Chapter 10

Always on, but never there? Political parody, the Carnivalesque and the Rise of the 'Nectorate'

Annamaria Neag and Richard Berger

Introduction

Today's global electorates are the most networked and technologically astute in history. However, many major political ballots have reported low turnouts in recent years; in the recent 2016 US election, 50% of eligible millennials did not vote (Fry, 2016). At the same time, user-generated political parody accounts abound on social media. Their sophistication, breadth of dissemination and the quality of the interactions they provoke, suggest a high-level of engagement in (de)legitimizing spheres. Nonetheless, studies by Rill and Cardiel (2013) and Lee and Kwak (2014) urge caution when making claims about the quality of these interactions; Holbert et al. (2013) suggest that, "it is clear that young voters do not envision political satire to be news" (p. 173).

In this chapter, we aim to map the complex relationship and interplays between "legitimate" and the (de)legitimizing aspects of political discourse on social media, and the nature of their routes of dissemination through focusing on a so-called joke party, the Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party (HTDP). Here we use Mikhail Bakhtin's characterization of the "carnivalesque". Rooted in Medieval folk culture, and forged in the crucible of twentieth century Russian revolutionary politics, Bakhtin's carnival is never anything less than a political act. It is a means by which dominant ideas are subverted through humor, where eccentric behavior is encouraged and

potentially blasphemous events can take place, without punishment. The carnival's purpose then, is to de-privilege dominant voices by blending the ruling culture with the "profane" and the grotesque. We argue here that recent political movements, particularly in their interactions online, are offering new spaces for alternative political discourses to flower and flourish. The new (de)legitimizing spaces often display "carnivalesque" interactions, in their often "grotesque" parodies of political personalities. In writing about the grotesque, Edwards and Graulund (2013) state that, "[l]aughter…is a response associated with the popular energies of the carnival: the overthrow of authority, the dismissal of the sacred, the dissemination of counter discourses and the grotesque realism of the body" (p. 104). Similarly, for Dentith (1996), the carnival represents an "aesthetic which celebrates the anarchic body-based and grotesque elements of popular culture, and seeks to mobilise them against the humorless seriousness of official culture" (p. 66).

In addition, we propose that these interactions suggest a new "user-sphere" has been created, but one whose nexus of interactions has not (thus far) translated into a more civically engaged electorate (a new "nectorate") in more mainstream spaces. But for some electorates, interacting with a parody account has become the default mechanism for engaging with political discourse. We shall demonstrate through examples drawn from the HTDP's social media communication, that this mechanism also serves to bring "outlier" political groups and organizations into the mainstream.

Literature Review

The Delegitimizing Power of Anti-Establishment Parties

2016 was a turbulent year for the European Union. The United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union altogether, the "leave" campaign being shaped by an outlier political movement, with no elected members, The UK Independence Party (UKIP), which, as a single-issue entity, sowed the seeds of its own waning political influence by being on the winning side. Like Bakhtin's carnival with its origins in Medieval feast days, the types of political parties, groups and movements under discussion here are often single-issue, and therefore potentially very temporal entities, but which can still have a huge pull on shaping discourse, while they exist. Commentators used this largely unexpected result to further claim that there was now a clear disaffection for the political class – later mirrored by the anti-establishment Donald Trump's elevation to the highest political office in the world.

Another example can be seen in the Icelandic context. In October 2015, Iceland held a general election. With no one party gaining a clear majority, and a series of attempts at forming coalition administrations collapsing, the third-place Pirate protest party (Piritar) was duly tasked with forming the next government, with a 14.5% share of the vote (see Cammaerts, 2015). Although the Pirate party walked away from negotiations and now constitutes the official opposition in that country, it is an organization which is defined by its anti-establishment positions and one with a clear focus on new technology; the party proposes making bitcoins the national currency and has offered whistleblower Edward Snowden full citizenship.

