

Derek Dunlop
October 5, 2006

Drawing the Disaster

The core of my research considers the following question: how do I develop an aesthetic that is both formally interesting enough to keep myself and the viewer engaged while at the same time asking the questions that highlight my critical commitment to re-imagine our social world. I will trace my research from photography to drawing to the final realization of the limits, or what I see to be the limits of art itself. I will use the idea of aesthetic limits or “an aesthetics of failure” as a means to discuss the social or psychological limitations of the contemporary subject. Specifically, I explore these ideas in their relationship to desire, masculinity and sexuality.

In *Camera Lucida* (1980), Barthes adds two terms to the theoretical discussion of photography: the *punctum* and the *studium*. Barthes uses the *studium* to describe why he is interested in so many photographs. It is “...that very wide field of unconcerned desire, of various interest, of inconsequential taste.... The *studium* is of the order of liking, not of loving; it mobilizes a half desire, a demi-volition; it is the same sort of vague, slippery, irresponsible interest one takes in the people, the entertainments, the books, the clothes one finds “all right.”¹ The *studium* is seen as how one culturally participates in the photograph. To use Shawcross’s analysis, “*Studium* represents the world of codes, of

¹ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida Reflections on Photography* (USA: Hill and Wang, 1981), p. 27.

culture, of conventionalized context.”² The *punctum*, on the other hand is, “the element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces.”³ This detail, this “sting, speck, cut, little hole”,⁴ that “lightning-like”, “accidental prick”, the “wound”, the “tiny shock”, that which “bruises” but is also “poignant.” The *studium* is always present in photographs whereas the *punctum* may or may not be present, may change over time, may even disappear - the *punctum*, however elusive it may be, is always dependent upon the *studium*. Shawcross explains, “If the *studium* is seen as those elements in the photograph that culture – specifically, history – contextualizes and explains, then the *punctum* cannot really emerge from an image that functions as an intellectual or cultural unknown or void, because the essence of the *punctum* is that it punctures the photograph’s cultural coding (its *studium*).”⁵ Whether the *punctum* is a bandage on a girl’s finger, a little boy’s bad teeth, or a necklace worn by a woman, it has a very personal weight. Barthes explains, “Last thing about the *punctum*: whether or not it is triggered, it is an addition: it is what I add to the photograph and *what is nonetheless already there*.”⁶ Because we do not share the same experience of seeing and knowing, we will disagree on where, what, or even if a *punctum* in a specific photograph exists. We do however, share the same openness to being *wounded*, to being stung or pricked.

² Nancy M Shawcross. *Roland Barthes on Photography The Critical Tradition in Perspective*, (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1997), p. 83.

³ Barthes, *Camera Lucida Reflections on Photography*, p. 26.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.26.

⁵ Shawcross, *Roland Barthes on Photography The Critical Tradition in Perspective*, p. 84.

⁶ Barthes, *Camera Lucida Reflections on Photography*, p. 55.

In his essay, “Re-reading Camera Lucida,” Victor Burgin argues that Barthes’s method of analysis in *Camera Lucida* is one of phenomenology, which he argues has severe consequences because phenomenology “rejects the concept of the unconscious.”⁷ He compares Barthes project with the earlier work by Sartre called *L’Imaginaire*, of which *Camera Lucida* is written in homage. The two underlying concerns that Barthes uses to explore his subject matter in *Camera Lucida*, according to Burgin are the phenomenological ideas of essence and intentionality. First, according to Burgin, “phenomenology sets out to describe subjective experiences rather than material objects.” In order to prevent seeing only what I know, phenomenology would have one “put [ones] knowledge ‘on the shelf’ (even if it is ‘scientific’ knowledge) in order to ‘reduce’ [ones] experience of the world to the terms of ‘raw’ apprehension.”⁸ Secondly, to explain the concept of intentionality, Burgin writes that, “...things exist for me only in that I *actively* ‘intend’ them in consciousness...The mind is not simply a *screen* upon which the world projects its appearances; in ‘making something’ of appearances the mind, in a sense, is also a *projector*, projecting a world of things *onto* those appearances.”⁹ Because Burgin sees the unconscious as crucial to the development of theory about photography, he problematizes the idea of the *punctum* by grounding it in psychoanalytic theory. Burgin locates the *punctum*, in the Lacanian sense as an “encounter with the real.” Of which, I will speak more about in a moment.

⁷ Victor Burgin, “Re-reading Camera Lucida” from *The End of Art Theory: Criticism and Postmodernity*, (London: Macmillan, 1986) p. 83.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.80.

For Barthes, the *punctum* can only exist in the photograph, for only the still image is “pensive.” When one watches a film or television there is no time to add to the image – if one were to shut one’s eyes, and open them again, they would be flooded with new imagery – one would not be able to pinpoint the detail. Barthes has addressed the idea of the still in relationship to the film in his essay “The Third Meaning.” In it he considers stills from an Eisenstein film and tries to understand what separates the filmic from the film. He defines 3 levels of meaning: an informational level, a symbolic level, and the third meaning or the obtuse meaning. The obtuse meaning, relates to the significance of the image, and is similar to the *punctum*. He describes the obtuse meaning as being “outside culture, knowledge, information”¹⁰, as being “theoretically locatable but not describable.” He understands it as “opening out into the infinity of language” and finally as “...a signifier without a signified.”¹¹ Because the obtuse meaning is “outside (articulated) language”, the degree of value it might have as a theoretical term is questionable. How do we talk about something in relationship to the social when we cannot really locate it? Published ten years before *Camera Lucida*, it might be more sensible to understand the idea of the obtuse meaning as an early investigation into photographic meaning from which the *punctum* and the *studium* later develop. Not only are the two later terms much more specific in their definition they are also starting points from which to begin a discussion whereas the obtuse meaning is an ending point - the eventual description of an emotion or effect. What is useful, however, in Barthes’s discussion of the obtuse meaning is the idea that it is the “epitome of a counter-

¹⁰ Roland Barthes. “The Third Meaning,” from *Image, Music, Text; essays selected and translated by Stephen Heath*. (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1977), p. 55.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 55 and p. 61 respectively.

narrative”¹² it is “...discontinuous, indifferent to the story and to the obvious meaning”¹³. In this way, it shares similar, yet undeveloped characteristics of the *punctum*. Because the obtuse meaning is deliberately vague and mystical in its definition, I am much more interested in the *punctum*. Specifically, I want to think about it in terms of its relationship to time and action. And of this relationship, I want to use it as a means to make sense of my experience of watching television. In a sort of reconciliation of the two approaches outlined above, the experiential approach linked to phenomenology and a psychoanalytic approach grounded in the unconscious, I will spend the remainder of my paper discussing the process I went through attempting to represent my activity of watching television. And in addition, I will discuss the social and political implications of that representation.

