Political

"Political" shares its root with "polis"—referring to people in a place or a society. The "polis" was, ideally, a society in which debate and decisions could be achieved since it was a small, intelligent, and flexible society in which there were few enough members that regulatory bureaucracies could be kept to a minimum if not entirely dispensed with. "Political" is the adjective referring to disciplines and practices involving the polis or politic —political science, political processes, political animals perhaps?

"Political" is very frequently deployed as a negative adjective. The word now so often connotes irksome bureaucracy and debates that have become non-debates since they are in fact irresolvable. "Political" people—whether or not they are individuals, committee members or indeed members of legislatures, are those people who stall important and inevitable decisions, or who truly do make mountains out of molehills. "Political" people and institutions are true specialists at thinking globally while being unable to act locally.

The word "political" becomes tricky to define when it is deployed in relation to art or artistic practices (or artistic mentalities). Art, and not only according to high modernists, is supposed to be somewhere between apolitical and *beyond* political—free of ideological baggage not to mention state, corporate, or self-censorship. How many of those concerned with political or "identity-related" representational issues have not been accused of being *non* or *anti*-artists because of the accusers' inability to grasp that the artworks in question have their own intrinsic formal logics that must encompass so-called "bad politics?" Of course, the most negligible consequence of "political correctness" is political incorrectness for its own sake; an aggressive insistence that "political incorrectness is subversive." For every inspired individual who may well problematize rote ideologies either by means of radically-subjective associations or by (sigh) virtuosity of execution so stunning that it cannot be simply ignored or refused, there are so many hack "artists" who feel threatened by serious representational issues and who thus "act out" by pandering to the (not necessarily) cheap seats. In such an arena, there are allegedly no politics. There is only the question of whether it is beautiful or ugly, funny or painfully earnest.

The actor who becomes a successful politician is of course mirrored by the politician who is really an actor. For some time now it has been a reality that professional politicians are in fact anything but politically-motivated. The desire to achieve executive power and then maintain it for its own sake does not necessarily involve having any sort of political agenda. Agendas are often the last complication that the mythical average voter or citizen needs to hear about. "Political" is now more often than not deployed to refer to what is either not at all actually political or what is an

unintended parody of political discourse. The word "political," in fact, is now frequently a derogatory term for a perception of over-bureaucratization. An individual who causes meetings to drag on interminably because she or he always has to ask too many either legitimate or trite questions is "political." Nothing ever gets done within or by such organizations because decisions can never be made—the organizations actually become the antithesis of "political."

The labeling of individuals or organizations as being "political"—however tongue-in-cheek or sarcastic such labeling might intentionally be—does reek of a barely-latent modernism that has never quite disappeared even through the decades of postmodernism during which "art for art's sake" and "art devoid of all possible meanings except for those intrinsic to its literal formal realities" have been scorned and ridiculed by so many countless academics, cultural theorists and pundits. The reality of granting-agencies, curators and selection committees has always rested upon concepts of excellence regardless of politics, or perhaps excellence regardless of whether or not the art or artist actually has any politics. When an artist or artwork is labeled "political," the labeling is prompted by the fact that such art or artist cannot easily be homogenized or airbrushed. The political agenda is too apparent, too much a part of the art's or artist's intention to be safely formalized. The labeling may be derogatory or complimentary, but, within selection processes founded upon an apolitical notion of "excellence" such a labeling can easily become a means of denial or censure. He/she/it is simply too damn *political*.

For many global citizens, largely but not at all exclusively young or youthful, the words "politics" and "political" have come to refer to processes removed from immediate situations and realities. "Politics" is quasi-synonymous with parliamentarism, democracy with all of the signs but without any significant decision-making and subsequent actions. The people comprising the legislatures are far removed from those who could (or did) vote them into power. Members of parliament need to be wealthy to even consider standing for election and are hopelessly compromised by their contradictory funding sources. Positional adjectives such as "left" and "right" have lost historical meanings and relevance. Is this shift indicative of the fact that Marxism is all but extinct and that social democracies are obsessed with achieving and then retaining power and are thus so obsessed with trying to please everybody that they have in fact abandoned politics? Or is this more an indication of frustration and anger at useless bureaucracies of all ideological stripes that merely serve to impede site-specific decisions that must be made quickly and without delay in immediate situations where rational rather than irrational efficiency is exactly what the doctor must order. Political individuals are in these situations dinosaurs—well-intentioned liberals who only slow everything

down in the ultimately irrelevant interest of "fairness" and simulated democracy. Ironically, this impatience with big politics and cumbersome parliamentary procedures returns political discourse back to the polis in which there were many but not far too many voices with the right to be heard and in which cacophony and false anarchy could be avoided as long as people were willing to listen and concentrate on the problem at hand.

So…is the vacillating hostility and indifference to politics and the "political" an indication of a post-political *Zeitgeist*? And what might be meant by "post-political?" That political discourse itself be taken for granted and then acted upon? That citizens of the globe might actually be up to the daunting task of anarchy—referring not to chaos but to self-government? Is anarchy even remotely feasible as long as profit motives for both individuals and multi-national corporations not only exist but are celebrated? Is "post-political" synonymous with "post-historical," meaning that superficially-unregulated free enterprise has won the war and become the governing ideology by pretending not to be an ideology? Is "post-political" anarchy by default? Are there any viable alternatives or is it simply fatigue and exasperation camouflaged by bravura? Are "post-political" and "apolitical" synonymous? I hope not, but I often suspect so.

—**Andrew James Paterson**

Popoloid

ponder a popoloid segment

shape shifter propels zings through space whistling alien
whooooistles hoooo oooo oooo

where's my brain
I left in Spain or maybe it slipped down the drain
I left it in haloes above my head

a poisonous flower

pulls stretches taut twists curves bend snakelike wraps around compresses
    tight
whisper blow breathe through it hollow
from one ear to the other
listen

pompous and portly worn on head or haloed a crown
around a waist a throat atop a head encircling a wrist ankle a charm

positively possesses portent powers and possibilities to posture as
    propellors through