

Dramatic and Postdramatic. Strategies of Emotion Management

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Abstract

In every definition of populism, the appeal by the politicians to the “people” is central. The appeal may take diverse forms. Politicians talk directly to the people and criticise the elite, promise protection against minority groups, e.g., immigrants etc. But they often also apply a specific emotional strategy: in political communication and behaviour, they use the emotional patterns elaborated and spread by popular culture, that is, by the cultural products consumed by the “people” most. Popular culture is permeated with emotions, e.g., blockbusters use specific emotional dynamics to grab the audience and keep it under continuous effect. The consumption of popular culture obviously leads to the emergence and strengthening of popular sensibilities that should be taken into account by politicians striving to win the “people”.

Emotions may be raised in several ways. So far two have become used in popular culture: dramatic and postdramatic. Dramatic is described and prescribed for theatre by Aristotle first. The spectacle should be structured in a way that emotions are building all along and, at the peak, they are “purged”; electoral campaigns may be a political parallel with the Election Day as the peak. The concept of postdramatic theatre was introduced by Hans-Thies Lehmann in the nineties. That is another way of emotion management: it works not through one coherent well-structured story/narrative but exerts a series of emotional impulses of various intensity upon the audience.

The thesis of the paper is that populist politicians have learnt to use not only the dramatic but the postdramatic emotion management as well, and the more smoothly they use both, the more successful they have been so far.

Introduction

Theatre and drama are often used as metaphors for politics.¹ Similarly, public opinion often believes that politicians play only roles, rather than reveal their true selves. Politics is all just a play, the piece has been written long ago, decisions are made behind the scenes. There is also much talk about political dramas, dramatic turns, dramatic situations, and dramatic conflicts between politicians.

Literature² also defines a number of common features of theatre and politics, but a number of parallels are more revealing if drawn between politics and popular culture in general. Politicians have become celebrities, media and politics itself have turned

¹ Plato might be the first to do that when called democracy teatrocracy in *Laws*. Applause and appreciation by the crowd are the most important in both he wrote.

² See, e.g, Van Zoonen 2005 and Street 1997.

tabloid. Politicians are forced to adapt or want to adapt, in order to win, to the changing public taste, to serve the widespread sensibilities formed by popular culture.

If the public perceives politics by the patterns offered in popular culture, if sensibilities and experiences coming from popular culture help citizens understand political processes, it is extremely important to know what is going on in culture in general and in popular culture in particular. In addition, politicians have to pay attention to the cultural transformations because they have to make effect, touch the electorate, and make themselves liked in this cultural milieu, so that these efforts can turn into votes in time.

Since the turn of the century, major changes have taken place in culture and within popular culture and, apparently, it has not left political culture, the politicians' behavior and political communication untouched. One may understand political changes more, e.g., the success of Donald Trump, the long-lasting and unchallenged leadership of the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán for eight years now, the love of a considerable part of voters towards them if one looks at the cultural changes that have developed a new sensibility, a postdramatic one, in many people.

The following study attempts to present the components of this sensibility.³ What makes a politician's behaviour and communication efforts attractive for many people, basically regardless of what the ideology, election programme, government measures behind are?

In short, the paper states that, recently, a postdramatic sensibility has spread widely in popular culture and in politics, and the more a politician is able to serve and take advantage of that sensibility, the more probably he or she succeeds at the elections. The concept of postdramatic theatre was elaborated by Hans-Thies Lehmann in the nineties. Since 1999, when his book, *Postdramatisches Theater* was published, its shortened version has been translated to several languages, to English as well. Lehmann and the book have had enormous effect on theatre theory and also on the profession of theatre. It is time to apply postdramatic paradigm to politics, at least to some of its trends, to probe the approach in this realm too.

In order to do that, first I have to summarize the features of postdramatic theatre, then the transformations that have taken place in an outstandingly popular realm of popular culture: the Hollywood blockbusters, as well as the new developments in politics, particularly in political communication, namely the ones that are more understandable with the help of the postdramatic paradigm. I will, hence, define and present parallel tendencies in theatrical high culture, in cinematic popular culture and in political behaviour.