These types of protest Pirate Parties are, in fact, nothing new, but have been gradually (de)legimitizing official discourses since the global financial crisis in 2008. The first organized groups began in Sweden in 2006. The US quickly followed, with the UK's Pirate Party being

founded in 2009. These disparate groups organized themselves around issues such as copyright law, intellectual property, and digital rights. While being (explicitly at least) neither for or against European integration, the Pirate Parties self-defined as occupying the "radical centre" which chimed with a new generation of (mostly young) digitally literate voters who had a marked dissatisfaction with the political process. In short, the Pirate Parties arrived at a time when the most networked generation in history was reaching its political maturity. What for Camaerts (2015) are "subterranean politics" has come to exert huge influence on mainstream political ideology. Evidence of this can be seen in Germany, where the slogan of "yes to politics, no to politics" is utilized by the satirical Die PARTEI (The Party), which has a real chance of ending up in Angela Merkel's coalition, as a buttress against a resurgent far-right movement. Demonstrating a new cohesion, perhaps, if not complete consensus across EU far-right organisations, the former leader of the UK Independence Party – and a leading BREXIT figure – Nigel Farage, was the guest-speaker at a closed event for Germany's AfD party in 2017. More digitally astute, than mainstream political groups – particularly in the use of social media - the Pirate Parties then, are perfectly attuned to the behavioral habits of younger voters. While mainstream education across the EU seeks to limit access to social media in schools Germany's pirate movement has campaigned to prevent educators from blocking access to the internet:

> Pirate Parties are part of a broader burgeoning movement, aligning themselves with other actors, such as Wikileaks, Anonymous and the Occupy movement, in critiquing the secrecy of the liberal state and a decline in civic liberties, lamenting a lack of balance between corporate/financial interests and societal interests (Camaerts, 2015, p. 32).

In this way, the pirate groups carefully align themselves with the types of libertarian groups attractive to younger people.

A key part of Bakhtin's carnival is parody, and as we shall see in the case study we present here, these outlier parties, initially at least, employ satire and parody, particularly in their interactions across social media platforms as a form of mocking their political opponents – who generally happen to be the establishment. In relation to this, Edwards and Graulund (2013, p. 100) have stated that satire and parody involve a "form of laughter that is not inclusive or communal, but which isolates the mocked individual from the group. In mocking someone, the person is individualized and separated through the discursive construction of a hierarchy". This will be particularly relevant in the current study.

These new political groups turn parody into a political act as dominant ideas are subverted through humor. Baktin himself applied his ideas to the political sphere, but demonstrating how carnival rituals were even appropriated by rulers (in this case Ivan the Terrible) and used to attack the sacred (here the Russian Orthodox church). The examples and interactions we describe here might well be used in the same way in the future – particularly in supporting fragile coalition relationships. Indeed, coalition administrations very much mirror the political interactions across social media; in the Medieval world described by Bakhtin "nearly every Church feast had its comic folk aspect" (in Morris, 1994, p. 196). For Bakhtin, then, the carnival was always the place where unlikely people were brought together.

Bakhtin largely concerned himself with novels, and while these oft-featured grotesque monsters and improbable events, they told stories contemporary rulers were not keen to hear (Stam, 1989). Since then, Bakhtin's ideas have largely been applied to texts, particularly those that display carnivalesque properties (see Flanagan, 2009). However, the carnivalesque has further value as a

means by which to understand how the 'official' (sacred) political culture can exist alongside a delegitimized (profane) one, and in increasing cases, through parody, a dialogue can emerge between them.

For Hutcheon (1989), "…parody can also be seen…as a threatening, even anarchic force, one that puts into question the legitimacy of other texts" (p. 100). In perhaps indicating how these political outlier protest Pirate Parties can achieve political office, we turn to a critique often mobilized when invoking Bakhtin's carnival. As Dentith (1996) would have it:

> [The]…most common objection to Bakhtin's view of the carnival as an anti-authoritarian force that can be mobilized against the official culture of the Church, is that on the contrary it is part of that culture; in the typical metaphor of this line of argument, it is best seen as a safety-valve, which in some overall functional way reinforces the bonds of authority by allowing for their temporary suspension (p.73).

In "making familiar relations strange" (Holquist, 2002, p. 89), it is easy to see how outlier political ideas can become mainstream. For Hutcheon (1989, pp. 87-88), parody is both a form of "imitation characterized by ironic inversion" and "repetition with critical distance". All of these things are evident in our case study, but perhaps many of these organizations' communication and interactions with its electorates across Europe could also be considered a form of "kynicism"; a concept that has much in common with Bakthin's "carnivalesque" performances:

> Kynicism represents popular, plebian rejection of the official culture by means of irony and sarcasm: the classical kynical procedure is to confront the pathetic phrases of the ruling official ideology – its solemn, grave tonality – with everyday banality and to hold them up

to ridicule, thus exposing behind the subtle noblesse of ideological phrases the egotistical

interests, the violence, the brutal claims to power. (Sloterdijk, 1988, p. 29)

