

§ POLITICAL PERCONTATION

CASEY BEAL

*Of knowledge naught remained I did not know,
Of secrets, scarcely any, high or low;
All day and night for three score and twelve years,
I pondered, just to learn that naught I know.*
– Omar Khayyam

This¹ is a din of voices interrupting, falling all over each other, trying to say something about moments of rupture or singularity; the doomed attempted authoring of something like a *political uncanny*. They'll show-and-tell to explore the idea that ruptural political and aesthetic events are the only fertile grounds for theory to engage with politics, but also that such events are irreducibly singular and cannot be usefully engaged by showing or by telling. As each fragment intersects with the next, think of them in terms of the questions that motivate their clamouring:

What can theory (specifically political and aesthetic theory) do?

#1 – The Catalogue

Imagine a gallery show with a theme like 'Rupture: the Aesthetic/Political Event'. Some of the pieces approach the theme by means of their content (images of *events* gone by—representations of and commentaries on May 68, Duchamp's Readymades, The Arab Spring, etc.). Other exhibits try

1 At the risk of seeming coy, I want to forego an introductory section which declares a detailed trajectory at the outset. Neither do I want to make any promises regarding questions' answers. The expectation that the results of the investigative process of writing be announced in advance works contrary to the formal point I want to make.

themselves to author some sort of rupture by means of their form; perhaps by presenting a question unanswerable within our present social or linguistic frame of reference; perhaps invoking a temporality alien to the present; or perhaps otherwise enacting feelings of uncanniness, paradox, or absurdity.

Now suppose that this exhibition published a sort of summary text—a catalogue or program. Could such a catalogue itself constitute a ruptural aesthetic or political event? If so, what is the nature of the relationship between the ‘event’ of the catalogue and the ‘content’ of the exhibits in the gallery?

The real question though:

Is political theory forever stuck at the level of the catalogue?

In terms of dealing with eventual singularities it seems as though theory has two potential angles of attack. It can either describe singular moments/ruptures that have happened in the past in terms of the break they constitute with respect to the aesthetic or political *status quo*, or it can attempt somehow to author or perform such a rupture itself. This corresponds roughly to either creating knowledge out of the conceptual *content* of events-gone-by or engaging with the *formal* nature of the rupture to try to ‘figure out how it’s done’.

From the difference between these two approaches, a broad series of questions emerges: Is it possible to author a ruptural event by sheer attention to formal template, or are such moments so inextricably embedded in their own particularities (their content, so to speak) that describing, cataloguing, and enumerating them is useless for anyone but hobbyists and archivists? If we take the Rancièrian line that politics is wholly constituted in such irreducible moments of dissensual rupture, does this mean that theory can sometimes be *about politics* but that it can never itself be directly political?

Like any heavy object thrown with enough force, a catalogue can smash windows. And would such force be a simple abuse of the painstaking arrangement of text and image within?

#2 – The Aesthetic Regime of Political Theory

The time is coming when it will hardly be possible to write a book as it has been done for so long²

2 Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: University of Columbia Press, 1994), xxi.

Rancière’s *Politics of Aesthetics*,³ particularly the section entitled ‘Politicized Art’, is a beautiful, maddening tease. He begins to discuss the relation of (political) theory to his conception of the ‘aesthetic regime’ of art, but finishes the conversation before delivering anything well fleshed-out. Perhaps the way that Rancière is bound to only tease us with the paradox he presents is more significant than he would like to acknowledge.

Let us very briefly sketch the important terms. Earlier in *Politics of Aesthetics*, Rancière draws an important conceptual distinction between different ‘regimes’ in the production, identification, and theorization of art.⁴ For our purposes, two of the three regimes are important: the representative and the aesthetic. The representative regime operates on a logic of *mimesis*—of accurate reproduction of the ‘content’ of the image or thought, or whatever it aims to represent.⁵ He argues convincingly that this regime enacts a certain hierarchically disposed mode of thought. The aesthetic regime, on the other hand “identifies art in the singular and frees it from any specific rule, from any hierarchy of the arts, subject matter, and genres... The aesthetic state is a pure instance of suspension, a moment when form is experienced for itself.”⁶ Abstract expressionist and other non-representational artwork seems to be what Rancière has in mind. We might look to Picasso’s *Guernica* for a well-known example of this regime that is imbued with a particularly strong political charge.