It is obviously impossible to sum up any of those areas, therefore, I will demonstrate the theses on some particularly relevant examples.

- Regarding theatrical high culture I will cite *Einstein on the Beach*,⁴ an opera created by Robert Wilson as director, Philip Glass as composer and Lucinda Childs

³ In this paper, there is no space to define the concept of sensibility. I mean what Sontag (1965/2013) and, mainly, what Scribano – Lisdero (2010) and De Seno – Scribano (2014) put forward.

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HikivegUhTc>

as choreographer. I will also mention the dance performances *Dawn* (2013) and *Solos* (2017) by Hodworks,⁵ *Dawn* was selected as one of the best performances in Europe in 2013.

- It is easier to find well-known examples from popular culture because they are the most popular films, and that was exactly the motive of the present paper: why those films are so popular, what is the possible political effect of that popularity? In this paper, I will focus on the so-called cinematic universes of Marvel and DC. The former is populated by films like *Iron Man 1 to 3*, *The Guardians of the Galaxy 1 to 2*, *Captain America 1 to 3*, *Avengers 1 to 4*, and *X-Men* while to the latter belong films on Batman, Superman, Wonder Woman and Aquaman. The period beginning in 2008 matters most.
- As regards postdramatic politics, I will focus on Hungarian politicians with some passing mentioning Donald Trump and others from the international landscape.

Dramatic and postdramatic theatre

As the label suggests, postdramatic theatre goes beyond dramatic; one therefore has to define what the latter concept covers. It is the more important because originally films are as long in time as theatrical plays, and constructed in a rather similar way.

According to Lehmann, the main feature of the European and Western theatre is that it creates a total whole within the written drama and also in the performance. That ambition is described and, at the same time, prescribed for the future, first by Aristotle in *Poetics*. Drama creates a whole world and it should do so, Aristotel wrote, that is, the audience is not supposed to know anything about history, mythology, previous performances in order to enjoy the play. The entire dramatic universe, the plot, the characters etc. should be small enough to be kept in mind, that is, it must not be too long; otherwise the audience will not remember the beginning. In order to meet that requirement, the plot should be constructed in a logical way: the dramatic events should follow each other according to necessity or probability. The drama should have a beginning with nothing to precede it, and an end with nothing to follow. The conflict as the central point is developing throughout the plot, leads to a peak, the protagonists clash, and someone wins, the other probably dies and that is the end of the play.

The creation of the total whole of the drama is possible only through the imagination of the audience. The audience is capable of participating in the illusion because the drama and the performance are imitations of reality. For Aristotle, art in general is only imitation. The theatrical whole is being created on the stage and the audience is expected only to watch it. A metaphor of the Western theatre is the room with the fourth wall removed, so that the audience can see what is going on in the closed universe inside.

According to Aristotle and also to the dramatic tradition, the most important component of drama is plot: the imitation of the actions of real people. Plot is put forward

⁵ <http://hodworks.hu/en/>

mostly by talk, by dialogues. In that sense, dramatic theatre is under the rule of the text. It is under the rule of the text in another sense as well. Aristotle wrote that drama is possible also without actors, scenery, music, that is, without a performance, but not without plot. Drama is, therefore, a written text, first of all.

Lehmann says that postdramatic theatre transgresses all this tradition. It ignores the requirement and ambition to create a total, closed and imitated whole. Theatre is not identical with drama, it is separate, a performance, although there may be a written text which is put on stage. In postdramatic theatre, Aristotle's prescription is not valid anymore. As he writes on Robert Wilson's operas:

Wenn offenkundig nicht einfach mehr dramatische Illusion gebrochen wird oder epischer Distanz entsteht; wenn weder Handlung, noch plastisch ausgestaltete dramatische personae, keine dramatisch-dialektische Kollision von Werten und nicht einmal identifizierbare Figuren nötig sind, um "Theater" zu produzieren ...⁶

Indeed, *Einstein on the beach* does not have a storyline, nor identifiable characters, nor a narrative based on values; all a description can do is to tell what can be heard and seen on the stage. *Einstein on the beach* is an opera with singers and music. The music and the libretto, written by Philip Glass, consist of numbers and a couple of sentences repeated with very small alterations for dozens of minutes.

