

Introduction: Low Theory

sources of knowledge? Sponge Bob Square Pants

What is the alternative to cynical recognition on the one hand and naive optimism on the other?

What's at stake with this question? hope future anti-social thesis utopia see *MLA Forum on Anti-social thesis in Queer Theory*

This book loses the idealism of hope in order to gain wisdom and a new, spongy relation to life, culture, knowledge and pleasure (2).

live life otherwise

Low theory tries to locate all of the in-between spaces that save us from being snared by the hooks of hegemony and speared by the seductions of the gift shop (2).

standing outside of success: failure = not succeeding, not achieving success

goal = dismantling logic of Success/Failure

re-envisioning failure (and losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming, not knowing) as offering more creative ways of being *parallels with Luhmann and ignorance, Butler and undoing*

Failure's rewards (3)?

- escape punishing norms that discipline behavior/manage development
- preserves some of the wondrous anarchy of childhood
- disturbs "clean" boundary between childhood/adulthood, winner/loser
- allows us to use negative effects (disappointment, disillusionment, despair) to poke holes in toxic positivity and myth of power of positive thinking and positivity/personal responsibility see *Ehrenreich and RSAanimate's "Smile or Die"* <http://youtu.be/u5um8QVWRvo>

Is failure necessarily negative? Does it demand that we embrace and value our negative, "whiny," grouchy attitudes?

Little Miss Sunshine and a new kind of optimism: not based on positive thinking or the bright side at all costs, but a little ray of sunshine that produces shade and light in equal measure (5).

UNDISCIPLINED

not being taken seriously, lack of rigor, frivolous, promiscuous, irrelevant (7).

What should count as "serious" and rigorous academic work?

- Benjamin: strolling down the paths, going the wrong way, not knowing exactly which way to go
- Disciplinary knowledge, the sciences and rogue intellectuals

Do we really want to shore up the ragged boundaries of our shared interests and intellectual commitments, or might we rather take this opportunity to rethink the project of learning and thinking altogether (7)? Is this possible in academic spaces, especially at the U?

Let me explain how universities (and by implication high schools) squash rather than promote quirky and original thought (7).

- disciplines and being disciplined

- normalization, routines, convention, tradition, regularity
- produces experts and administrative forms of governance
- disciplines qualify/disqualify, legitimate/delegitimate, reward/punish; reproduce themselves and inhibit dissent (10)



crossroads between university-as-corporation and university-as-new-public-sphere

need for subversive intellectuals not more critical, professionalized intellectuals (8)

What kind of intellectuals/thinkers does the University produce? What could it produce? How?

Illegibility may in fact be one way of escaping the political manipulation to which all university fields and disciplines are subject (10). How so? What would this look like? What impact does illegibility have on the ability to survive in the academy? How do those forms get evaluated/graded?

Foucault and subjugated knowledges

steal from the university (11)

adding to the 7 theses (including, worry about university, refuse professionalization, forge collectivity, retreat to external world):

- resist mastery (11-12)
- privilege the naive or nonsensical
- suspect memorialization

responses to colonial knowledge formations:

- violent (Fanon)
- homeopathic...one learns dominant system and undermines from within
- negative...subject refuses knowledge, refuses to be knowing subject (14)

JH's book works with violent and negative responses

LOWTHEORY



The image shows a screenshot of a social media thread with six tweets. Each tweet features a profile picture of a person with the word 'TROUBLE' written above it. The tweets are as follows:

- undisciplined** Sara Puotinen
JH, 14: "people must be led to learn, not taught to follow" #quet2011
1 hour ago
- undisciplined** Sara Puotinen
JH as unteachable (12). "what I was taught in school left very little impression upon me at all" #quet2011
1 hour ago
- undisciplined** Sara Puotinen
#quet2011 JH, 12: privilege the naive/nonsensical (stupidity)...connects to Luhmann, queering pedagogy and reflecting on ignorance
1 hour ago
- undisciplined** Sara Puotinen
for JH, 11-12: resist mastery...analysis as mode of conversation rather than mastery #quet2011
1 hour ago
- undisciplined** Sara Puotinen
yes, we need to untrain and break bad habits, but also retrain to form new habits..part of my troublemaking-as-virtue project #quet2011
1 hour ago
- undisciplined** Sara Puotinen
#quet2011 we have to untrain ourselves so that we can read the struggles and debates back into ?s that seem settled/resolved (JH, 11).
1 hour ago ☆ Favorite ↩ Reply 🗑 Delete

accessible (17)

theoretical model that flies below the radar, assembled from eccentric texts and examples (17)
theory as goal oriented

practicing “open” theory. OPEN =

- questioning
- shifting
- flexible
- adjustable
- orients us towards problem-solving
- playful (a la Lugones: <http://blog.lib.umn.edu/puot0002/quet2011/2011/11/world-traveling-and-loving-perception.html>)



undisciplined Sara Puotinen
Can counterhegemonic ideas/systems be cultivated in queer classrooms? If so, how? #quet2011
45 minutes ago

undisciplined Sara Puotinen
#quet2011 Education as popular practice aimed at cultivation of counterhegemonic ideas/systems (JH, 17). What education? Taking place where?
46 minutes ago

undisciplined Sara Puotinen
involve, not explain...reminds me of my writings on engagement and feeling troubled: trouble.room34.com/archives/3614 #quet2011
58 minutes ago

undisciplined Sara Puotinen
low theory: revels in detours, twists and turns through knowing and confusion, seeks not to explain but involve (JH, 15)
1 hour ago

JH on **hegemony** (from Gramsci and Hall): “the multilayered system by which a dominant group achieves power not through coercion but through the production of an interlocking system of ideas which persuades people of the rightness of any given set of often contradictory ideas and perspectives” (17).

traditional vs. organic intellectual

Low theory = counterhegemonic form of theorizing, the theorization of alternatives within an undisciplined zone of knowledge production (18).

Pirate Cultures

Linebaugh’s/Rediker’s *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and The Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* and the history of alternative political formations
flesh out alternatives: how to live, how to think about time/space, how to inhabit space with others, how to spend time separate from the logic of work (19)



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dom. history teems w/remnants of alt. possibilities; subversive intellectual must trace lines of worlds they conjure, left behind #quet2011

40 minutes ago

Animated films deliver queer/socialist messages:

- work together
- revel in difference
- fight exploitation
- decode ideology
- invest in resistance



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Halberstam turns to the "silly" archives of animated film/TV: Sponge Bob, South Park, Dream Works. #quet2011 Anything on Adventure Time?

39 minutes ago

FAILURE AS A WAY OF LIFE

goals of book:

1. "I hold on to what have been characterized as childish and immature notions of possibility and look for alternatives in the form of what Foucault calls "subjugated knowledge" across the culture: in subcultures, countercultures, and even popular cultures."
2. Turn the meaning of failure in a different direction, away from happy/productive failure to the "dark heart of the negativity that failure conjures"--modes of unbecoming
3. Early chapters (1-3) chart the meaning of failure
4. Later chapters (4-6) allow for fact that failure is also unbeing

It is a book about failing well, failing often, and learning how to fail better (24).

Reminds me of JB's passage: "Trouble is inevitable, and the task, how best to make it, how best to be in it."

JHalb hopes this book is accessible to a wider audience. What do you think? How do we put Halberstam's desire for intelligibility/accessibility beside our discussion of Butler's value of difficult writing?

Master the art of getting and staying lost (25).



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"...the mysteries of the universe may be revealed to you" (21).
Woah... Ashton Kutcher-as-prophet, now that's scary! #quet2011

31 minutes ago



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"I do believe that if you watch Dude, Where's My Car? slowly and repeatedly and while you are sober...#quet2011

33 minutes ago



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texts JH prefers don't make us better people/liberate us, but offer strange, anti-capitalist logics of being/acting/knowing (21) #quet2011

34 minutes ago