Television is the most effective ideological tool for disseminating and dictating how one perceives, understands and experiences reality. Michele and Armand Mattelart have together written extensively on the power of communication systems, and television in particular. They argue that the television is the “principal site where social coexistence is managed”:

The system of communication and mass culture as the expression of a relation between sender and receiver, between producer and consumer and as the cement of consensus is the extension of a concrete political system, that of liberal democracy...the means of mass communication are the latest element in the constitution of the bourgeois ‘public sphere’ which began in the eighteenth century and which made possible rational discussion of the normative rules of social action – rules whose legitimacy

¹² Ibid., p. 63.

¹³ Ibid., p. 61.

is thus no longer based on their sacred character but on a consensus achieved by reasoning subjects.¹⁴

Television's ability to form consensus defined as "socialization, cultural consensus, political consensus or social consensus"¹⁵ is extremely powerful and must not be underemphasized, especially for a generation who grew up with the television in its *natural* place: either in the family room, kitchen, or bedroom. Although, we mustn't trust our memory, I must indulge in a few simple observations of the effect television had on me as a child. I can remember an overwhelming sense of security and safety in those moments when my family came together in order to share time and experience watching *The Wonderful World of Disney* on Sunday nights. Similarly, I can remember how my brother and I constructed and defended very different identities through the divergence of our emerging television taste. I can also remember wanting to call a character from a sitcom, actually looking his name up in the phone book, and having my brother explain to me that the character is an actor who lives in California and that the character isn't actually real at all. Ultimately, I can remember feeling the pressure to laugh at the right jokes at the right times making sure I watch the right shows in order to communicate and get along with those around me.

The Mattelarts ground their understanding of television in theories of power and hegemony in order to articulate the effect they see it has as a socializing force. They use Michel Foucault's analysis of power as no longer being an attribute and property of a

¹⁴ Armand Mattelart; Michele Mattelart, *The Carnival of Images Brazilian Television Fiction*, Translated by David Buxton, (New York, NY: Bergin & Garvey, 1990) p. 110-111.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

class, but instead as a “network of strategies, institutions, practices and relations” including discourses “said and unsaid.” No longer seen as a central core, “localized in macro-subjects like the state,” power is understood as “present in the multiplicity of disciplinary techniques and technologies.”¹⁶ With this in mind, the Mattelarts develop an appropriate and beautiful analogy for how the television can be symbolically visualized:

Foucault’s insight enables us to identify the communications apparatus as a mechanism of power in its very form of organization. The model of the Panopticon characterizes the management/organizational mode of control exercised by television, or better the television *dispositif*: a mode of organizing space, controlling time, continually watching over the individual and assuring the positive production of behaviors, relinquishing the negative forms of repression...the Panopticon is a surveillance mechanism, where, from a central tower, a single watchman has total visibility over a circular building composed of a honeycomb of isolated, individual cells where those under surveillance can be seen without being able to see. Adapted to television, which reverses the direction of vision, enabling the watched to see without being seen, and which functions not by disciplinary control but by fascination and seduction, television as a mode of organization becomes the reversed telepanopticon.¹⁷

This reversed telepanopticon functions in a way to secure and promote the ideology of the dominant class which can be described as hegemony, or “the capacity of a particular social group to exercise moral and intellectual direction over the whole of society, the ability to invest its own cultural modes throughout civil society in ways of life, mentalities, attitudes and behavior.”¹⁸ These ideas, articulated by the Mattelarts, are rooted in the theories of the Frankfurt School and were essential to the ongoing debates

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 114.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 115-116.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 110.

surrounding the deregulation and internationalism of television media (in the 1980's and 1990's) and the increasing amalgamation of corporate media powers around the world. I am interested in this history only in a general sense because it is important to recognize the history of television theory. In contemporary debates, there are much more interesting theories that are more specific to how we think about sociality. I will expand upon some of them in a moment, but first I'd like to consider again my own experience of watching television.

Today, because of my life experience and education, I do not have the same desire to identify with the characters on television or laugh at the right times at the right jokes. Perhaps, like most other people accustomed to the strategies of advertisers, the television functions as a form of conflicted distraction/relaxation. In a way, I watch it to test the degree to which I will let myself indulge in the colours and sounds. And although we all have some degree of resistance in us to what is being broadcast, how our ideas and desires are being manipulated, there is a point in which we must let the television do what it does best, and that is to wash over us in all its spectacle. Nevertheless, one wonders at what point do we stop engaging with what is being broadcast and simply let the images wash over us? Moreover, where do the images go when they do wash over us? And finally, what happens when we give in to this pleasure - understanding the manipulation, yet indulging in it anyway? The Mattelarts argue that:

in examining how media texts operate, we have been too satisfied with a focus on the units of discourse of images and words. But the power of the culture industries also lies outside the stories they tell; the latter, it might be said, remain the epiphenomena of what is communicated. The culture

industries also occupy the psychic structures of the popular audience, which are as much elements of nature as they are of culture. Their ideological function also consists of administering this perpetual refueling of the deep structures of a collective unconscious.¹⁹

In order to break with, and understand this refueling of my own individual unconscious, I began to photograph the television screen: the process ultimately began as a naïve process of reclaiming. Reclaiming what I thought of as lost time as well as lost experience.

It is with the effect of the *punctum* in mind, that I began to decide when, what and why I would take a photograph. The degree of poignancy I felt in relationship to the images I was collecting is arguable, but certainly I felt the effects of tiny shocks, stings or wounds - there was an underlying feeling of violence. In my excitement and with the anticipation of imagining what kind of impressions would affect the film, my activity became one of improvisation. I began to think of the TV as a potential minefield of multiple *punctums* happening at any given moment on any given station. Through the experimentation of different shutter speeds and exposure times, the images became torn, blurred and sometimes completely obliterated. My action became, in some instances, missed encounters – either clicking too soon or too late.

I should clarify a few small, but important divergences from how I began thinking about the *punctum* compared to Barthes's original interpretation. Nancy Shawcross has pointed out about that:

¹⁹ Ibid., p.104.