Then, how does postdramatic theatre make effect if there is no plot, no characters, no values and causes or aspirations personified by actors? The theatrical effect is made not by the narrative, nor by the catharsis caused by the realization that we have the same moral values as the rest of the audience and the author because we feel sorry for the fall of the good and happy for their prosperity. Postdramatic theatre does not represent a world similar to ours, it consists of presence, of the momentary pleasure of happenings, of the experience of the moment. The people in the audience may let the spectacle, the motions and the voices, the forms and the colours of the scenery, the texts and the tunes affect them in one way or another. They do not have to keep the whole storyline in mind and do not have to wait for the end to reach the peak because there is hardly a peak.

They can, therefore, enter and leave the theatre any time. *Einstein on the Beach* does not have a beginning in the traditional sense. The audience is arriving, making noise, people are looking for their seats, somebody is doing something on an instrument in the orchestra pit etc.; the usual comings and goings of a performance before it starts. At a point, two women almost unnoticeably enter the scene and sit down on chairs on the left side. They start to utter numbers in seemingly haphazard order. And suddenly the audience notices that a continuous hollow tone has been heard ever since the arrival. Wilson's performances are sometimes called dreamscapes not without reason.

What relevance do such postdramatic performances have on understanding popular culture and politics? Can one discover similar means and gestures in blockbusters and politicians' dealings? Definitely not all of them but I will present some below. Because of lack of space I limit the list to only a couple of similarities.

⁶ Lehmann (1999): 49.

The separate whole vanishes

Although Marvel calls its series of films and television shows a universe, this universe differs from the one Aristotle and dramatic tradition have in mind. In dramatic tradition, each and every piece is supposed to have a universe of its own. That whole consists of the plot, the characters, their language, ways of thought, the scenery, the voices and music; Aristotle lists the necessary components of any performance. A drama should not contain anything unnecessary for the plot. In a postdramatic performance, in turn, there is no plot, hence, it is no point raising the questions why a certain action happens, why this or that piece of costume and scenery are there on the stage, how they serve the big picture, the plot, how they anticipate the peak and the solution.

How does the evanescence of the whole take place in the blockbusters? Definitely by removing the limits of time and space.

1. A Marvel and DC blockbuster never stands alone; there is always much the audience meets beforehand and also after leaving the cinema. The show is preceded by trailers, posters, advertisements, also rumours and news bits about the shooting. The higher the marketing budget is, the earlier the viewer gets a lot of information on the film, the plot, the stars and the tricks.
2. Around the premiere, products based on the film start to sale: t-shirts, badges, refrigerator magnets, gadgets, toys etc. The sound tracks can also be bought separately. Some films are published as books too. The film or the cinematic universe is developed to computer games, or the other way round: some films were games first. Television series use the characters and motives. Amusement parks will use the components of the film or the series.
3. Both universe is based on comic books; a great part of the audience has much knowledge of the characters at least, but sometimes even the plots too.
4. With Marvel universes, the films themselves do not end in the usual way. The credits starts as usual, and then one or more scenes come, which continue the story. Marvel has gone so far as putting a very important scene after the end of the credits too. In the very end of *Avengers: Infinity War* the patient viewer can see an extra scene about the deaths of two rather important heroes of the series and the sending of alarm signal to a possible savior.
5. The films dismantle the closed universe not only by hinting at the future but also by alluding to past episodes of the series. Characters or objects from past films appear for a short time in the actual film.

Thus, a single film is definitely not a closed whole anymore, rather a part of the series, it is serialized with all the consequences. The point is, however, that, according to the huge success of the DC and, particularly, the Marvel films, *Avengers: Endgame* is the financially most successful film in history, the audience does not mind the loss of closeness, just the opposite.

Is there a dismantling of the universe of politics too? Yes there is; again in time and space as in cinema.