For Rancière’s ‘aesthetic regime’, the necessity of the relationship in representative art between a conceptual ‘idea’ (say the ideational ‘content’ of an artwork) and the manner deemed appropriate to the expression of this idea (‘form’) is challenged. The only way to presume that certain ‘forms’ of expression are more appropriate to certain content is to implicitly cede to hierarchical (and possibly socially or politically contingent) classifications of the ‘appropriateness’ of manners of expression. This means that the aesthetic regime of art demands a certain indifferent relation between the form of a particular work and its content.

The question then becomes: can we think of political theory in terms

3 Jacques Rancière. *Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (New York: Continuum, 2004).

4 Rancière. *Politics of Aesthetics*, 20-30.

5 Ibid., 21.

6 Ibid., 23-24.

of Rancière’s regimes of art? In *Politics of Aesthetics* the answer seems to be ‘yes.’ Rancière says, “I think that a theoretical discourse is always simultaneously an aesthetic form, a sensible reconfiguration of the facts that it is arguing about.”⁷

If we equate the aesthetic form with political theory, as Rancière seems to want to do, the following passage should cause us to reconsider what we want from theory:

The dream of a suitable political work of art is in fact the dream of disrupting the relationship between the visible, the sayable and the thinkable *without having to use the terms of a message as a vehicle*. It is the dream of an art that would transmit meanings in the form of a rupture with the very logic of meaningful situations. As a matter of fact, political art cannot work in the simple form of a meaningful spectacle that would lead to an ‘awareness’ of the state of the world.⁸

What is present in this passage is a similar logic to the replacement of the representative regime of art with the aesthetic one. Rather than privileging the content of the message to the form in which it is delivered, the ‘suitable’ political work of art reconfigures the distribution of the sensible, and thus inaugurates fresh political subjectivity by the logic inherent in its manner of expression—prior to the ‘message’.

Thus the perfect aesthetic political work according to Rancière would be one which does not rely upon its representative ‘message,’ but is *itself performatively political*. That is to say, through its own internal reconstruction of the distribution of the sensible aesthetic-regime art (and possibly theory) can inaugurate revolutionary logics and subjectivities much more effectively than straightforward descriptions and diagnoses of contemporary life. Such work, if attainable, would make representational efforts at ‘consciousness-raising’ seem ham-fisted and condescending by comparison.

My problem is that I want very much to agree with him, but it leaves us to deal with the familiar gap between what we know theory *can* do (the catalogue, thrown or studied), and what we want might want aesthetic-regime theory to do.

It seems that, in terms of our expectations, what distinguishes theory

7 Ibid., 65.

8 Ibid., 63. Emphasis mine.

from, say, poetry is primarily the relationship of its ‘form’ to its ‘content’. Theory is theoretical (and not simply speculative or sophistic) insofar as it treats the object of its study in a certain rigorous analytical manner. It aims at a degree of faithful representation of its ideas.

If the order of the political distribution of the sensible is most effectively engaged with at the level of form—that accessed by the aesthetic regime of art—then should we not be questioning the degree to which we focus on the ‘content’ (i.e., the analytical rigour, and objective diagnostic correctness of theory) and instead worrying more about the politics implicit in its logic of organization, visibility, and, inevitably, exclusion? Is the ideal form of aesthetic-regime political theory something more like a poem? A text which says the previously unsayable; makes visible the previously unseen by its micropolitical logic of presentation? If this is the case, why bother toiling at the level of the empirical correctness of the ‘message’—the diagnostic?

Rancière makes a nod to this in his final remarks in the Rockhill interview mentioned above. He claims that he tries to structure his theoretical texts in such a way that they subvert typical “means of presenting objects”, however one wonders at the degree to which he could really substantiate this, or to which he is really sure of what his own proposed regime would look like in a theoretical text. Indeed, are we not somewhat accustomed to encountering, in the introductions to anthologies of critical writings on politics—secondary Deleuze scholarship is especially notable for this—some pretense to a textual performativity that is often as sympathetic in its aims as it is hazily defined and unconvincing?

In fact, I have a hard time imagining what ‘aesthetic-regime’ political theory might look like. Would it be similar to the work of Deleuze and Guattari? There it must be admitted that the logic of the text interrupts the expected distribution of the sensible in a fairly dramatic way. Nevertheless, though, it *returns* always, at least somewhat, to an attempt to faithfully represent content (the critique of psychoanalysis, images of organization of thought, etc.) How could it not? Is there any such thing, then, as a pure ‘*livre-evenement*’?