It is thus not only about making fun or ridiculing those in power, but a focus on the injustice and

lack of choice that is imposed on "common people" by ruling political parties and their

politicians. Speaking about injustice is only possible through an honest presentation of facts, and

this is where Foucault's (2001) interpretation of the concept of *parrhesia* can help us understand

why satire is important for the public interest. Foucault (2001) believes that *parrhesia* or the

strength to speak frankly about difficult situations, is empowering both for the speakers and the

listeners. By deciding not to hide difficult truths, those who employ *parrhesia*, show their own

determination in dealing with these situations. Therefore, both parrhesia and kynicsm have a

similar goal: to go beyond one's self interest in order to highlight and possibly solve poignant

social issues.

Saving the Public Sphere? – The Satirical Politics of the Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party

"There are no other options left."

(S. Dada, personal communication, May 19, 2017)

In order to understand how kynicism is subverting the dominant political discourses (the sacred),

for our case study we employed tools from critical discourse analysis. One of the analytical

concepts used in this project is power. As Diamond (1996) suggests, power "is not just the ability

to coerce others or to get them to do something against their will, but rather, it is the ability to

interpret events and reality, and have this interpretation accepted by those others" (p. 13). One of

the ways through which political power is enacted is legitimization. Reyes (2011, p. 782)

observes that the "[…] act of legitimizing or justifying is related to a goal, which, in most cases, seeks our interlocutor's support and approval." In the case of political satire or cynicism/kynicism though, one has to deal with delegitimization. An important point that has to be made here is that the act of delegitimization is also about the pursuit of power. Delegitimization, as the opposite of legitimization, is about claiming authority and depriving the political opponent of this authority (Cap, 2008, p. 22). Political actors use an argumentative strategy and recontextualization in order to delegitimize their opponents. Moreover, as Davies and Harré (1990) observe, the process of (de)legitimization always involves a positioning process: the political actors (re)position themselves in relation to the other political actors they present. This involves a binary opposition that eventually leads to the goal of presenting themselves as better, more trustworthy, or simply funnier, and thus more likable.

In 2015, the year before Iceland's Pirate Party becoming a mainstream political organization, more than one million people had claimed asylum in Europe according to the statistical office of the EU (Eurostat, 2016). A wave of opposition swept over Central and Eastern Europe against a planned relocation scheme that would have relocated 160,000 refugees EU-wide. Hungary closed its borders in October 2015, and the country filed a court challenge against the relocation scheme. In 2016, the government ruled by the Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Alliance and KDNP (Christian Democratic People's Party), decided to hold a referendum on EU's refugee quotas. The question on the ballot was: "Are you in favour of the EU being allowed to make the settlement of non-Hungarians obligatory in Hungary even if the national assembly does not agree?" Ahead of the referendum, a governmental campaign urging citizens to vote "no" was carried out across the country. The slogans used in the campaign focused on a popular quiz-type

of rhetoric. One of these slogans read "Did you know? The Paris terrorist attacks were carried out by immigrants."

One of the governmental campaign's challengers was the Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party (HTDG). This group self-defines itself as a "joke" party (Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party, n.d.). The HTDG was founded in 2006 – the same year as the Pirate movement - but it was not officially registered until 2014. The main activities of the party are street art, graffiti, urban gardening and guerrilla activism. As with the Pirate parties, the HTDG built-up a strong online following, with more page likes than any other political party in Hungary. The HTDG got immediately involved in the quota referendum campaign by making fun of and mocking the anti-immigrant slogans. In a relatively short-space of time, they managed to raise more than €100,000 through crowdfunding, and spent the money on putting up posters across the country with their own messages (Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party, 2016). The joke party's campaign goal was to urge people to vote invalidly (to spoil ballot papers in other words).

In what follows, we now analyze the joke party's campaign in order to map the complex relationship and interplays between legitimizing and delegitimizing aspects of political discourse on social media.