1. Politics used to take place in closed edifices, called parliament, the buildings of the local authorities, in the headquarters of the government, in party offices. It was important to separate these localities from each other in order to demonstrate the separation of powers. True: from time to time politicians left these buildings, particularly when they participated in campaigns. But even these occasions were institutionalised. One may say that, politics were going on in specific spaces and places and in institutionalized forms. Recently, however, politics entered the public spaces. Even institutionalized politicians, like ministers and party leaders prefer to appear and speak outside the traditional places. Remember Emmanuel Macron's performance at the World Cup Final.⁷
2. The same is true regarding the political activities of the citizens and their organizations. Long ago citizens were expected to turn to their members of parliament if they had a political issue. If a movement sprang, it was institutionalized and professionalized soon. Now, people organize or join civil movements, sometimes on international scales, but sometimes they are very short lived organisationless organizations as Bimber et al (2012) write. They do not have headquarters, nor real leaders and, still, they can reach goals more efficiently than parties or trade unions. For example, late 2014, Hungarian government wanted to introduce a tax on internet traffic. An organisationless organizing sprang up and organized a mass demonstration with around one hundred thousand participants in Budapest. The government had to give up the idea seeing so much anger.⁸
3. Politics transgresses the boundaries of time as well. Citizens do politics not only in campaign periods participating in rallies and helping the local party organizations. They may appear in public spaces with a political agenda anytime. And that is true regarding politicians as well.
4. Politicians also appear outside the traditional universe of politics. They show their families and private lives to the media and the citizens. We can see their partly uncovered bodies (see the hunting and fishing Vladimir Putin), the way they celebrate Christmas and Easter, how their house and appartments look like etc.

It is not easy to say whether there is a limit to border crossing and whether it is reasonable to still speak about the boundary of politics laid out clearly.

Tragedy losing out: death and resurrection

Death plays outstanding role in drama, particularly in tragedy, which is the peak of art for Aristotle. The death of the protagonist leads to catharsis, the emotional sense of drama. By dramatic death, audience experiences that the cause has failed even if it should have prevailed because it was morally right. The audience is cleaned by that experience because it turns out that the values of the author and the rest of the viewers

⁷ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/the-filter/2018-world-cup-final-told-pictures-emmanuel-macron/>

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2014_Hungarian_Internet_tax_protests

are common, and thereby those values are strengthened in the effervescence of sorrow in the theatre. That is exactly the political goal of theatre in Antiquity; that is why the state paid the citizens of Athens for the attendance and not the other way around.⁹

Popular culture uses death extensively, in the end of *Avengers: Infinity War* (2018), half of all the living beings die in the whole universe, and die, crumble to dust half of the super heroes too. In *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* (2016) Superman himself dies and is buried. In *Deadpool 2* (2018), we see the death of the protagonist and, also in *Game of Thrones* (2011 to 2019), important heroes and heroines die rather suddenly, at least contradicting our expectations (Ned Stark, Caitlin Stark) and the plot so far (Rob Stark, his wife and Jon Snow).

But most of those deaths are temporary. Deadpool is resurrected in a couple of minutes and he tries to resurrect his loved one too. Superman is also revived in *Justice League* (2017), so is Jon Snow in the very first episode of the next season, and his is not the only revival in the series. And probably all the viewers of Marvel films were sure in 2018 that at least some of the evaporated superheroes will return somehow in the *End-game* as it did happen to all of them but three.

Death, thus, is no more than a momentary shock effect; it does not have any higher sense. Even when the screenwriters give it a higher meaning, e.g., when Luthor in the end of *Batman v Superman* says: with Superman, God has died, that line is again no more than a momentary effect, trying to cause momentary pleasure by alluding to Nietzsche. After all, the authors knew and the greater part of the audience also knows that Superman will return, will be resurrected in the next piece.

We see something similar in politics. I do not mean the times when politicians died because they were executed or shot by assailants. I mean political deaths, that is, politicians leaving public life or moving to the second and third rows when failed at an election. They move the further backward the more serious the failure has been.