Similarly, the fact that large parts of Debord’s *Society of the Spectacle* were, for lack of a less pejorative term, “plagiarized” (“liberated”?) from other works is itself a subversive logic of formal organization. This formal subversion arguably only makes sense though, when wedded to the ‘content’ of anti-capitalist critique (particularly the laudable species that says, ‘fuck intellectual

property’).

This points to a kind of necessary ‘doubling’ which the ‘aesthetic-regime’ political work might demand—a jumping-up out of the representative into the evental, the realm of rupture-via-form, followed by an inevitable gravitational falling back into engagement at the level of content and representation.

Does this mean that political theory is doomed always to fall back into the hierarchical organizations of thought that characterize the representative regime? If this is the case, what can we truly expect from emancipatory political theory? If we rely on theory will we not be asking the hierarchical to produce or somehow provoke the spontaneous emergence of the non-hierarchical?

#3 – The Percontation Point as Political Punctuation

The Wikipedia article on ‘Irony Punctuation’ is a good one. From it we learn that the percontation point is a medieval invention in experimental punctuation that can be used in order to signify an indirect inquiry that does not demand a response. In other words, it signifies a rhetorical question.

According to Anthony Judge’s fascinating article ‘Embodying a Way Round Pointlessness?’, the percontation point is “[...]indicative of qualities of the cognitive uncertainty, surprise and discontinuity in the despairing experience of “nothing”—and its anticipation.”⁹

What might this mean? I’ll say that the ‘nothing’ which the percontation point anticipates is the non-space of the answer; not an absence which goes where an answer ought to be, but an unsettling indication that the space of the answer is not approachable. This non-space interrupts the consensual flow of a text or a performance. From this it is easy to imagine a definitely political inflection to the moment signified by the percontation point. The rhetorical question enacts the uncertain, the unclosed, the uncanny. The rhetorical question is a moment of pure ‘suspension’ in the Rancièrian determination; it is a presentation and holding-open of what Erin Manning calls the ‘Interval.’¹⁰ The projectile at the weightless apex of its arc, played upon by forces cancelling one another out, has a fractional moment of indeterminacy.

9 Anthony Judge. *Embodying a Way Round Pointlessness?* (Accessed online at: <http://www.laetusinpraesens.org/docs10s/geozero.php>: 2012)

10 Erin Manning. *Relationescapes: Movement, Art, Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 18.

Perhaps percontation is what theory's catalogue might strive for. An uncannily free, suspended moment at the top of an arc of flight.

#4 – *Not at Home; Authoring the Uncanny*

Very roughly, uncanniness can be thought of as the sense that something is missing that should be present, or something is ominously present that ought not to be.

There is a particularly memorable scene in Mark Danielewski's novel *House of Leaves*.¹¹ In the "central narrative" of the book, a passage from Heidegger's *Being and Time* is used to describe a bizarre and unsettling occurrence in a possibly-haunted house. It is the section where Heidegger reminds us that the term *unheimlichkeit*, translated as 'uncanniness' also has the connotation of not-being-at-home, of being removed from a familiar environment. At this point there is a suspension of the normal temporal flow of the book: a four page footnote in the voice of the meta-character who 'found the manuscript' where the central narrative unfolds. He describes his own recent uncanny experience. Working at a tattoo parlour, he is suddenly overwhelmed by feelings of anxiety and dread: the gnawing sense that something terrible is just behind him—that if he looks he'll met with unspeakable, *unrepresentable*, horror. He lingers in this dread, and finally brings himself to look over his shoulder—but nothing is there.

And as readers, we are interrupted by the same nameless dread. The creature is always just behind us. When we look but find nothing there, we are perhaps suspended for a fleeting percontative moment before falling, in Heideggerian fashion, back to a comfortable home.

#5 – *Dancing the Dance and the Eternal Return to Content*

Freud's writings on the uncanny employ centrally the notion of a certain paranoid double aspect of reality. For Freud, the experience of the uncanny is characterized by a "doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self."¹² Let us now return to the concept of doubling—in a usage, perhaps not immediately identifiable as an instance of the Freudian application, but rather in the sense we employed above in the Rancièrian fragment.

11 Mark Danielewski, *House of Leaves* (New York: Pantheon, 2000), 24–28.

12 Sigmund Freud, "The 'Uncanny'" in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. 17*, ed. James Stachey (Hogarth Press: London, 1964), 217–252, 234.