The *punctum*...is not a thing but rather a condition that arises from the *noeme* of the unique medium of photography: 'That-has-been'.... For Barthes this *noeme* holds both a cultural and a personal significance. The cultural import concerns our understanding of or relationship to history; within the personal sphere, the 'That-has-been' of the Winter Garden photograph allows Barthes to do much more than 'recognize' his mother – he 'discovers' her.²⁰

The photograph of the Winter Garden is the central concern for Barthes in *Camera Lucida*, it represents how he is pricked or ultimately, how he “encounters the real.”

When I am photographing the television, the real that I am photographing is not the real that Barthes imagined in the collection of photographs that he discusses. We could not look at my photographs of the television and say “That-has-been” the same way we would of the images compiled in *Camera Lucida*. The real I am photographing is confused and complicated for, I am not photographing “That-has-been,” but rather some imaginary effect of the media that might be described (especially in terms of advertising) as “This-can-be” or “This-will-be” or “Imagine-if-this-was.” The real that I am photographing are the imaginary fictions, ambitions and narratives of our culture. I am photographing the technical hallucinations, the day - dreams, the fictional narratives, utopias, visions that inform and create our cultural unconscious. Ultimately, the archive that I am amassing can only relate to the real in terms of the imaginary - a relationship that exists and informs our thoughts, desires and feelings.

Furthermore, I must also clarify how I understand the details or specks that inform the condition of the *punctum*. Through my improvisation the *punctum* may reveal itself

²⁰ Shawcross, *Roland Barthes on Photography The Critical Tradition in Perspective*, p.85.

not only as a gesture, face, article of clothing, or setting; but may be a disruption from the narrative - an inconsequential twist, or an entire advertisement. It is whatever punctures or disrupts the regular flow of things. And this disruption, to my surprise, affects me in consistently similar ways.

Before long, I realized that I needed to take greater responsibility for my decision-making. I began to expect certain things from certain stations at certain times of the day. And I soon realized that most of my images looked the same: men sitting, men standing, men looking out the window, men driving cars, men talking to other men, and men drinking beer. Not only did my archive look unexpectedly the same but the images were boring. Once I had received the photographs back from the developers, the images were tame, painless. To use Barthes's term, often the images became simple instances of "politeness." However much the same, boring or painless they were, what they all shared was the same subject matter - the socialization of men.

Judith Butler has written an incredible amount of literature on the construction of gender norms. She argues that:

Femininity [and masculinity I would include] is thus not the product of a choice, but the forcible citation of a norm, one which complex historicity is indissociable from relations of discipline, regulation, and punishment. Indeed there is no 'one' who takes on a gender norm. On the contrary, this citation of the gender norm is necessary in order to qualify as a 'one,'

to become viable as a 'one,' where subject-formation is dependent on the prior operation of a legitimating gender norm.²¹

The *punctum*, for me, emerges as multiple sites of gender norms where I recognize the enforcement of gender and realize their regulatory effects. The television is the perfect medium in which to perpetuate gender norms because of the repetitive aspect of the media: we see the same commercials, sitcoms and series over and over again. As Butler has further noted, gender "is something that one becomes – but can never be...gender is itself a kind of becoming or activity, and...gender ought not to be conceived as a noun or a substantial thing or a static cultural marker, but rather as an incessant and repeated action of some sort."²² The repetitive nature of television enforces gender norms while at the same time it demonstrates how essentially ephemeral these norms are; in their serial repetition, one easily recognizes an anxiety. Essentially however, these sites, from sitcoms, evening dramas, news media and of course, advertising, function to contain, tame and regulate one's sense of social agency.

It's no coincidence that I became re-interested in the power of the television after the successful attack and destruction of the World Trade Center in New York, and for obvious reasons. It is also no coincidence that I started photographing the television just before the start of the Second Gulf War – when it was critical for the White House to re-imagine how masculinity was imposed and celebrated in their mobilization for war. For my generation, it was the first time in our lives that the American military began

²¹ Judith Butler. *Bodies that Matter on the Discursive Limits of Sex*. (New York, NY: Routledge, 1993), p. 232.

²² Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. (New York, NY: Routledge, 1990), p. 143.

aggressively recruiting, and, I might add, very recently there has also been an aggressive campaign from the Canadian military. I noticed that the military prefers to recruit on sports networks and their advertisements usually follow beer commercials. It was operating in a codified way, I thought, to amplify and exploit one's gender anxiety. They offered the myth of the working class boy made good; the immersion into a technologically fetishized video game; the myth of the heroic dead soldier returned from the grave to re-recruit; they gave the illusion of a utopian social community existing outside the fiercely competitive business model and they offered the answer to structural poverty. For me, the *punctum* began to represent points in daily life where one is forced to take sides: in the celebration of aggressive heterosexuality, shaming of alternative sexualities and the naturalizing of patriarchal, misogynist social structures.

During a roundtable conversation in the journal October in 1997, Leo Bersani is perhaps the most articulate in explaining his ideas regarding sexuality and psychoanalysis. I am interested in Bersani's work for many reasons, but for now I would like to discuss his understanding of sexuality in the simplest and most condensed way possible. He believes that as a child we are overwhelmed by external stimuli, in a solitary situation. Possibly, as a mode of survival, "...the only way for the infant to survive the imbalance between external stimuli and the ego structures prepared to receive them is to find the pain of this imbalance pleasurable."²³ It is out of this conflict that Bersani develops his theory of masochism – which I will return to in a moment. The

²³ Tim Dean; Hal Foster; Kaja Silverman; Leo Bersani, "A conversation with Leo Bersani," *October* (Autumn 1997) p.5. Page numbers for further citations from this article appear in parenthesis in the text.

child's inability to understand the world and his/her own sexuality is based on the child's lack of knowledge. "With the enigmatic signifier, the adult withholds what might complete the infant by giving it knowledge. The infant may then experience this unmasterable event as a kind of castration" (p.8). Basing his understanding of the enigmatic signifier on his reading of Jean Laplanche, Bersani notes:

The enigmatic signifier is a call like this: an adult addresses the infant with some message. For Laplanche the infant experiences this message as threatening; the adult is carrying so many sexual significations that he or she cannot help but overwhelm the infant. So how does the infant respond to these enigmatic signifiers? Laplanche says that it responds by taking the mass of what it can't understand and making it unconscious (p.7-8).