We see in the Hungarian politics, as well as in other countries, e.g., in Italy with Silvio Berlusconi, that politicians do not want to die politically. In the nineties, the failed prime ministers (Péter Boross 1993 to 1994 and Gyula Horn 1994 to 1998) quitted the first line of politics. In the past twenty years, we have seen a different pattern. Viktor Orbán lost in 2002 on the general elections and his party lost the local elections in the autumn. He lost again, even more seriously, in the general elections of 2006. He offered his resignation from the leader position but ultimately stayed. Ferenc Gyurcsány, prime minister from 2004 to 2009, did not leave politics in 2006, when a secret speech was leaked in which he confessed that he and his government had lied to the people about the economic situation of Hungary. Exceptional event followed the leaking: turmoil, months long demonstrations in front of the parliament etc. His party was defeated gravely at the local elections in the autumn 2006 but instead of resignation, he stayed and even became the chairman of the party. His party lost seriously in 2010 again and, another party he founded in 2012, lost again in 2014, just like at the 2018 elections. But he is in the Parliament and seems to have retaken the lead on the left.

⁹ Fischer-Lichte 1990.

Gordon Bajnai, prime minister from 2009 to 2010, resigned after the 2010 defeat, but returned in 2012 and wanted to become prime minister again.

With the help of postdramatic paradigm one may formulate those events as follows: politicians have ceased to be the personifications of classes, social groups, issues, causes, of the common good. They represent only themselves in the sense that they are identical with the competences they have or they are attributed to. In politics, conflicts take place between persons and not between views or institutions any more; at least, the ideological contradictions are secondary and subsumed to the personal conflicts. Just like in the superhero movies where Iron Man clashes with Thor (*Avengers Assemble* 2012), then his group with the one led by Captain America (*Captain America: Civil War* 2016), Batman clashes with Superman; not because they have relevant issues with each other but because that leads to spectacular and captivating moments of fights and also because, by that, popular and highly popularized actors, stars have the opportunity to show their skills and competences.

Gábor Vona, the late leader of Jobbik, the radical rightist party in Hungary, said once, after years of moving his party from the extreme right to the centre causing much confusion in the extreme rightist camp, that the main task for a politician is to obtain trust. When citizens trust a politician, he can move wherever he wants to in the political landscape, the voters will follow because not the ideologies matter anymore but the personal attraction and competence. Values, programmes, ideals, promises are secondary. And trust can have several sources; not only harmony between the past and present declarations and claims as it were the case for the dramatic sensibility and experience.

The postdramatic paradigm may explain the popularity of Donald Trump in spite of his changing positions on important political issues. Nicholas Carr wrote something rather similar:

If traditional print and broadcast media required candidates to be nouns – stable, coherent figures – social media pushes them to be verbs, engines of activity.¹⁰

In that sense, Donald Trump is a verb, while Hillary Clinton was rather a noun.¹¹ To be a verb means changing together with the situation whereas the situation is not under the politician's control. What matters is whether the voters believe that the politician will be able to solve any future crisis rather than whether he or she is faithful to past vows and programme points. The politician should be able to rule the moment. It does not matter if his or her outlines are blurring.

Superman was educated by his earthly stepfather not to reveal his superhuman skills because that would threaten his integration among the normal people. According to *Man of Steel* (2013), the father sacrificed his life to avoid the disclosure of Superman's real identity. And still, after a while, Superman breaks the vow and becomes the god

¹⁰ Nicholas Cass, "How Social Media Is Ruining Politics," *Politico Magazine*, September 2, 2015, <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/09/2016-election-social-media-ruining-politics-213104>.

¹¹ Denton (2017): 122.

like savior of the mortals. Wonder Woman is disappointed because people are belligerent and aggressive, inclined to war, still, she stays with us to help when necessary. And nobody in the films, let alone in the auditorium will demand an explanation because what matters is that they can save the world.

The involvement of the audience

Audience has always had an influence on the efforts of politicians and film makers. Politicians want votes, film studios want income. Both groups are eager to know what audience likes and they make changes in the offer in case. What is new, and present in all the three areas, that is, in high culture, popular culture and politics, is the more diverse involvement of the people. The audience and the citizens are involved not only in the way of feed back, that is, afterwards, but beforehand and during the artistic and political activity.

The creators of high culture performances may invite the future audience, the most enthusiastic fans in the process of creation. Hodworks invited the audience of a performance for a rehearsal of its next dance show in order to talk and ask for ideas and opinion. Several troupes invite the audience to the stage during the performances. Others give stage opportunities to some lay persons beforehand by asking for stories that may be put on stage with a possible participation of the persons concerned.

