

Platypus

Platypus is a new international journal of critical letters and emancipatory politics (forthcoming), dedicated to reconstituting the Marxian Left.

The Platypus Review

"Published by a group of Leftists, or neo-Marxists, participating in an intellectual revolution. Platypus engages heavy topics for heavy times."

— *Newcity* Chicago, November 19, 2007 (Jason Foumberg, "Eye Exam: 'Autonomy, Inc.'")

The Platypus Affiliated Society

The *Platypus* Affiliated Society, established in 2006, organizes reading groups, public fora, research and journalism focused on problems and tasks inherited from the "Old" (1920s-30s), "New" (1960s-70s) and post-political (1980s-90s) Left for the possibilities of emancipatory politics today.

Statement of purpose

Platypus is a project for the self-criticism, self-education, and, ultimately, the practical reconstitution of a Marxian Left. At present the Marxist Left appears as a historical ruin. The received wisdom of today dictates that past, failed attempts at emancipation stand not as moments full of potential yet to be redeemed, but rather as "what was" — utopianism that was bound to end in tragedy. As critical inheritors of a vanquished tradition, Platypus contends that — after the failure of the 1960s New Left, and the dismantlement of the welfare state and the destruction of the Soviet Union in the 1980s-90s — the present disorientation of the Left means we can hardly claim to know the tasks and goals of social emancipation better than the "utopians" of the past did.

Our task is critique and education towards the reconstitution of a Marxian Left. Platypus contends that the ruin of the Marxist Left as it stands today is of a tradition whose defeat was largely self-inflicted, hence at present the Marxist Left is *historical*, and in such a grave state of decomposition that it has become exceedingly difficult to draft coherently programmatic social-political demands. In the face of the catastrophic past and present, the first task for the reconstitution of a Marxian Left as an emancipatory force is to recognize the reasons for the historical failure of Marxism and to clarify the necessity of a Marxian Left for the present and future. — *If the Left is to change the world, it must first transform itself!*

The improbable — but not impossible — reconstitution of an emancipatory Left is an urgent task; we believe that the future of humanity depends on it. While the devastating forces unleashed by modern society — capitalism — remain, the unfulfilled promise of social emancipation still calls for redemption. To abdicate this or to obscure the gravity of past defeats and failures by looking to "resistance" from "outside" the dynamics of modern society is to affirm its present and guarantee its future destructive reality.

Platypus asks the questions: How is the thought of critical theorists of modern society such as Marx, Lukács, Benjamin and Adorno relevant for the struggle for social emancipation today? How can we make sense of the long history of impoverished politics on the Left leading to the present — after the international Marxist Left of Lenin, Luxemburg and Trotsky, to the barrenness of today — without being terrorized or discouraged by this history? — How might the answers to such questions help the urgent task of reconstituting the Left at its most fundamental levels of theory and practice? How might we help effect escape from the dead-end the Left has become?

We hope to re-invigorate a conversation on the Left that has long since fallen into senility or silence, in order to help found anew an emancipatory political practice that is presently absent.

What has the Left been, and what can it yet become? — Platypus exists because the answer to such a question, even its basic formulation, has long ceased to be self-evident.

April, 2007

A history of Platypus 2004-08

December 15, 2004

Platypus journal prospective editorial board convened.

April 15, 2006

Platypus Marxist reading group first meeting in Chicago.

May 29, 2006

Platypus reading group and affiliated society email discussion list established.

June 11 and July 6, 2006

"What is a platypus? On surviving the extinction of the Left" and supplemental "short history of the Left" written.

August 5, 2006

Platypus flyer of "What is a platypus?" and "A short history of the Left" produced.

September 11, 2006

"Introducing Platypus" report and bibliography, published in *AREA Chicago* magazine.

October 5 and 12, 2006

Platypus flyer distributed at anti-war demonstrations.

December 3, 2006

Platypus Affiliated Society organization established.

January 30, 2007

Platypus Affiliated Society public forum: " 'Imperialism': What is it? — Why should we be against it?" with Kevin Anderson (*News & Letters*), Chris Cutrone (*Platypus*), Nick Kreitman (new Students for a Democratic Society), Danny Postel (*OpenDemocracy.net*), and Adam Turl (International Socialist Organization).

February 23 - May 16, 2007

Platypus Affiliated Society film screening discussions at University of Chicago and School of the Art Institute of Chicago: *Rosa Luxemburg* (dir. Margarethe von Trotta, 1985), *Man with a Movie Camera* (dir. Dziga Vertov, 1928), *The Handmaid's Tale* (dir. Volker Schlöndorff, 1990), *The Conformist* (dir. Bernardo Bertolucci, 1970), and *Glory* (dir. Edward Zwick, 1989).

February 24, 2007

Platypus workshop "What's Left in Iraq? Problems of internationalism and anti-imperialism on the Left" at new SDS conference on Iraq occupation in Chicago.

April 8, 2007

Platypus Affiliated Society statement of purpose, membership criteria and organizational rules adopted.

May 1, 2007

Platypus report "*The Left is Dead! — Long Live the Left!*"

July 28, 2007

Platypus Affiliated Society presentation "*What is Platypus? Educating critical historical consciousness on the Left*" at Pedagogical Factory, Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago.

October 15, 2007

Platypus Affiliated Society interview with Tariq Ali (*New Left Review*) by Chris Cutrone.

November, 2007

The Platypus Review issue #1 published: articles by Marisa Holmes, Danny Postel, Marco Torres, et al.

November 6, 2007

Platypus Affiliated Society public forum: "*The 3 Rs: Reform, Revolution, and 'Resistance' — the problematic forms of 'anticapitalism' today*" with Michael Albert (*Z* magazine, author of *Parecon: life after capitalism*), Chris Cutrone (*Platypus*), Stephen Duncombe (Gallatin School of NYU, editor of the *Cultural Resistance Reader*), Brian Holmes (*Continental Drift*, Université Tangente), and Marisa Holmes (new SDS).

January 17, 2008

Platypus Affiliated Society and *News & Letters* talk by Andrew Kliman on his book *Reclaiming Marx's "Capital"*.

February, 2008

The Platypus Review issue #2 published: articles by Amanda Armstrong, Ernesto Laclau, et al.

February 2, 2008

Platypus Affiliated Society public forum: "The Failure of Pakistan — Perspectives on the crisis, its past, present, and future" with Ayesha Siddiqa (author of *Military, Inc.: Inside Pakistan's military economy*), Manan Ahmed (University of Chicago), and Atiya Khan (*Platypus*, University of Chicago).

2/2/08