Methodology

In analyzing selected posts on social media platforms, we were guided by Reyes' (2011, p. 781) typology for political discourse. By applying tools from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Reyes argues that legitimization can be discursively achieved through five different strategies,

which employ: (1) emotions (particularly fear), (2) a hypothetical future, (3) rationality, (4) voices of expertise and (5) altruism. These strategies are linguistically constructed in political discourses. This typology is helpful to understand the linguistic choices made by politicians in order to convince their audience or argue for support. Reyes explains these strategies with examples taken from politicians talking about the 9/11 attacks in the USA. As Reyes (2011, p. 790) explains, the 9/11 events were frequently used as a mode for triggering "people's emotions in order to legitimize future actions". While Reyes' typology (2011) was developed to analyze official political discourses, these categories proved to be helpful in a somewhat new context for us.

Due to the fact that the main goal of the HTDG's campaign was to mock the Hungarian government's rhetoric, and thus to delegitimize it, these five legitimization strategies had to be "turned upside down". In this way it is similar to Hutcheon's (1989, p. 88) assertion that, "…ironic inversion is a characteristic of all parody." So, by building on the theoretical work on *kynicism* by Sloterdijk (1988) and Higgie (2014) and on the concept of *parrhesia* by Foucault (2001), we inverted the set of categories proposed by Reyes (2011) to address political parody. For a clearer understanding, we will present the *old* and the *new* categories side by side:

1. *Legitimization through emotions* (and especially fear) is turned into *delegitimization through comic relief*. While in political discourses, actors turn to emotions to skew opinions, or to justify exclusion by appealing to fear, in most instances, in the case of political parody, humor is used to disperse this anxiety. This type of legitimization can be found in kynicism, a "cheeky, subversive practice" (Chaloupka, 1999, p. 171). As Gray observes, "[…] kynics hold onto to the notion of truth, but since they see it being

perverted all around them, their cynicism and laughing ridicule serves as a defence and an offence to this state of affairs." (2005, p. 154)

2. *Legitimization through a hypothetical future* is transformed into *delegitimization through a ridiculed hypothetical future.* This is one of the most often used strategies in political discourse. It highlights the possibility of a future threat if one does not act quickly in the present. In the case of parody though, the actors are creating ridiculous and grotesque scenarios for a hypothetical future in order to mock the strategies used by politicians.

3. *Legitimization through rationality* is converted into *delegitimization through irrationality*. Political actors use reason as a means for justifying action. The legitimization process is presented as "[…] a process where decisions have been made after a heeded, evaluated and thoughtful procedure" (Reyes, 2011, p. 786). In political parody, however, no such claims are made, even more the actors present their own (or others') decisions or actions as irrational, that have not been thought through, so as to entertain.

4. *Voices of expertise* are delegitimized by the *voice of the non-experts*. Politicians regularly cite reliable sources, experts or exact numbers to support their authority (Van Dijk, 1988). This type of expertise in political parody is inverted into citing "common sense" or regular people's opinion to confront the official ideology and discourse.

5. *Altruism* becomes *a ridiculed altruism*. Altruism is used to legitimize actions by presenting these as beneficial for the others. Politicians regularly use this rhetorical device to justify actions as being helpful or advantageous for the community (Reyes, 2011, p. 801). In the case of political parody, actors delegitimize official actions by highlighting the issues they perceive as more pressing. By using biting irony, the

parodists bring up everyday examples of social issues in order to highlight the "egotistical interests" (Sloterdijk, 1988, p. 29) of politicians.

A total of 110 Facebook posts were analyzed between August 17th and November 3rd, 2016. August 17th was the first day the party posted about the campaign, and the analysis ends with the last post that deals with this campaign – so here we frame the campaign as a single situated utterance (while recognizing that it is one which still connects and interacts with all other utterances). There were more than 122 updates posted during this period on the Facebook page of the party. However, after downloading all posts between August and December, the posts that had no connection to this campaign were disregarded. Beyond the status updates, the authors also added the campaign posters to this database. Most of these posters were uploaded as photo (jpeg) files to the party's main Facebook page. If the selected posts included a link to the website of the party, these articles have also been included in our analysis. These findings were then corroborated with information gathered from semi-structured interviews with leading party members. The interviews were carried out in person with Suzi Dada, board member of the HTDG, and via Skype and emails with Gergő Kovács, the president of the party.

In the following section, we will present how these strategies were employed during the anti-government campaign organized by the HTDP. For a fuller understanding of the context, we will also present the rhetorical strategies used by the government. In many cases, the HTDP borrowed and remixed the governmental discourse for their own aims. This is in line with Hutcheon's (1989) observation, quotation or borrowing…is not meant to signal only similarity. It is not a matter of nostalgic imitation of past models; it is a stylistic confrontation, a modern recoding

which establishes difference at the heart of similarity. No integration into a new context can avoid altering meaning, and perhaps even value. (p. 90)

As we will present in the following, the style adopted by the HTDP and its remixes are not really a nostalgic imitation, but a confrontation with the ruling coalition in both style and content.