Let us get there by way of a quotation from an essay by Alain Badiou on dance:

It should be noted that dance, which is both bird and flight, is also everything that the infant designates. Dance is innocence, because it is a body before the body. It is forgetting, because it is a body that forgets its fetters, its weight.¹³

The dancer recoils and scoffs when I read her this passage. The intensity and immediacy of her reaction surprises me.

Not only does Badiou neglect vast swathes of contemporary dance which embrace the grotesque, the heavy, the corporeal, but even more importantly, as any dancer knows, while dance may *sometimes* look as though it is an innocent taking-flight and forgetting of the body, this is always at least a partial illusion. The dancer may conceal her/his relation to the body—s/he may flee from it—but very rarely does s/he forget it. The corporeal is always ghosting along with the pure form of movement. For the dancer, the two are not separable.

While, in all fairness, Badiou does nuance his position later in the essay, a much better articulation of the dancer's double-movement comes from Brian Massumi's *Semblance and Event*:

To dance the dance is to extract animateness—pure-movement qualities—from the actual movements of the body. But the body remains, shadowing the nonsensuous dance-form, in heavy contrast to its tendency to lift-off. One of the shadows the body casts is its physical frailty: its inevitable pull to the ground, counter to the push to the limit. At the counter-limit: mortality. Any intense experience of the animateness of the body contains this contrasting pull in suggestive potential. Appetitive lift to abstraction/gravitational fall-back. It takes very little for the fall-back position to regain ground. Conventional language, with its stockpile of at-the-ready symbolic and metaphorical associations, easily provides the ballast. Content redux. How many reviews of contemporary dance have been written that ponderously reveal a “theme” of death? Or sex and love, romantic ecstasy, and the wrench of jealousy? For the human body is as sexed as it is mortal.¹⁴

13 Alain Badiou, *The Handbook of Inaesthetics*, trans. Alberto Toscano (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 57.

14 Brian Massumi, *Semblance and Event* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011), 151–2.

Massumi is tormented here by the content/form dichotomy manifest as a doubling of the movement of art. The shadow of content (the actual physical apparatus of the body) constantly haunts the ‘nonsensuous’ form of the aesthetic event. Content, in this example of dance, is tied to death, and gravity—but also the ‘ballast’ of symbolic representation. For Massumi the relationship of form-content in the aesthetic event happens in a loop that he likens to the Nietzschean Eternal Return.¹⁵ What better metaphor to capture the circuit of revolution and its inevitable cooptation and recovery by the hierarchies it sought to shake off?

What makes dance an especially excellent example of this ‘doubling’ is that the physical apparatus of the artistic transcendence (the body) is also itself a central element that pulls us away from the ‘pure’ Real of the formal ‘movement of movement’—pulls away from the open rhetorical question of the interval and directs us back to content, to gravity, to a question that can be answered in the realm of the symbolic.

The other central element of this return to content is the translation from visceral ‘affect’ into prescribed emotional categories given in the realm of language. Another long but useful quote from Massumi:

The event passes from pure “uncoded” liveness (mechanically reproduced or not) to coded “message”... It becomes communicable... No general category understands the first thing about affect. They are always by nature emotion-ready, because they are always ready-made for content. They have an in-bred appetite for content. They maw for it. That’s what they do. They are voracious techniques of containment. “Common sense” is promiscuously dedicated to general categories. As is “good sense,” in a more selective and disciplined way. “Opinion” invests general categories with a personalized emotional force of their own. Weapons of mass containment, all.¹⁶

The categories of language construct systems of ‘containment’ of singularity. They do so by establishing structures of equivalence and identity which give meaning but neutralize the singularity of the aesthetic event.

It seems difficult to imagine how theory could operate outside of this linguistic bind and still be understood as signifying anything. Does it not therefore seem as though theory, no matter how radical its content—no mat-

15 Massumi, *Semblance and Event*, 150.

16 Ibid., 153–4.

ter how it takes flight—is always bound by gravity and symbolic ballast to return from performative, percontative engagement with singularity to a hierarchically structured language of representation and equivalence?

Perhaps theory can, at its best, rupture these equivalences, if only temporarily; holding open spaces by posing rhetorical questions that perhaps author a sense of politically useful uncanniness; disrupting the current distribution of equivalences (and therefore power)? Maybe it can shine a light toward the rare and elusive spaces where equivalence, identity and language cannot quite yet reach?

