



Obstruction

By Nick Salvato

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Obstruction By Nick Salvato

Can a bout of laziness or a digressive spell actually open up paths to creativity and unexpected insights? In *Obstruction* Nick Salvato suggests that for those engaged in scholarly pursuits laziness, digressiveness, and related experiences can be paradoxically generative. Rather than being dismissed as hindrances, these obstructions are to be embraced, clung to, and reoriented. Analyzing an eclectic range of texts and figures, from the Greek Cynics and Denis Diderot to Dean Martin and the Web series *Drunk History*, Salvato finds value in five obstructions: embarrassment, laziness, slowness, cynicism, and digressiveness. Whether listening to Tori Amos's music as a way to think about embarrassment, linking the MTV series *Daria* to using cynicism to negotiate higher education's corporatized climate, or examining the affect of slowness in Kelly Reichardt's films, Salvato expands our conceptions of each obstruction and shows ways to transform them into useful provocations. With a unique, literary, and self-reflexive voice, Salvato demonstrates the importance of these debased obstructions and shows how they may support alternative modes of intellectual activity. In doing so, he impels us to rethink the very meanings of thinking, work, and value.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Joining gorgeous readings to new critical vocabularies and startling insights, *Obstruction* rewards the close and slow reader. And like the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick or Lauren Berlant, José Esteban Muñoz or Lee Edelman, it creates paradigms that, once absorbed, become difficult to think without."

(Jack Halberstam, author of *The Queer Art of Failure*)

"Offering a capacious analysis of the familiar blocks to creative and critical productivity, Nick Salvato models a cutting-edge criticism that remains alert to the significance of language and the ruse of intentionality. *Obstruction* is a provocative work and a pioneering venture in modeling a critical reading practice of the present."

(Tavia Nyong'o, author of *The Amalgamation Waltz: Race, Performance, and the Ruses of Memory*)

About the Author

Nick Salvato is Associate Professor and Chair of Performing and Media Arts at Cornell University and the author of *Uncloseting Drama: American Modernism and Queer Performance*.

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