Analysis and Discussion

Delegitimization through Comic Relief

Reyes (2011) has observed that emotions are easily predictable and can influence the way we perceive reality. He brings up the example of the word "terrorist", which can influence a listener's perception. One of the slogans created by the Hungarian government reflects this strategy: "Since the beginning of the migrant crisis, more than 300 people died because of terror acts in Europe." In contrast, the joke HTDG's aim is to mock the government's rhetoric in order to disperse fear and anxiety. This is clear from the article shared through which they announce the start of the campaign. They say: "I think this is the first time the country is filled with this much hatred. And we would like to do something in order to improve the terrible mood in this country" (Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party, n.d.). This reasoning comes up in our interview with the party leader too:

In the current state of the Hungarian politics, I don't know if there is a point to talk about issues in a serious manner. Moreover, there are many others who do this by saying what's wrong with the government. And I think that Hungarian politics is filled with anger and hate […]. We try to criticise the government, if it does something wrong, in a way that is not hateful. (G. Kovács, personal communication, February 17, 2017)

In a related post, they advertize an online game in which users can fight ISIS with the help of an *acid spitting weasel*. The post reads: "Defeat ISIS with the acid spitting weasel!" (Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party, 2016). While evoking a terrorist organisation can induce fear, the joke party disperses this emotion first by saying that it can be defeated through a video game and by using a funny mascot to do so. The acid spitting weasel is then regularly used to "scare off" political opponents, ironically inverting here for powerful parodic effect.

In the weeks following the success of their initial crowdfunding campaign, the party asked the help of "passivists" (a term they use for non-violent activists) to put up their posters across the country. In an interesting turn of events, these posters were then regularly destroyed. The party shared photos and videos of people pulling down the billboards and posters, or harassing their "passivists". For example, in September they shared a video in which a person is trying to scare off an activist who is trying to stop him from tearing down a poster. The Facebook posts says: "Every penny spent on the hate campaign has worth it. Someone loyal to Fidesz (or Jobbik *[Hungarian radical nationalist party]*, please let us know if you can tell the difference) while tearing down our posters and protecting our women from the migrants, almost beats up a woman, then he is being Anti-semitic. The country is on the right path" (Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party, 2016). The post employs a classical kynical procedure to confront the aggressiveness of the video. It counters the official anti-migration ideology by holding the activities of those loyal to the government position for ridicule and mockery. As the effective irony suggests: there is no need for migrants to harass women in the country.

After the campaign, the posters had to be removed from the streets. The party once again summoned their fans to help them. While during the campaign, they had many problems with people destroying the posters, after the referendum nobody continued this activity. The party frequently mocked this indifference by claiming that their detractors had disappeared, as if by magic, after the national referendum. In one of the latest posts for this campaign, they invite people to help them remove the posters by saying: "Fidesz loyalists, join us! Let's put divergences aside! The country can finally become one for the big common goal: to destroy the dog party's posters." (Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party, 2016). Here again, we see the employment of legitimisation through comic relief. While in the case of official discourse, emotions are used to justify exclusion by appealing to fear, in this case a joke is used to unify divergent parties.

Delegitimisation through a Ridiculed Hypothetical Future

As presented before, politicians regularly use the future, or more accurately, the possibility of a threat in the future to legitimise their actions. This was a strategy used by the Hungarian government too, by highlighting in one of their slogans that "Brussels wants to relocate as many illegal migrants to Hungary as the population of a city." In the last weeks leading up to the referendum, the government then changed its slogan to "Let's not risk the future of Hungary! Vote no in the referendum!"

In contrast, the 'joke' HTDP party was making up increasingly ridiculous scenarios for the future. In one of the posts, they stated that "If we get €15000 billion for this anti-campaign, we'll organise the Olympics. Unfortunately, its broadcast will have to be interrupted every tenth

second because of our commercials" (Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party, 2016). In another post, they mocked the rhetoric of the government, and created their own alternative slogan: "Let's not take chances! Let's not weld without protective glasses" (Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party, 2016). The future hypothetical threat is being ridiculed in this slogan too: "Did you know? An average Hungarian sees more UFOs than migrants throughout his life" (Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party, 2016).