#6 – Forget about the Indians

How might this problematic relationship of form and content and its intersection with a desire to engage performatively with singularity make itself manifest in actual politics?

For resources to understand this, let us look at the ‘long ‘68’ anti-capitalist protests which took place (to greatly varying degrees of intensity) in Italy under the blanket term ‘Autonomia.’

The following excerpt from a 1979 journal kept by Sylvere Lotringer during a sort of journalistic/anthropological tour of Autonomist political nodes, captures the general open spirit of the movement:

Throughout Italy in fact, even in the villages, there are many who see themselves as autonomous even when they lack any theoretical knowledge of the autonomist position. Autonomia... relies on the addition of singularities at the base. No pressure is exerted on *compagni* to accept a predetermined program. What draws together the scattered elements of Autonomia is the refusal of any centralizing organization, or any abstract representation of its diversity. Although ideological disagreements exist within the movement... the contradictions are never pushed to the breaking point or transcended through a declarative synthesis.¹⁷

In practice, this diffuse, non-centralization manifested in very different, localized articulations which were united only in terms of their opposition to some

17 Sylvere Lotringer, “In the Shadow of the Red Brigades,” *Autonomia: Post Political Politics*, eds. Sylvere Lotringer and Christian Marazzi (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007), v-xvi, ix.

aspect of the capitalist status quo.¹⁸ Arguably the ‘autonomist’ towns practicing collective auto-reduction of bus-fares, utility bills, and grocery prices were a world apart from the pirate radio stations and abstract aesthetic and theoretical critiques of the Bologna ‘creative’ autonomists, who themselves were very critical of what they saw as the dogmatic economic Marxism of the autonomists in Rome and other cities. *Autonomia* would eventually be described by one of the State prosecutors of the movement’s members as “a veritable mosaic made of different fragments, a gallery of overlapping images, or circles and collectives, without any central organization.”¹⁹

At first glance this looks like an almost perfect realization of a diverse and open Multitude resisting the stultifying movements of Empire and the State. Or at least it does until we remember that it was arguably the very reluctance of *Autonomia* to foreclose upon the open space of the movement, its refusal to synthesize its aims under one unitary narrative, that allowed agents of the reactionary State to write a narrative *about them* that eventually brought the long event of *Autonomia* to a close. Indeed, it was by seizing control of the production of public knowledge about *Autonomia* that the State was able to legitimize a massive police-military-judiciary crackdown that doled out long prison sentences to many of the movement’s most important thinkers and activists (most famous among them, of course, being Antonio Negri).

Importantly, because it could argue that the same blanket term could be applied to all autonomists equally, the State was able to be thorough in its repression of anyone to the left of the Italian Communist Party (which was veering ever to the Centre at that time). ‘*Autonomia*,’ which had for so long held at bay the politics of equivalency, found this model strangely amenable to manipulation by agents of the State. The state was able, adeptly, to manipulate structures of equivalency—equivalency of knowledge and language (which we might also call ‘content’) to effectively neutralize the radical singularity, the ruptural event that was *Autonomia*. The radical left in Italy (at the time one of the world’s most eloquent, literate and nuanced in its internecine differentiations) has arguably never since recovered.

The following is excellent quotation from Lotringer that explores the kind of baffling threat that *Autonomia* posed to the state:

18 Sound familiar? The ideological resonance with the contemporary World Social Forum and Occupy movements feels like it is worth pointing out overtly.

19 Sylvère Lotringer, “In the Shadow of the Red Brigades,” xi.

The real danger to the State comes not from the Red Brigades [the very loosely associated military cell, whose persecution was used to legitimize the general repression], who speak the same language and who develop structures which “mirror” and thus reinforce its own. The profound menace to the State comes from the fact that Autonomy speaks a language and develops forms of organization and of subjectivity against which there exists no “classic” response.²⁰

In other words, they presented the State with a question that, for a while at least, it could not answer. A question that temporarily defied structures of equivalency and identity.