Bersani understands the couple as representing the "hegemonic model of domination and enslavement" and the originary situation out of which the enigmatic signifier arises. A situation, that he argues, is marked by: "mutual hostility, paranoid fascination, absolute separation between subject and object, impossible mastery over otherness" (p.9). For this paper, I am not interested in discussing the couple and its relationship to the enigmatic signifier, but instead, I am interested in understanding the enigmatic signifier through the filter of the television. Which is a slight distancing perhaps, as Bersani might argue that I am only looking at the symptom rather than the cause.

Before moving on, I need to briefly elaborate on Bersani's notion of masochism. As it is my point of divergence, he claims that, "a masochistic self-shattering was constitutive of our identity as sexual beings, that it is present, always, not primarily in our orgasms but rather in the terrifying but also exhilarating instability of human subjectivity" (p.6). And furthermore that, "that originary experience cannot be forgotten

or done away with; we always revert to it in some way; there is always a memory of self-constitution that includes this masochistic coming-into-being of the sexual” (p.6). Finally very recently, Bersani clarified further, what he sees to be the potential of theorizing masochism, it is not “as pleasure in pain so much as the pleasure of at once losing the self and discovering it elsewhere, inaccurately replicated” (p.6).

I want to understand the television as one of the sites from which Bersani’s masochistic coming-into-being of the sexual occurs. The sense of *losing the self* and *finding the self elsewhere*, is how I want to understand the child’s experience of television. The child’s sexual self-constitution happens as an affect of the TV; it is something that happens by accident, without the child’s consent and is something that cannot be done away with. Affecting the subject to greater or lesser degrees (depending on one’s social position), the act can be violent and aggressive. The erotic object becomes a site of intensity based on the power relations of which the television so easily naturalizes. Victor Burgin offers a detailed account of his psychoanalytic understanding of the *punctum*:

Psychoanalytic theory has described how, in the primitive stages of emergence of language, sound imagery joins with other forms of imagery (visual, tactile and so on) around certain early encounters with the real to establish ‘elementary signifiers’ of the unconscious: certain early experiences which thereby make a ‘lasting impression’ on the infant/child; these images, and the emotional charge they carry, remain in the unconscious mind of the adult; from time to time, some conscious event (for example, looking at a photograph) will have some aspect to it which will ‘allow’ an associative connection with the unconscious fragment; the emotional charge carried by the unconscious fragment will then ‘spark’

across the gap to the configuration in conscious perception, investing it with a 'feeling' for which there is no rational explanation. It is in this way (albeit the account I have given is highly simplified) that I would account for Barthes's '*punctum*.'²⁴

The *punctum*, for me, in my archive of images, emerges as multiple sites of "elementary signifiers" or "enigmatic signifiers" in which an unconscious fragment relating to my own sexual self-constitution is sparked.

In this sense, I am not imagining that the television functions the same way as it does to regulate gender, through hyperbolic versions of man and woman (as an example), but through something deeper: it actually affects the form of the ego. And one compulsively returns to the television, in memory, as if to reconfirm and reinforce who one is by revisiting that originary experience. I am also interested in how the television takes on the symbolic weight of the family. As Barthes has said, when we watch television, we are "condemned to the family."²⁵ Or as Bersani has said, "TV doesn't make the family, but it makes the family *mean* in a certain way."²⁶ It is at this point that my theories begin to break down and I no longer have the answers to the questions that I am interested in asking. How does that original moment, as an affect of the television, transform one's self-constitution? How does this process impact and regulate one's own confessional understanding of the adult self? How do we explain the compulsion with which one returns to the television, especially as it participates in a cultural project that

²⁴ Burgin, "Re-reading Camera Lucida" from *The End of Art Theory: Criticism and Postmodernity*, p. 85.

²⁵ Victor Burgin, "Barthes Discretion," in *In/Different Spaces Place and Memory in Visual Culture* (Los Angeles, USA: University of California Press, 1996), p. 166.

²⁶ Leo Bersani, "Is the Rectum A Grave?" in *AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism*, ed. Douglas Crimp (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988).

wants to obliterate difference? Ultimately, it is with this understanding and these questions in mind, that I began to see what the accumulation of images in my archive could demonstrate, and with this emphasis that I also began to understand the full weight of the *punctum*. And it became my project to de-essentialize what seems so natural.

My problem became how to develop an aesthetic to think through this process. I turned to the medium of drawing, not only because of how and where it is situated between the other mediums, but also for what the medium can offer. Drawing is always in a state of becoming; it can show a line of thinking as well as show thinking itself. I also turned to drawing because it is a medium that lends itself to improvisation, the original impulse that generated my first experimental photographs.

I considered ways in which to engage the viewer: to educate, to outwit, to shock, to heal – which all seemed outdated, with little relevance to contemporary society. So my responsibility became the medium itself. My research brought me to Raymond Pettibon, not because I was interested in his work so much as I was interested in how he is attached to theory through Benjamin Buchloh. Particularly, I am interested in his essay of 2000, “Raymond Pettibon: Return to Disorder and Disfiguration.” In it, Buchloh traces three distinct “incompatible definitions” of drawing that emerged in the past century: “Drawing could now function either as an instantiation of a pure spatio-temporal process (e.g., the line from Pollock to Serra) or it could pretend to be the mere trace of a...physiological/libidinal performance (the line from Michaux to Twombly), or drawing could take on the guise of a merely functional notation (the line from Duchamp to Johns

to Sol LeWitt).”²⁷ Buchloh argues that the drawings of Pettibon synthesize two of the models described above – “drawing as pure matrix (embodied in Johns) with the model of drawing as pure grapheme (embodied in Twomby).”²⁸

This synthesis is key to Buchloh’s discussion of Pettibon’s project, and I think it is a very interesting idea - but the degree to which Pettibon’s project is successful in these terms is questionable. This is partly due to the aesthetic quality of the work, and partly an effect of the ambition of the project. Although, I can appreciate Pettibon’s work and he has certainly opened up the possibility for my own understanding and development of drawing, I think we are restricted in how we can understand any serious political potential emerging from his work – besides a kind of adolescent anarchism. This restriction is marked by our inability to locate a stable social position. Without this, there is nothing to address, nothing to contest. This is perhaps why Buchloh reaches the conclusion that, “[Pettibon] undoes once and for all the assumption that drawing can still deliver alternate models of corporeal behavior and of sexual organization.”²⁹

Pettibon tears apart the imagery of mass media, and tears apart the written word but, after a while, besides the artist’s sense of play, his exploration of the punk rock and comic book aesthetic, one finds no definite position in which to enter the work. Although one can readily find a psycho-sexual dynamic in the work, (especially in terms of his representation of the American military) his overall project lacks any kind of consistently

²⁷ Benjamin Buchloh, “Raymond Pettibon: Return to Disorder and Disfiguration.” *October* (Spring, 2000), p. 36-52.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.42.

coherent social or political ambition, it is ultimately an exercise in rupture. Rather than seeing Pettibon's project as an endpoint to earlier avant-garde moments, I see his project as a starting point for re-imagining the potential drawing has as a contemporary medium.

