‘little white boy’ with a ‘big black man’. He reveals that he is endeavoring not to authorize the stereotypical scenario with his incidental personal experiences but to redeem the utopia promised by the stereotype, the happiness the interracial symbolizes that causes it to be stigmatized by both white and black people. Subject descriptors: Homosexuality — United States. Sex attitudes. Intimacy (Psychology). Geographic: United States — Race relations.” (*Humanities Abstracts* © 2000 H. W. Wilson Company).

The Failure of the Islamic Revolution: the nature of the present crisis in Iran

(approx. 4,000 words) | *International Journal of Žižek Studies* 3.4 (Open Humanities Press, 2009)

CONFERENCE PAPERS (selected)

Beyond history? Nietzsche, Benjamin and Adorno (approx. 2,000 words)

3 December 2011 · **Critical Historical Studies** conference, 3CT, University of Chicago

Adorno and Marcuse in 1969: The separation of theory and practice (approx. 2,000 words)

27 October 2011 · **Critical Refusals: 4th biennial conference of the International Marcuse Society**, University of Pennsylvania

Lenin’s liberalism (approx. 2,000 words)

22 June 2011 · **Marxist Literary Group Summer Institute on Culture and Society**, University of Illinois at Chicago

Adorno and Korsch on Marxism and philosophy (approx. 2,000 words)

6 May 2011 · **Weissbourd annual University of Chicago Society of Fellows in the Liberal Arts conference**

14 May 2010 · **Historical Materialism conference**, York University, Toronto, Canada

What is critique? The relevance of Critical Theory to art today (approx. 2,000 words)

25 March 2011 · **Cultural Studies Association conference**, Columbia College, Chicago

Adorno and Freud: The relation of Freudian psychoanalysis to Marxist critical social theory (approx. 2,000 words)

7 April 2010 · **Social Theory Forum**, University of Massachusetts, Boston

Adorno and Benjamin’s philosophy of history: The challenge of the history of the Left to the progressive view of history (approx. 9,000 words)

7 November 2009 · **Rethinking Marxism 2009**, Amherst, Massachusetts

Adorno in 1969: Adorno’s Marxism and the problem and legacy of the 1960s Left in theory and practice (approx. 8,000 words)

6 August 2009 · **Adorno — 40 Years On**, Centre for Social and Political Thought, University of Sussex, U.K.

26 October 2006 · **Rethinking Marxism 2006**, Amherst, Massachusetts

PANELS (selected)

- 29 April 2011 • **The politics of Critical Theory**
at the Platypus Affiliated Society 3rd annual international convention 2011
with **Andrew Feenberg, Richard Westerman** and **Nicholas Brown**
School of the Art Institute of Chicago
- 19 March 2011 • **Lenin's Marxism**
Platypus Affiliated Society panel at **Left Forum 2011**
with **Paul LeBlanc** and **Lars T. Lih**
Pace University, New York City
- 20 November 2010 • **What is critique? The relevance of Critical Theory to art today**
public forum of the Platypus Affiliated Society, New York
with **J. M. Bernstein, Lydia Goehr,** and **Gregg Horowitz**
Parsons, the New School for Design
- 27 April 2010 • **The politics of the culture industry: Art today**
public forum of the Platypus Affiliated Society, Chicago
with **Stephen Eisenman** and **Claire Pentecost**
School of the Art Institute of Chicago
- 5 November 2009 • **30 Years of the Islamic Revolution in Iran: The tragedy of the Left**
public forum of the Platypus Affiliated Society, Chicago
with **Maziar Behrooz, Kaveh Ehsani,** and **Danny Postel**
University of Chicago
- 18 April 2009 • **Dialectics of defeat: Towards a theory of historical regression**
Platypus Affiliated Society panel at **Left Forum 2009**
Pace University, New York City
- 15 April 2009 • **Punk and postmodernism: Exploring the art and act of negation**
with **Patrick Durgin, Chuck Hendricks,** and **Dan Sinker**
School of the Art Institute of Chicago
- 6 December 2008 • **Progress or regress? The future of the Left under Obama**
public forum of the Platypus Affiliated Society, New York
with **Stephen Duncombe, Pat Korte, Charles Post,** and **Paul Street**
New York University
- 25 July 2008 • **The crisis in Marxist thought**
hosted by the Platypus Affiliated Society, Chicago
with **Kevin Anderson, Peter Hudis, Andrew Kliman,** and **Sandra Rein**
School of the Art Institute of Chicago
- 6 November 2007 • **The 3 Rs: Reform, Revolution, and "Resistance:" The problematic forms of "anticapitalism" today**
public forum of the Platypus Affiliated Society, Chicago
with **Michael Albert, Stephen Duncombe,** and **Brian Holmes**
School of the Art Institute of Chicago
- 15 October 2007 • **Platypus presents: An interview with Tariq Ali on Iraq, the anti-war movement, and the state of the Left today**
School of the Art Institute of Chicago
- 30 January 2007 • **"Imperialism" — What is it? Why should we be against it?**
public forum of the Platypus Affiliated Society, Chicago
with **Kevin Anderson, Danny Postel,** and **Adam Turl**
School of the Art Institute of Chicago