Torealta’s excellent article ‘Painted Politics’ describes a singular moment within the singular political series of *Autonomia*, an enigmatic movement known as the ‘Metropolitan Indians’. His is one of the few accounts of this moment that have found translation into English. Here is the contextualizing epigram at the beginning of the article:

In the Spring of ’77, in the midst of violent demonstrations, nihilistic happenings were staged in various cities, especially Bologna and Rome. Their existence was short-lived but the inventiveness of the Metropolitan Indians, their diffidence of radical rhetoric, their use of simulation and parody as political weapons were not forgotten by the Movement.²¹

Torealta does an excellent job of articulating what makes the movement so interesting on a theoretical level. Essentially he makes the case that the Metropolitan Indian movement recognized that the social and linguistic conditions of capitalism favour the neutralizing structures of equivalency discussed earlier, but that these conditions themselves can provide the grounds for new types of elusive subversion:

Thus the social conditions of simulation and of the arbitrary come into being: there arises a social subject that is not reducible to one precise identity, that arbitrarily invents one for itself and at the same time hangs on the thin

20 Sylvère Lotringer & Christian Marazzi, ‘The Return of Politics.’ in *Autonomia: Post Political Politics*, 8–20, 20.

21 Maurizio Torealta, “Painted Politics” in *Autonomia: Post Political Politics*, 102–106, 102.

thread of its own precarious language, suspended between absolute power and total absurdity, waiting without fear for some other determination of identity at its ineluctable opening: that of derision... They decided to continue being nomads, but at the same time enter the city of the enemy's language—a city that is always strengthening its fortifications—even if only to remain silent, sitting around, smoking, sleeping. We have termed them nomads, but perhaps it is more correct to call them sophists, in a position to simulate, to enter and leave the walls, to master diverse languages as the situation demands, in a position to play-act, falsify, create paradoxes, sabotage, and disappear once again. This type of sophist is a figure who can intervene in languages with an exact and distinct action, without taking them as a despotic and unyielding totality. This gift is of course not innate; it is a consequence of the relation to wages (wages' general equivalence with the rest of things, exactly like language).²²

This amounts to using the system's logic of linguistic equivalency against it—in creating nomadic, shape-shifting, anti-capitalist guerrillas—able to resist neutralization of singularity by simply shifting to new planes upon which to pose their unanswerable, paradoxical questions and riddles to power.

Interestingly, the Indians were equally derisive of the more 'representative' or hierarchically organized elements of their own Movement as well—one of their most famous moments was the parodic upstaging of a speech by a high-ranking labour secretary associated with the Italian Communist Party.²³ They thus disoriented and interrupted the model not only of status quo politics, but of dissent as well—mocking the communists as well as the government.

So The Metropolitan Indians, remarkably, are a sort of singularity within a singularity—a rupture within a rupture. *A critique at the level of form of a critique at the level of content of capitalism and State logics of equivalency.*

For me, however, the final few sentences of Torealta's account are as remarkable as the description of the movement itself:

What is left for us to do before concluding is finally to **forget about the Metropolitan Indians** and once again prevent a Movement from becoming a fetish, a hypostasis, shortcircuited by the media's diffusion. There will always be animal reserves and Indian reservations to conceal the fact that

22 Torealta, "Painted Politics," 103, 105.

23 See Anonymous, "Lama Sabachthani" in *Autonomia: Post Political Politics*, 100–101.

the animals are dead, and that we are all Indians. There will always be factories to conceal the fact that production is dead, and that it is everywhere and nowhere. **We follow the momentum of our projects with our song and occupy ourselves with other things.**²⁴

Though beautifully written, this passage must cause us to pause: why bother writing about the Indians at all, Torealta, if what we ought to do is forget? What role does archival knowledge play in the production of ruptural political singularity? If one knows enough, can one engineer such an event?

The example of the Metropolitan Indians is useful because it points out a central absurdity of the *Autonomia* anthology to which I have now heavily referred. What function does it hope to serve? That of the catalogue? Does it represent a collection of singularities pinned to a board that we would be better off forgetting instead of fetishizing? As an object this anthology is an enigma, calling as it does for its own erasure. Perhaps in this fleeting percontative moment, with Danielewski's beast hovering over our shoulder, we find the best we might hope for in a political catalogue.

Shall we think further about how we might best cultivate what Lotringer calls "the addition of singularities at the base," or bring about Torealta's nomads? Laden with our anthologized knowledge of their successes and failures we might try to dance the dance as they did, but how could we hope to take flight with so much ballast? Or shall we simply forget it, as Torealta exhorts we do the Indians, and occupy ourselves with other things?

24 Torealta, "Painted Politics," 103, 105.

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