It is not easy to involve the audience because the theatre goers' attitude is often based on the idea of theatre coming from Aristotle: the only task of the audience is to watch and feel.

Solos, the 2017 production of Hodworks, the rehearsal of which was open to the public, contains some moments when one of the dancers sits down on the floor in front of someone in the audience and puts his head in her lap. At another point a dancer throws an orange to another viewer. These are rather careful tries, presumably not really successful because in their next show, *Sunday* (2018), no such moments occur, rather the opposite: the dancers start to run towards the audience but just the moment when they would reach the people sitting around a fellow dancer always pull them back. Hodworks regularly thematizes the relationship between dance, the dance company and the audience. From time to time, they come to the conclusion that what a considerable part of the audience is interested in is their naked bodies. And however disappointing this may be, they go on with further shows which contain naked bodies again.

Hollywood film makers have had small groups of people watch an early version of the blockbusters before the premiere for long. Nowadays fan communities are important inspiration for the industry. With producing films for profit and for various markets with diverse needs, the big studios have always co-ordinated with the buyers, be they from national socialist Germany in the thirties or China present day. And sent different versions of the same film accordingly.

What is new is the more and more frequent addresses targeted at the audience within the film. The two *Deadpools* have several of such moments. Once the protagonist even

criticizes the film makers for a rather haphazard turn in the very film he is just playing a character.

Finally, the least noticeable but most effective involvement of the viewers is the visual and acoustic bombing. The very loud noises make it impossible for the audience to keep a distance from the film, just like the constant explosions and fires, burning vehicles and building the debris of which are flying towards the audience particularly in IMAX and in 3D. All the senses of the viewers are seized by the visual and acoustic means.

Politicians have also always wanted to involve the citizens in politics, at least on the election day in order to get enough votes. They organize rallies even if sometimes their unfolding is uncertain. With internet and social media and with citizens turning from consumers of news into producers and curators, that is, prosumers, politicians has started to adapt. They put content on the internet sites, and, particularly on their own social media sites which are attractive enough for the netizens to send them forward to all their friends and contacts either in unchanged or in a modified version. Politicians should become good material for creating memes and gifs. For sure, most of the memes and gifs are rather unfavourable because they tend to make fun of the politicians but their sheer presence and creation by a fellow citizen will indicate for the audience that the politicians are important enough to deal with, to work on their images and film clips and to send them around. The follow up is ineluctable but the assumption of risk is unavoidable under the conditions of online communication. Moreover, the unfavourable meme and gif of the present day may be shadowed by another one, hopefully more favourable tomorrow.

The rule over the moment

I started the paper with the statement that postdramatic has gone beyond the rules put forward by Aristotle on the closed whole of the drama, which is around a systematically unfolding plot. Seeing the scenes of *Einstein on the Beach* or the motion sequences of *Dawn*, the scenes of *Solos* and those of the *Conditions of Being Mortal* by Hodworks, or any plays that involve the audience, we realize that the performances do not unfold smoothly, continuously. The postdramatic performances are divided into parts either on purpose or because of the participation of the audience which is always risky.

It is even more so in popular culture but for a different reason. In blockbusters, particularly in the comic films, narratives seem to have been overshadowed by spectacular elements. Hollywood films used to be narrative in most of the cases with character based plots consisting of events following the logic of cause and effect. That is, Hollywood preferred dramatic poetics. Blockbusters has had spectacular ingredients too: beautiful mountains or seashores, charming men and pretty women, car chases and explosions; partly because that was the way film industry wanted to keep its specific features vis-a-vie television. Still, one may say that spectacular served the narrative, the plot.

Recently, however, narrative seems to serve the spectacular in the sense that the film needs a narrative only so that the story could get from one spectacular moment to the next. Spectacular scenes interrupt narrative unfolding. The film is, thus, a series of spectacular scenes, and sometimes not the last big clash of the characters is the most spectacular as the dramatic paradigm would expect, but another one in the previous parts; that is the case with some James Bond films and also in the last Bourne episode *Jason Bourne* (2016).