So, by making-up ludicrous scenarios for the future, the party was attempting to effectively deligitimise the strategies employed by the government: "The motivation and the form of the carnivalesque are both derived from authority: the second life of the carnival has meaning only in relation to the official first life" (Hutcheon, 1989, p. 99).

Delegitimization through Irrationality

During the campaign, the HTDG had to deal with several challenges; a complaint was filed against them because in one of their slogans they were asking the public whether they were aware that the water authority could put LSD into the water-supply (see first strategy above). The court ruled that all materials and information regarding to this claim had to be destroyed. Since the slogan was only shared on Facebook, they posted the ruling with the caption "We need to destroy the internet on our own costs." (Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party, 2016) This strategy is often used to highlight the irrationality of the main political actors and their actions. In a separate legal action, they were fined in one of the districts of Budapest because their stickers appeared on trash cans. However, in one of their posts they shared a newspaper article in which it was shown that on a different trash can, the 'legitimate' Fidesz sticker was right next to the

HTDG sticker. The ruling party was not fined. The news article was shared with the following text: "It was probably just a misunderstanding" (Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party, 2016). On different occasions, the strategy is employed to stress that they don't claim to make rational choices based on careful consultations. In a post from September 1st, they say: "From today on, the city lights and posters are out. From next week on, we'll distribute the small posters across the country. The distribution on Atlantis will be delayed because our time machine is under maintenance" (Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party, 2016).

Voice of Common People

While politicians often claim that their decisions are backed by experts, in the case of the HTDG they were deligitimising this claim by stressing that they reach resolutions based on people's ideas and will. This is not to be confused with the fifth strategy mentioned above (altruism). The party did not claim to do this for the benefit of people, but they did high-light that this was a grassroots approach. This strategy is quite interesting since it shows a different approach to politics in Central and Eastern Europe, where funding political parties is not common. In the first day of the campaign, they posted the following: "We are where we were last year. 9 million was gathered in one day, and more than 1300 of you have sent us money." (Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party, 2016). Three days later, they asked for slogan ideas: "Hi, we want «Did you know» type of poster ideas, here in the comments. Afterwards, we'll vote on these. Don't just share the texts, create the posters, please. Here is the meme-generator: http://index.hu/belfold/2016/07/21/plakatgenerator/" (Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party, 2016). Moreover, one of the slogans shared on posters across the country was: "Did you know? People are not stupid." (Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party, 2016). So, once again as a deligitimising tool,

this poster was aimed at strengthening the view that commonsense is more important than the opinion of authorities or experts. Gergő Kovács, the leader of the party, explained that when it comes to larger campaigns, "Two thirds, or three quarters, of our ideas come from the people. […] For instance, we write an economic program, post it to Facebook and in a couple of minutes, there are 3-4 better ideas in the comments, so we take it down and add these ideas. So, in fact it really [comes from] the people" (G. Kovács, personal communication, February 17, 2017).
At the end of the campaign then, the following status update strengthens this strategy: "Thank you so much for all the hard work you have invested in this campaign. Besides the results, the other thing I'm the proudest of is that we are the only party in which everybody does everything through volunteering" (Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party, 2016).

Deligitimization through a Ridiculed Altruism

One of the most common rhetorical strategies used in political communication is built on the premise that something is not driven by personal interest, but by a focus on the common good, in this case protecting the Hungarian people from the migrants. Again, the 'joke' party challenged this strategy by bringing up social issues that were framed as being more crucial than the migrant problem. For example, one of their slogans was: "Did you know? More than 1 million people want to leave Hungary for Europe." (Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party, 2016), while another claimed: "Did you know? Since the beginning of the migrant crisis, less has to be spent on the health system." (Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party, 2016). Thus, the party uses a strategy that deligitimises the claim of the officials of serving the benefit of voters. By bringing up the problems of wage inequality, the health system or political corruption, the HTDG further

undermines the government rhetoric.

Conclusion

"Some supporters are keep badgering us to say something serious for once. And I always ask them: but what do you mean?"