Because of the history of drawing that Buchloh stresses, I recognize that in order to seriously engage with the medium, I need to fully consider its foundation. I shifted my understanding of drawing into one of performance; I could perform drawing the same way as one performs gender, sexuality or subjectivity itself – and it became a perfect medium for unlearning these internalized behaviors. I looked to the strategies employed by other artists throughout the century: Jackson Pollock and his “psychoanalytic drawings,” Jasper Johns and the line of function, Andy Warhol and the de-skilled line, Cy Twombly and the abstract libidinal line, Eva Hesse and the obsessive, repetitive drawing, Robert Morris and blind drawing and now the contemporary realist aesthetic – what has been called high school realism.³⁰

I would begin a drawing by performing or embodying an aesthetic strategy rooted in one of these various aesthetic moments from the past. I thought of each alternative as representing an entry point into a conversation that was already taking place. It was not in the hope of reclaiming the revolutionary fervor of these avant-garde moments but in the possibility of forging my own aesthetic out of their ruins. My drawings begin by indexing an image from my archive, which I think of as representing, to use Foucauldian

³⁰ Scott Watson introduced this term to me in a conversation in my studio.

language, “the weak points, the openings, the lines of force”³¹ from which I could communicate what needs to be said.

However, as soon as I felt that I had a grasp of the aesthetic strategy, the aesthetic exhausted itself and the original intention that had brought it into being, diminished. I had reached its aesthetic limit. In which case, it became necessary to begin again with a different approach, re-working what I had already drawn. In this way, my drawings became one failed attempt after another. Failed attempts to properly come to terms with the subject matter that I was dealing with. I began to think of failure, not as something negative, but rather as a position of mobility – as a possible strategy for dealing with these images that we have no use for. And I began to imagine the possibility of a formal transformation in the medium itself - a transformation with the potential to open up a new social space in which to consider these representations.

Four dominant themes, or ways of thinking quickly emerged in the work: 1) the complexities of same-sex eroticism, 2) an aesthetically complex labour based on layering and covering up; 3) the violence with which one is forced into a subjectivity constituted in unequal power relations and 4) the socialization of men, especially as it exists in the contemporary mobilization for war.

I would now like to expand on a few of these points and talk more openly about my research. Leo Bersani has written extensively about same sex desire, especially as it

³¹ Lawrence D. Kritzman. *Michel Foucault Politics Philosophy Culture Interviews and other Writings 1977-1984*, (Routledge: New York, 1988), p. 124.

is positioned in the hierarchy of sexuality. He argues that the internalization of an oppressive mentality is fundamental to homosexual desire in that it risks loving the oppressor:

[It] combines and confuses impulses to appropriate and to identify with the object of desire. An authentic gay male political identity therefore implies a struggle not only against definitions of maleness and of homosexuality as they are reiterated and imposed in a heterosexist social discourse, but also against those very same definitions so seductively and so faithfully reflected by those (in large part culturally invented and elaborated) male bodies that we carry within us as permanently renewable sources of excitement.³²

These male bodies are of course, the same male bodies that compose my archive. This quote comes from the essay, of 1987, “Is the Rectum a Grave?” and although the essay is somewhat dated in terms of the history of the AIDS Epidemic, he does articulate clearly here more than anywhere else – the essential conflict inherent in the internalization of “male bodies,” and the conflict that one carries with oneself in the representation or celebration of that desire. Among other things, Leo Bersani argues that in America it became a moral imperative to oppress gay men, as it was a moral imperative to contain the spread of HIV/AIDS. Our understanding of the disease had shifted today, but, as a result of the dissemination of this moral imperative by the medical institution, religious organizations and the education system, we are in a situation today where this moral imperative has been successfully internalized by the new generation of gay men: not only are our minds diseased, but our bodies are as well. This generation’s sexual constitution

³² Leo Bersani, “Is the Rectum A Grave?” in *AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism*, ed. Douglas Crimp (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988).

came into being with the self-knowledge that it was a moral imperative, or one's social responsibility, to contain, deny, repress and censor whatever desire they had. This is not to say that there was a time in recent history when same-sex desire was celebrated or more freely expressed. But it is important to recognize that today, whether one is HIV positive or has AIDS already, gay men feel the effect of an overly medicalized body. It isn't a body that expresses desire and sexuality openly, without hesitation, but is a body that fears sickness, is sick already or even seeks sickness out.

Having said that, the degree to which the representation of same sex eroticism can be seen as a critical strategy or as having the potential of a transcendental effect, is seriously questionable. Judith Butler has continually argued that it does and even in her most recent book of 2004, *Undoing Gender*, she insists:

The fact that desire is not fully determined corresponds with the psychoanalytic understanding that sexuality is never fully captured by any regulation. Rather, it is characterized by displacement, it can exceed regulation, take on new forms in response to regulation, even turn around and make it sexy. In this sense, sexuality is never reducible to the 'effect' of this or that operation of regulatory power. This is not the same as saying that sexuality is, by nature, free and wild. On the contrary, it emerges as an improvisational possibility in a field of constraints.³³

She locates a striking contradiction – there is the hope for transformation through the slipperiness of desire, but also the possible realization of it as a failed project – especially with the rapidity in which desire or sexuality is continually created, commodified and successfully contained by the mass media.

³³ Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York, 2004), p. 15.