This approach has been debated in the literature. Geoff King (2002) claims that there has not been such a change in Hollywood but he wrote his book before 2008, that is, before the start of the Marvel Cinematic Universe. King himself adds at the same time, that in the beginning of the twentieth century films were narrative because they were produced for the middle class, which was rich enough to buy the relatively expensive cinema tickets. If one takes this remark seriously, one can draw the conclusion that the pair of narrative versus spectacular has even a sociological basis. Middle class prefer narratives, narrative films, while there is another sensibility which is fond of spectacular instead.

For the present paper, the point is that we have two analytic concepts: narrative and spectacular, which can be matched to the pair of dramatic and postdramatic.

In politics, this pair helps us understand the difficulties political analysts have in dealing with the new generation of politicians. In Hungary, the analysts try to explain the huge success Viktor Orbán, prime minister since 2010 with an exceptional two-third majority in parliament. They come up with the idea that Orbán is successful because he has narrative on anything, that is, he can draw up a narrative to each and every government measure, and he can explain the higher sense of the happenings, whereas, allegedly, the rest of the politicians, particularly on the left, cannot. Indeed, the Prime Minister does have explanations and a capability of contextualisation. But one finds such capabilities on the left as well. The difference is stemming from something else, from Orbán's capability of playing both instruments: spectacular as well as narrative. Belonging to the middle class, because writing for the middle class readers, political analysts focus too much on narratives and ignore the spectacular components of politicians in general and those of Orbán in particular. Postdramatic paradigm, with explicating the importance of interruptions in narratives and of a new sensibility, can draw the analyst's attention to components of political behaviour overshadowed so far by the rule of narrative.

King indicates the sociology of the two sensibilities. One can follow it up saying that if middle class has a narrative, a dramatic sensibility, the lower classes may have an inclination towards the spectacular. Middle class feels at home in the realm of narrative, perhaps that is the only place where it feels at home because narrative makes happenings perceivable and, by that, tameable. Narratives objectify the world and the developments within, create a kind of protective frame¹² against the accidental; just like a drama, which has a comforting cause and effect structure, comprehensible in its entirety. The lower classes does not need such reassurance because they know or feel

¹² See the works of Michael J. Apter.

that they cannot have one. They are not in the position to prepare long term plans, they are, therefore happy to give themselves up to the moments of the spectacular.

A politician, who wants to recruit a huge support and forge an alliance with the middle class as well as the lower classes, should take narrative and spectacular, that is, dramatic and postdramatic sensibilities into account and put forward dramatic and post-dramatic materials for the various classes and niches of the electorate. The political analyst, in turn, may try to translate the spectacular and postdramatic, not only the narrative and dramatic, into a professional narrative. Politics contains both kinds.

Conclusion

By introducing postdramatic paradigm I wanted to give help in unravelling the secrets of the successful politicians. A great part of culture, high as well as popular, seems to have turned into postdramatic for the past decades. The closed and internally total character of such cultural works has vanished. Works do not give a full story, plot, sometimes they do not have any. They do not build characters either, but want to draw the audience into the play either as actors or as fans or as customers rather than keep it sheer spectator. And, seeing the exceptional success of blockbusters one can say that such efforts meet enthusiastic reception. The audience, the citizens are happy about the postdramatic solutions; the latter can lean on postdramatic sensibilities and strengthen them at the same time.

One can see similar transformations in politics as well. Politics is not a closed realm anymore, it moves from the institutionalized spaces and times. Politicians criticising political institutions and traditional elites and referring to personal competences as superheros do seem to become successful recently.

I do not want to suggest that either high culture, or popular culture or politics have become clearly and entirely postdramatic. One finds dramatic pieces in theatres and cinemas. A blockbuster is certainly perceivable in itself and can be rewritten into a narrative, without prior knowledge of the whole mythology. Politicians want to make effect not exclusively on voters with postdramatic sensibility. Still, the works and politicians which appeal to dramatic as well as postdramatic sensibilities are the ones to attract big crowds of audience and electorate.

The metaphors of drama and theatre are suitable to understand politics in the future as well. Even if that is not the same drama and the same theatre anymore.

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