(S. Dada, personal communication, May 26, 2017)

This chapter has argued that social media platforms offer new opportunities for enacting "carnivalesque" or "kynicist" performances, particularly in the arena of political parody. For Denith (1995), this performance, "…reproduces within its own structures and by its own practice, the character inversions parodies and discrownings of carnival proper" (p. 65). Laughter and comedy are important to Bakhtin's conceptualization of the carnival, because humor reveals truths to the world (Lachman, 1988). In presenting our case-study on the 'Hungarian Two-tailed Dog' party, and our examination of the meshing of the mainstream with 'outlier' movements, we have demonstrated here how dominant political discourses (the sacred) are subverted through a process of parody (the profane), opening up new spaces of (de)legitimization. Interestingly for us, these outlier parties and groups, rather than being seen as rather temporary moments of subversion and parody, at first glance at least, *seem* to become more mainstream legitimizing forces (as we are seeing in Iceland, Hungary and now Germany).

However, as so much political discourse now takes place online, with major mainstream politicians using social media in their campaigning, the (de)legitimised spaces co-exist with the

legitimised ones forming new dialogues between two quite unstable 'utterances'. In some instances, the dissemination of parodies and memes have become appropriated into, and reworked by, mainstream political discourse discourse – just as Bakhtin's Russian political elites did in the 1920s.. A problem arises however, demonstrated by the electoral success of the Pirate Party in Iceland. Despite the fact that the Pirates did not in the end form a government, they are still now the official opposition. This suggests then that the parodic power of these types of movements is perhaps limited and temporary perhaps: "The parodic text is granted a special license to transgress the limits of convention, but as in the carnival, it can do so only temporarily and only within the controlled confines authorized by the text parodied" (Hutcheon, 1989, p. 100).

So, we would argue here that this has certainly been the case with the Icelandic Pirate movement, and that in Hungary, the HTDP has tested the limits of convention, and no more:

> I can't really tell how many of our 200.000 Facebook fans would vote for us. […] We'll know next year. […] To be honest, for me the parliamentary elections are not important. For me, it's much more important to see what we can do with those couple of hundreds of people that is good for them and good for the city. […] With all these campaigns, I have to confess, my aim is to create something creative and funny, and yet meaningful. The party has two main pillars: one is the funny critique, and the other one is to do something with the 'passivists'. I think it is useless to have one more opposition party that has a serious program. I have no interest to do politics in the traditional way. (G. Kovács, personal communication, February 17, 2017)

Similarly, the Pirate party lost its rhetorical power once it has gained *legitimate* political influence; dialectically, it had become something close to the very thing it had been born to despise: the political mainstream. The *raison d'etre* of these parties is to (de)legitimise, but in doing so, they can become legitimate organisations, that could potentially wield extraordinary power. But, what they have done, is to perhaps re-energise a politically apathetic generation. The next step is to legitimise the wider 'nectorate' and translate their 'likes' into voter registrations. For Bakhtin, the twentieth-century novel was the agent of change and resistance, but as our study perhaps demonstrates, it is the online spaces of (de)legitimization, and the vehicles of social media, which now are shaping political discourse in the twenty-first century, by (de)privileging dominant voices by blending the ruling culture with the profane.

References

2016-os Tudta? Kampány elszámolás. (2016, 10 24). Retrieved from Ketfarkukutya: http://ketfarkukutya.com/?p=2158

Cammaerts, B. (2015). Pirates on the Liquid Shores of Liberal Democracy: Movement frames of European pirate partes. *Javnost: The Public 22 (1)*, 19-36. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2015.1017264

Cap, P. (2008). Towards the proximization model of the analysis of legitimization in political discourse. *Journal of Pragmatics 40*, 17–41. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2007.10.002

Chaloupka, W. (1999). *Everybody knows: Cynicism in America*. Minneapolis: University of

Minnesota Press.

Davies, B., & Harre R. (1990). Positioning: The discursive production of selves. *Journal for the

Theory of Social Behaviour*, *20*(1), 43-63. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-5914.1990.tb00174.x

Dentith, S., 1995. *Bakhtinian thought: An introductory reader*. London: Routledge.

Diamond, J. (1996). *Status and power in verbal interaction. A study of discourse in a close-knit

social network.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Edwards, J, D., & Graulund, R. (2013). *Grotesque*. London: Routledge.

Eurostat. (2016). *Asylum in the EU Member States.* Retrieved from

http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7203832/3-04032016-AP-EN.pdf

Flanagan, M. (2009). *Bakhtin and the movies: New ways of understanding Hollywood film*.

Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

Foucault, M. (2001). *Fearless speech.* (J. Pearson, Ed.) Los Angeles: Semiotext(e).