Whatever momentum gay and lesbian “liberation” had in the early stages of its emergence as a rights-based cause, its potential to challenge what it is to be “male enough” or what it is to be “female enough,” or even at its strongest ambition as a potential strategy for taking down patriarchy, has been diffused and eliminated. This is emblematic of the recent inclusion of gay and lesbians into the institution of marriage, which contains and regulates desire arguably more than any other institution. This is not to say that gay and lesbian should not be included in the institution of marriage, but rather that the entire phenomenon of marriage in contemporary society needs to be seriously re-examined. Similarly, keeping in line with how liberal democracies create and manage illusions of freedom, people who are openly gay and lesbian have recently started appearing as regular contributors to home decorating and design-TV shows; this works to further entrench and domesticate whatever threat alternative sexualities once posed. When we consider popular gay and lesbian representations, we see them presented as a miming of accepted models of sociality. Leo Bersani has responded to this new acceptance of gays and lesbians by popular culture and has argued for a return to thinking about the sameness in which gay and lesbian desires are fundamentally constituted. Sameness, as the biological reality of men desiring men and woman desiring woman, he argues “might revolutionize our understanding of how the human subject is, or might be, socially implicated”³⁴, and he continues:

My argument is that by not accepting and radically reworking the different identity of sameness – by rejecting the whole concept of identity – we risk

³⁴ Leo Bersani, *Homos*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995) p. 73.

participating in the homophobic project that wants to annihilate us. Only an emphasis on the specifics of sameness can help us to avoid collaborating in the disciplinary tactics that would make us invisible. In other words, there is a ‘we.’ But in our anxiety to convince straight society that we are only some malevolent intention that we can be, like you, good soldiers, good parents, and good citizens, we seem bent on suicide. By erasing our identity we do little more than reconfirm its inferior position within a homophobic system of differences.³⁵

Television does not operate in the interest of empowering or representing marginalized or minority cultures, but in the interests of containing them. The Mattelarts very succinctly note, “The needs of the audience that television pretends to interpret are in reality above all the need for an audience that the institution can incorporate structurally.”³⁶ Social or political threat to the established order is quickly and efficiently reduced and eliminated through its very structural incorporation – and the television is the most effective medium for symbolically completing this process. Consequently, the proliferation of gay and lesbian variety shows, in this light, must not be seen as a hallmark of liberation. As Julia Kristeva writes:

Today, sexual liberation has denigrated into ‘health sex’: an idyllic panacea, a new religion that finishes up as a cocoon or as family life reinstated in a sort of oceanic feeling, where there’s pleasure for all, at any price, no problem.... ‘Holistic’ sex has transformed itself into universal peace, regulated by spectacle and profit, and has ended up confused with the death of desire...³⁷

³⁵ Ibid., p. 42.

³⁶ Mattelart and Mattelart, *The Carnival of Images Brazilian Television Fiction*, p. 126.

³⁷ Julia Kristeva, *Revolt She Said An Interview by Philippe Petit*, Translated by Brian O’Keeffe, (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2002), p. 18.

The dialectic between alienation and identification, as Victor Burgin recognizes, is one of the concerns of Lacan's understanding of the mirror stage. Originating in the "moment when one becomes oneself because one is no longer the same as one's mother,"³⁸ the continued negotiation and development of subjectivity has been severely altered and intensified by our media saturation and post-modern theories of the crisis of subjectivity are in abundance. Burgin writes:

From a Western world in which images were once limited in number, circumscribed in meaning, contemplated at length, we have today arrived at a society inundated with images consumed 'on the fly' –from glossy magazines, from photomats, video rental stores, broadcast and cable TV, communication satellites, and increasingly realistic computer simulations. Flipping and 'zapping' through avalanches of books and journals, TV channels and CD-ROM, we are in turn bombarded by pictures not only of hopelessly unattainable images of idealized identities but also images of past and present suffering, images of destruction, of bodies quite literally in pieces. We are ourselves 'torn' in the process, not only emotionally and morally but in fragmentary structures if the act of looking itself. In an image-saturated environment that increasingly resembles the interior space of subjective fantasy turned inside out, the very subject-object distinction begins to break down, and the subject comes apart in the space of its own making...Such fragmentation, decentering, and loss of subject-object boundaries, is characteristic of paranoia.³⁹

The human body is symbolically torn and manipulated - yet consistently presented as whole, happy and properly socialized by the mass media. Gilles Deleuze and Felix

³⁸ This expression is borrowed from the words of Catherine Clemente in the essay: Victor Burgin, "Paranoiac Space," in *In/Different Spaces Place and Memory in Visual Culture* (Los Angeles, USA: University of California Press, 1996), p. 125.

³⁹ Victor Burgin, "Paranoiac Space," in *In/Different Spaces Place and Memory in Visual Culture*, pp. 120-121.

Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, have argued that as a direct extension of technological forces, the subject is perpetually unsatisfied: “Lack is created, planned, and organized in and through social production...The deliberate creation of lack as a function of market economy is the art of the dominant class; making all of desire teeter and fall victim to the great fear of not having one’s needs satisfied....”⁴⁰ I agree with this theory to a certain degree, but hasn’t humanity always been haunted with and wrestled with feelings of inadequacy and lack? Literature and art is filled with representations of this long before today’s advanced capitalism. Giorgio Agamben argues that humans are in some ways doomed to feel a sense of lack because they essentially exist not as a self in the present, but as potential:

There is in effect something that humans are and have to be, but this something is not an essence nor properly a thing: *It is the simple fact of one’s own existence as possibility as potentiality*. But precisely because of this things become complicated; precisely because of this ethics becomes effective...Since the being most proper to humankind is being one’s own possibility or potentiality, then and only for this reason (that is as humankind’s most proper being – being potential – is in a certain sense lacking, insofar as it can not-be, it is therefore devoid of foundation and humankind is not always already in possession of it), humans have and feel a debt. Humans, in their potentiality to be and to not-be, are, in other words, always already in debt; they always already have a bad conscience without having to commit any blameworthy act.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Armand Mattelart and Michelle Mattelart, *Rethinking Media Theory*, Translated by James A. Cohen and Marina Urquidi, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992) p.108.

⁴¹ Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, Translated by Michael Hardt, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993). *The Coming Community* does not have page numbers in the traditional sense. When page numbers are included in my text, it is because they appear in his, otherwise they are absent in both cases.

The idea that “humans are guilty for what they lack, for an act they have not committed” is one way to imagine the source of human motivation and Giorgio Agamben argues it is an essential aspect of the human condition - not something that the media or capitalism has created, but something that has always existed. He links this state of being to the construction of original sin by religion, “Morality, on the other hand, refers this doctrine to a blameworthy act humans have committed and, in this way, shackles their potentiality...” In this sense, television or the mass media in general, ought not to be seen as creating a lack, but simply steering one’s attitude in a particular direction - manipulating an already inherent aspect of the human condition. If religion was and is used as a way to moralize this sensibility, we must not underestimate the degree to which the mass media completes the task in contemporary times. These feelings of indebtedness, guilt and lack are all emotions that the media capitalizes upon and exploits in order to “shackle one’s potentiality” - or more precisely, control a subject’s behavior.

