

# The Castration of the Political, and Then the Police

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Castration prevents a male from procreating with pleasure, while it merely denies a female pleasure. In any case, at least as far as psychoanalysis is concerned, in women the notion of castration signifies powerlessness – men need to be castrated in order to take their power away from them, while women are born castrated – even if they have the power of pleasure, it does not mean that they have the power of the political. The castration of the political can thus most easily be identified by the fact that it ensures political powerlessness. But there is also the plebeian pleasure of the political, which does not aim at the appropriation of power, but finds pleasure in castrating those who have the power. This is the pleasure in castrating the police. Does theatre have something to do with it?

The gap between the reality and the actuality, between the world as it appears and the world as it should be is a conflictual relationship. Actuality is act-ual, not actual – it is a matter of an act that reasonably reaches into manifestation, which resists reason. This means that the action of reason in reality is a dramatic conflict with the un-reasonable. Theatre is consequently actual only when it is reasonable, not when it is real; to be actual, it has to be performed.

How can theatre be actual, when it is just art, which we know cannot change anything – just as Hegel's famous owl of Minerva cannot? It has been fifty years since Michael Fried declared theatre to be a non-art. Aesthetic modernism was supposed to produce self-sufficient artworks which do not rely on the audience, something that theatre in principle cannot do. Theatre is a special kind of activity, which cannot become Art in the modernist sense of the word, whether Kantian or Greenbergian. Theatre without an audience does not exist. Theatre is effect – an impact created in the playfulness of the relationship between performing and presence, which plays both in the movable demarcation of the space of performing and the space of presence, as well as time, which is an incessant exchange of presence for performance and performance for presence.

Modernity is the time of transition between two epochs, capitalist and post-capitalist, which brings a state of emergency of elevated possibility for conflict and a

possibility of increased influence of the so-called subjective factor. As a consequence, two directions in performing activism are current. One nurtures entertainment in conditions of oblivion and relief (including therapeutic manipulation and moralist preachings on sinfulness), while the other questions transitional changes from the position of reality. Both already exist. The performative contract, which contemporary theatre breaches, is not a traditional or transitional theatre contract, but a contract in place between the providers and users of new media. In contemporaneity, it is the one that creates a one-dimensional reality without actuality, and this is the “peeking point” that the theatre community can transcend with the appearance of actuality.

That the multi-party representative democracy is in fact a performative democracy can be seen from the organisation of the parliamentary space. Its ritual content is a convocation of the demos – a people who legitimises the performance as the author and, completely in accordance with Bakhtin, only lives in performing. Two authors from the West used to be particularly popular around here, especially in civil society and academia: David Held and John Keane. Today, these former advocates of a liberal social democracy supported by an active civil society speak about the castration of the political, which means the loss of power of the representative democracy and of the pleasure in it, and particularly its inability to conceive of a people as a community that is based on the contract between the represented and their audience. Bourgeois theatre came to its end also as a model of democracy, and not only as a model of theatre. This does not mean that the representative democracy will quickly disappear, just as bourgeois theatre will not, but it is no longer possible to expect that this model will produce the hegemony needed to transit from capitalism to post-capitalism or that it will decisively influence the end of the risky transition into post-capitalism that today appears as a blend of horror and hope.