Gray, J. (2005). *Watching with The Simpsons: Television, parody, and intertextuality*. New York:

Routledge.

Higgie, R. (2014). Kynical dogs and cynical masters: Contemporary satire, politics and truth-

telling. *Humor, 27*(2), 183-201. https://doi.org/10.1515/humor-2014-0016

Holquist, M., (2002). *Dialogism*. London: Routledge.

Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party. (n.d.). Retrieved from Ketfarkukutya:

http://ketfarkukutya.com/?page_id=1233

Hutcheon, L. (1989). Modern parody and Bakhtin. In G. S. Morson & C. Emerson (Eds),

Rethinking Bakhtin: Extensions and challenges (pp. 87-105). Chicago, IL: Northwestern

University Press.

Lachmann, R. (1998). Baktin and carnival: Culture as counter-culture. *Cultural Critique, 11*, 115-152. doi:?????

Morris, P. (1994). *The Bakhtin reader: Selected writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev, Voloshinov*. London: Edward Arnold.

Reyes, A. (2011). Strategies of legitimization in political discourse: From words to actions. *Discourse & Society, 22 (6),* 781-807. doi: 10.1177/0957926511419927

Sloterdijk, P. (1988). *Critique of cynical reason.* London: Verso.

Stam, R. (1989). *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism and Film*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

van Dijk, T.A. (1988) *News as discourse*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Facebook posts

Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party. (2016, September 14). Defeat ISIS with the acid spitting weasel!" Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/14792493292/posts/10154570435758293

Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party. (2016, September 16). Every penny spent on the hate campaign has worth it. A person loyal to Fidesz (or Jobbik, please let us know if you can tell the difference) while tearing down our posters and protecting our women from the migrants, almost beats up a woman, then he is being Anti-semitic. The country is on the right path. Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/14792493292/posts/10154576441868293

Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party. (2016, October 28). Fidesz loyalists, join us! Let's put divergences aside! The country can finally become one for the big common goal: to tear down

the dog party's posters. Retrieved from

https://www.facebook.com/14792493292/posts/10154706356658293

Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party. (2016, August 17). If we'll get 15000 billion for this anti-campaign, we'll organise the Olympics. Unfortunately its broadcast will have to be interrupted every tenth second because of our commercials. Retrieved from

https://www.facebook.com/14792493292/posts/10154484389193293

Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party. (2016, October 1). Let's not take chances! Let's not weld without protective glasses. Retrieved from

https://www.facebook.com/14792493292/posts/10154618359438293

Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party. (2016, September 19). Did you know? An average Hungarian sees more UFOs than migrants throughout his life. Retrieved from

https://www.facebook.com/justanotherwordpresspage/photos/a.10154582455338293.107374186

3.14792493292/10154582464678293/?type=3&theater

Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party. (2016, August 27). We need to destroy the internet on our own costs. Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/14792493292/posts/10154513691648293

Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party. (2016, September 14). It was probably just a misunderstanding. Retrieved from

https://www.facebook.com/14792493292/posts/10154569684758293

Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party. (2016, September 1). From today on, the city lights and posters are out. From next week on, we'll distribute the small posters across the country. The distribution on Atlantis will be delayed because our time machine is under maintenance. Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/14792493292/posts/10154530522093293

Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party. (2016, August 18). We are where we were last year. 9 million was gathered in one day, and more than 1300 of you have sent us money. Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/14792493292/posts/10154486725208293

Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party. (2016, August 21). Hi, we want "Did you know?" type of poster ideas, here in the comments. Afterwards, we'll vote on these. Don't just share the texts, create the posters, please. Here is the meme-generator: http://index.hu/belfold/2016/07/21/plakatgenerator/ Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/14792493292/posts/10154495799758293

Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party. (2016, October 3). Thank you so much for all the hard work you have invested in this campaign. Besides the results, the other thing I'm the most proud of is that we are the only party in which everybody does everything through volunteering. Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/14792493292/posts/10154624700433293

Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party. (2016, September 19) Did you know? More than 1 million people want to leave Hungary for Europe. Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/justanotherwordpresspage/photos/a.10154582455338293.107374186

3.14792493292/10154582457303293/?type=3&theater

Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party. (2016, September 19). Did you know? Since the beginning of

the migrant crisis less has to be spent on the health system. Retrieved from

https://www.facebook.com/justanotherwordpresspage/photos/a.10154582455338293.107374186

3.14792493292/10154582467828293/?type=3&theater