The excerpt quoted above by Giorgio Agamben is taken from *The Coming Community* - a dense philosophical investigation that culminates as a political treatise for the reinvention of one’s sense of belonging among others. His central argument, the need to re-imagine identity beyond traditional ideas of class or sets is developed from the principal belief outlined above - that humans exist in potential. Contrary to an individual political identity that Leo Bersani argues for: an identity that might be based on “sameness” – an identity that still values individuality, Agamben understands individuality itself as a failed project. This is partly the result of how he sees the current

state of global politics. Agamben argues that today we live in the extreme form of Guy Debord's society of the spectacle, where:

The spectacle does not simply coincide, however, with the sphere of images or with what we call today the media: It is 'a social relation among people, mediated by images,' the expropriation and the alienation of human sociality itself. Or rather, using a lapidary formula, 'the spectacle is capital to such a degree of accumulation that it becomes an image.' But for that very reason, the spectacle is nothing but the pure form of separation: When the real world is transformed into an image and images become real, the practical power of humans is separated from itself and presented as a world unto itself. In the figure of this world separated and organized by the media, in which the forms of the State and the economy are interwoven, the mercantile economy attains the status of the absolute and irresponsible sovereignty over all social life. After having falsified all of production, it can now manipulate collective perception and take control of social memory and social communication, transforming them into a single spectacular commodity where everything can be called into question except the spectacle itself, which, as such, says nothing but, 'What appears is good, what is good appears.'⁴²

In this global outlook, where humanity and social life is completely created and dominated by the economy – lived life is itself transformed into commodity and spectacle. The resulting consequence of this crisis of the real is that humans are becoming alienated from their linguistic being - "The uprooting of all peoples from their vital dwelling in language"⁴³, which ultimately leads to "accomplished nihilism." Ironically, however, he argues that as humans are no longer constituted in language, there is a potential to experience language in an unmediated way:

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 82,3.

the era in which we live is also that in which for the first time it is possible for humans to experience their own linguistic being – not this or that content of language, but language itself, not this or that proposition, but the very fact that one speaks. Contemporary politics is this devastating *experimentum linguae* that all over the planet unhinges and empties traditions and beliefs, ideologies and religions, identities and communities.⁴⁴

Although central to his argument in *The Coming Community*, Agamben does not really clarify what it is to experience one's own linguistic being. Only that it is to bring "language itself to language," or to exist "being-in-language." This, he argues is the beginning of a new sociality that rejects all identity and is not based on "any representable condition of belonging." It is clear that Agamben is arguing from a perspective in which all difference has been effectively eliminated, a situation we are not presently in; at least, not entirely.

In Agamben's vision of the world, all social classes have been dissolved into the planetary petit bourgeoisie, which no longer has any dreams of "bourgeoisie grandeur." He argues that the planetary petit bourgeoisie, having been so completely warped and modified by the spectacle no longer contain any trace of authentic thought or emotion, where human existence has "lost all pathos." The new humanity that Agamben describes must be understood to some degree as a fictive community yet to fully emerge. We may see examples of it today: subjectivity stripped of tradition, custom, language, and traditional ways of life. If my argument understands the media as one site in which a subject is sexually constituted, Agamben, is much more radical. He understands all

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 82,3.

identities and all of sociality itself as being constituted by the entire spectacle itself – the media only being a contributing factor. Are we really at that point? Have individuals completely lost any sense of an authentic experience? To what degree has individuality become a failed project?

There are many individuals and communities of individuals still fighting for collective rights – in many cases, simply the right to exist as worthwhile human beings. And the only way these communities actually exist and gather power is through their shared sense of belonging. In this sense, we must understand shared belonging as still vital to collective struggle. It is more beneficial to understand Agamben's theories in the same light that we once understood Guy Debord's theories of the spectacle. It is a direction that we are moving toward, but are not quite at. In this sense, we must recognize that our contemporary moment is one of transition, between those who accept the spectacle and excel in its flatness, and those who struggle with the remnants of historical consciousness, that still believe in a collective human project, that exists beyond the freedom to buy and sell. The question remains – ought one fight to maintain and nourish legitimate social identities? Or ought one become like the others celebrated by the media and relish in an individual hedonism?

If some social identities are worth fighting for, then what do they look like? What human values can we separate and salvage from the spectacle itself? It is in this line of thinking that I would like to return to my drawings and consider again how I think of them in relation to the idea of failure. They must not be understood as expressions of

self, or as a searching for the wholeness of self, or, of course, as therapeutic explorations of self. I have tried to explore the problematic from which we understand the self, and discuss some of the regulatory powers that keep this understanding in check. In re-working what I thought of as a subversion of the dominant modes of behavior of what might be called, in the words of Buchloh the result of “pre-established, industrially produced [modes of] behavior”, I quickly understood the limits of the project. I encountered the limits of rebellion (or at least, what I imagined them to be), the impossibility of transcendence through representing desire (especially as it is embedded in the medium of drawing), and the failure in visualizing the process of re-constitution; admittedly this last ambition seems to set myself up for failure at the very beginning. Which makes one wonder – why would I put such hopelessly idealistic demands on myself?⁴⁵

Ultimately, it is because I see no solution to the problem at least by the terms in which we define it at present. In this sense, it is not the solution that I am seeking, not the resolution – but the conflict itself. It is in the conflict that I understand the value of revolt. Julia Kristeva has reflected many times on the contemporary value of revolt:

revolt, as I understand it - psychic revolt, analytic revolt, artistic revolt - refers to a state of permanent questioning, of transformation, change, an endless probing of appearances.... I wanted to rehabilitate the microscopic sense of the word, its etymological and literary sense in which the root ‘vel’ means unveiling, returning, discovering, starting over.

⁴⁵ I would like to thank Jonathon Elliot for our many conversations that ultimately helped me to clarify this simple, yet crucial point which lead to my understanding of my process in the studio.

