Bodies in Virtual Simulations
Politics in the Age of Information and New Capitalism
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1. Body politics
In the age of new capitalism and information society the human body has become a cultural sign. This process is reflected by new theatre movements. Hans-Thies Lehmann (2006) notes that in postdramatic theatre, "[o]ften shocking physicality occurs, and the body becomes the centre of attention."[1] Lehmann notes that the same process is happening in popular culture: "[a]ll social issues first have to pass through this needle's eye, they all have to adopt the form of a physical issue. Love appears as a sexual presence, death as AIDS, beauty as physical perfection."[2]

As the generation born from the 1960s to the 1990s rejects former ways of understanding political discourse as verbal discourse in the parliament, new social activism has taken the form of bodily-oriented actionism. Ecological movements consider everyday life, with subjective lifestyles and consuming practices, as a part of politics, reflecting a vision of interdependence between processes of nature, society, politics and humanity.[3] For example, the early green movement tied human bodies to earth movers in order to prevent the ruin of Koijärvi, a Finnish natural treasure.[4]

The decline of the political in the 1970s
In Finnish theatre a period of political theatre ended at the beginning of 1980s. Regarding the situation of Finnish independent theatre groups, Marja Packalén noted, in 1980, a shift in socially critical art from interpreting society through simple political polarities, to a new stage: "A more profound phase is ahead of us, in which humanity must be analyzed as a whole including all kinds of processes, through a more profound understanding of interrelations between contexts and influences."[5]

This development is akin to the arguments by sociologists Richard Sennett (2007) and Paolo Virno (2004), that the form of politics represented by political parties and the political system in general has lost its power during the shift from organized capitalism into a new, disorganized capitalism.[6]

Virtualism
However, the time of new capitalism has a double face: virtual illusions of media, virtual capacity and limitless possibilities of computer-based technology, the virtual essence of the finance market, virtual money and prospects, make our time essentially virtual. The virtual functions of the finance market form a power matrix, which has an

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[1] Lehmann 2006, 95. Erika Fischer-Lichte's (2008) analysis of Marina Abramovic's *The Lips of Thomas* (1975) also posits Abramovic's body and the ways she violates it as the central locus of meaning, while narrative and other elements of drama are absent.
[2] Lehmann 2006, 96
[3] Konttinen 1998, 195; cf. Alasuutari 1996, 250
[4] See Konttinen 1998. The Koijärvi case started the ecological movement's action in Finland in 1978.
[5] *Teatteri* 2/1980, 3
[6] See Sennett 2007, 149-152; Virno 2004, 49-51

authority to transform the world into its own image, as Daniel Miller (1998) has noted.[7] In work places the computer and servo technologies help to perform tasks, but they have become also a threat for human identity: their speed and performance capacity is compared with that of a human agent. Furthermore, the technology has become a point of departure for new cultural models of work management, and even for the bodily practices of subjects, as Jon McKenzie (2001) has noted. As Scott Lash (2002) suggests, the whole of culture has been technologized.

Aesthetic society and politics

The three social developments – emergence of bodily practices, decline of former politics, and emergence of the virtual – seem to be interrelated. The body and the virtual seem to represent opposite social agendas. There is good reason to question if the two competing social forms, bodily and virtual, are political in nature. If so, how can we analyze their collision?

Hypothetically, this development is grounded in two factors: 1) The social structures of Western society have returned into *pre-modern forms*. Quite many researchers, mainly sociologists, but also theatre researcher Erika Fischer-Lichte (2008) share the view that in the age of new capitalism, structures of society and forms of social discourse are more and more comparable to those in the 17th century.[8] 2) The possibilities offered by technology have territorialized the realm of *humanity aiming at its transcendence*, which in modernity was territorialized by utopian "grand narratives" human equality, welfare, truth, justice through rational reasoning.[9]

Regarding the virtual spaces of new capitalism, Rob Shields (2003) has made a comparison between the power matrix created by the virtuality of the finance market, and the religious power of Catholicism in the seventeenth century: the Eucharist, and the virtual sensations of the Baroque churches. Finance market is 'virtually real' in the way the real body and blood of Christ are. Thus, the finance market is a virtual entity and abstraction like Catholicism:

> [e]conomic activities are treated as disconnected from all other spheres of activity. The cultural and social aspects of work, for example ... Where the existing world does not conform to the academic model, the onus is not on changing the model, testing it against the world, but on changing the world, testing us against the model. The very power of this new form of abstraction is that it can indeed act to eliminate the particularities of the world.[10]

Regarding the influence of the economy on forms of social critique, Lash (2002) argues that those of the manufacturing society – e.g. the Frankfurt school and 'French theory' (Foucault, Lacan, Derrida) – have lost their power, based as they are on the