This is the permanent questioning that characterizes psychic life and, at least in the best of cases, art.⁴⁶

She argues for the rehabilitation of revolt as a type of “permanent anxiety”, which she believes is the foundation of freedom and happiness: “happiness exists only at the price of a revolt. None of us has pleasure without confronting an obstacle, prohibition authority, or law that allows us to realize ourselves as autonomous and free. The revolt revealed to accompany the private experience of happiness is an integral part of the pleasure principle.”⁴⁷ The experience of revolt, she argues “is the only thing that can save us from the automation of humanity that is threatening us.”⁴⁸ She understands revolt not in terms of the simple transgression of a taboo or law, but as something infinitely more complex: “We have to get back to the intimate well-springs of revolt-in the deep sense of self-questioning and questioning tradition as well, sexual differences, projects for life and death, new modalities of civil society and so on.”⁴⁹

Kristeva ultimately argues that one needs to rehabilitate and place value in the “individual microcosm”; through the experience of revolt, she sees the only hope in escaping the “culture of entertainment” (the spectacle), of “managing business” (capitalism). We must understand her argument in sharp contrast to Agamben’s, even though they share a similar global political outlook. It is in the complete sense of Kristeva’s interpretation of revolt that I can begin to articulate my process in the studio. I

⁴⁶ Julia Kristeva, *Revolt She Said An Interview by Philippe Petit*, Translated by Brian O’Keeffe, (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2002), p. 120.

⁴⁷ Julia Kristeva, *The Sense and Nonsense of Revolt*, Translated by Jeanine Herman, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 7.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁴⁹ Kristeva, *Revolt She Said An Interview by Philippe Petit*, p. 85.

still place value in individual identities and still value a collective project that struggles to experience the full range of human emotion. The contradictions and representations of sexuality by the media and the eventual constitution of these contradictions are definitely worth working through. The conservative ethos of each person for him or herself so adamantly celebrated by the media is worth fighting against. Furthermore, it is important to stress that my revolt is not waged in terms of a rational dialectic – it is an intuitive struggle against the packaging of life into lifestyles, the creation of freedom as a market condition, and the struggle to de-identify with the consumer community. In this sense, my revolt is waged against the images that define and create the subject. It is a revolt against the structures that regulate one's behavior and it is waged against the body in pieces. Finally, it is in the representation of revolt that I see the overwhelming purpose or value of art.

I would like to conclude by clarifying the relationship I see between theory and art. I did not set out in the studio imagining failure as a critical strategy in which I could explore my subject matter. The process came about because of my naïve struggle with the medium. It arose as a way of articulating my activity. I imagine a theory of art that does not mean working through critical theory, but the challenging of critical theory – a subtle shift in the language from making not what one ought to but making what one does. For me, my project is the testing of limits – the limits of masculinity, gender and sexuality, in addition to the limits of the medium of drawing.

Selected Bibliography:

- Agamben, Giorgio. *The Coming Community*, Translated by Michael Hardt, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1993.
- Agamben, Giorgio. *Potentialities Collected Essays in Philosophy*, Translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1999.
- Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida Reflections on Photography*. Hill and Wang, USA, 1981.
- Barthes, Roland. "Rhetoric of the Image," from *Image, Music, Text; essays selected and translated by Stephen Heath*. Hill and Wang, New York, NY, 1977.
- Barthes, Roland. "The Third Meaning," from *Image, Music, Text; essays selected and translated by Stephen Heath*. Hill and Wang, New York, NY, 1977.
- Barthes, Roland. "The Wisdom of Art," *Cy Twombly Paintings and Drawings 1954-1977*. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, 1978.
- Bersani, Leo. *The Freudian Body*. Columbia University Press, New York, NY, 1986.
- Bersani, Leo. *Homos*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1995.
- Bersani, Leo. "Is the Rectum A Grave?" in *AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism*, ed. Douglas Crimp, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1988.
- Buchloh, Benjamin. "Raymond Pettibon: Return to Disorder and Disfiguration." *October* (Spring, 2000), p. 36-52.
- Burgin, Victor; Donald, James; Kaplan, Cora (ed's), *Formations of Fantasy*, Methuen & Company, New York, NY 1986.
- Burgin, Victor. *In/Different Spaces Place and Memory in Visual Culture*. University of California Press, Los Angeles, California, 1996.
- Burgin, Victor. "Re-reading Camera Lucida" from *The End of Art Theory: Criticism and Postmodernity*, Macmillan, 1986.
- Butler, Cornelia. *Afterimage: Drawing Through Process*. The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, California, 1999.
- Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter on the Discursive Limits of Sex*. Routledge, New York, NY, 1003.

- Butler, Judith. "Gender is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion," from *Inside Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*. Routledge, New York, NY, 1991, p.119-135.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, New York, NY, 1990.
- Butler, Judith. "Imitation and Gender Insubordination (1990)," from *Inside Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*. Routledge, New York, NY, 1991, p.119-135.
- Butler, Judith. *Undoing Gender*. Routledge, New York, NY, 2004
- Dean, Tim; Foster, Hal; Silverman, Kaja; Bersani, Leo, "A Conversation with Leo Bersani," *October* (Autumn 1997).
- Debord, Guy. *The Society of the Spectacle*, Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith, Zone Books, New York, NY, 2004.
- Derrida, Jacques. "Freud and the Scene of Writing," in *Writing and Difference*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1978.
- Fiske, John. "Moments of Television: Neither the text nor the audience," from *Remote Control Television, Audiences and Cultural Power*, Routledge, New York, NY, 1989.
- Foster, Hal. *Design and Crime And Other Diatribes*. Verso, New York, NY, 2002.
- Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*. Random House, New York, NY, 1990.
- Jameson, Fredric. "The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Durham, NC: Duke 1994 p.1-52.
- Joselt, David, "Notes on Surface: Toward a Genealogy of Flatness" in *Theory in Contemporary Art Since 1985*, Blackwell Publishing, Malden MA, USA, 2005.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Revolt She Said An Interview by Philippe Petit*, Translated by Brian O'Keeffe, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2002.
- Kristeva, Julia. *The Sense and Nonsense of Revolt*, Translated by Jeanine Herman, Columbia University Press, New York NY, 2000
- Kristeva, Julia. *Intimate Revolt The Powers and Limits of Psychoanalysis Volume 2*, Translated by Jeanine Herman, Columbia University Press, New York, NY, 2002.
- Kritzman, Lawrence D. *Michel Foucault Politics Philosophy Culture Interviews and Other Writing 1977-1984*, Routledge, New York, NY, 1988.

Lacan, Jacques, *Ecrits, A Selection*. W.w. Norton & Company, INC., New York, NY, 2002.

Mattelart, Armand; Mattelart, Michele. *The Carnival of Images Brazilian Television Fiction*, Translated by David Buxton, Bergin & Garvey, New York, NY, 1990.

Mattelart, Armand; Mattelart, Michele. *Rethinking Media Theory*, Translated by James A. Cohen and Marina Urquidi, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1992.

Shawcross, Nancy M. *Roland Barthes on Photography The Critical Tradition in Perspective*, University Press of Florida, Gainesville, FL, 1997