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[7] Miller 1998, 196; Shields 2003, 161-2
[8] See Lash 2002, Lash & Urry 1994, Virno 2006, Fischer-Lichte 2008
[9] See McKenzie 2001, 162-3; Lyotard 1984
[10] Miller 1998, 196; Shields 2003, 161-2

transcendent possibilities of humanity, on "grand narratives" and verbal discourse. They appeal to the realm of human thought, which is indentified with truth, being, the primordial and the like. Now, however, global information and technology have territorialized the realm of humanity's transcendent possibilities, suggesting a shift toward self-organizing, nonhuman functions and processes. Thus, in order to criticize technology, one cannot appeal to transcendence, i.e. the virtual. The whole composition has turned upside down: new social critique has given up the 'virtual,' and identifies rhetorically with the 'concrete': the limits of the human; the body.[11]

Furthermore, the new politics appears to be operating through aesthetic forms. Lash and Urry (1994) argue that the roots of new aesthetical politics (*aesthetical reflexivity*) are in "another modernity" represented by eighteenth century poet Charles Baudelaire – that of poetry and popular aesthetics[12]; Lash (2002) refers to Walter Benjamin's analysis of Paris in Baudelaire's time.[13] For Baudelaire the body seemed to be a cultural sign, critical to the ethos pre-modern capitalism expressed by the virtual spaces of consuming culture in Paris. Apart from materializing the façade of the metropolis and its Hausmannian boulevards (*panoramas*), his poetry created – through montages of low class quarters and bodily experiences of trash – a *dialectical image* of the very discontinuity of the commodity form, as Walter Benjamin has noted.[14] This is where Lash and Urry see the roots of aesthetic politics as a current political form of the information society.[15] This is the politics of the psychophysical in relation to the virtual essence of our time. Baudelaire reflected a centuries old polarization between the virtual and the 'concrete.'[16]

But so, I think, do the new social movements of the information age. Indeed, the new aesthetic forms of social critique bear comparison with Martin Luther's act of nailing his ninety-five theses on the Wittenberg church door in 1517, arguing that the bread and wine of Eucharist are not the real body and blood of Christ but only 'virtually real.' The old polarization has new dimensions, actualized through the co-existence of human agents and new technology. In this comparison the term *virtual* stands for the possibilities of technology, a new form of *transcendence*: something which can be achieved, something that is not concrete or concretely present *yet* – but could become so. The opposite of the virtual is the 'concrete': something that is concretely present or possible. The 'concrete' then is the human body. Thus, the virtual versus 'concrete' becomes the performativity of technology versus the human body and its limits.

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[11] See Lash 2002, 8-9
[12] Lash & Urry 1994, 5
[13] See Buck-Morss 1989, Benjamin 1973
[14] Buck-Morss 1989, 209-15
[15] Lash & Urry 1994, 5-6
[16] Shields 2003, 9-11: the panorama was the virtual form of Baudelaire's Paris, comparable to baroque illusions.

2. The Borromini arcade and the body

In order to create a general metaphor of how the aesthetic strategy might work and what the relations of the virtual and the psychophysical body in the age of new capitalism and information society are, I use my own experience of Baroque virtuality. In the Palazzo Spada, Rome, there is an arcaded courtyard built by the famous Baroque architect, Francesco Borromini (1599–1667). Its diminishing rows of columns and its rising floor create a visual illusion of a gallery thirty-seven meters long with a lifesize sculpture at the end of the vista, in daylight beyond. When I and my wife were standing in front of the arcade, in summer 2011, it was impossible to believe what we read in the book: that that the length of the gallery was only eight meters. Entering the arcade was strictly forbidden for tourists. However, our speculation interested the guard so much, that he offered to enter to the arcade himself. The guard walked through the arcade in eight long steps, and we witnessed how the optical illusion collapsed in front of our eyes. All that was needed was a human body to enter the virtual illusion.

In new capitalism the self-organizing functions of finance capitalism are as complicated to estimate as Borromini's illusion.[17] I sketch a scenario of a political psychophysical performance out of my experience of Borromini's illusion: the political content of art is the co-existence of the virtual and the bodily concrete. Two elements must exist for a performance to take place: 1) given a *context or scene*, concretely materializing a virtual perspective or illusion such that an embodied subject may enter and territorialize the virtual realm, 2) the actual *entrance of a body* therein – metaphorically, into the Borromini arcade – causes a sensation, a collapse of the virtual.

For the theatre, the more problematic element is the scene/context. I want to stress the importance of the scene/context in this article. It is very difficult for theatre to materialize convincingly the functions of virtual social mechanisms.[18] Further, there is the problem of when a social scene can be considered political? What social issue would equally materialize in virtual and bodily forms? With the argument that everyday life has itself become political – proper enough, I think – we are in danger of stating that everything is political. But if everything is political, then nothing is.

Which political scene, in new capitalism, would resemble that of the manufacturing society, of capitalistic mechanisms and production in relation to the human worker? The sphere of work and work places would appear to contain such political tension. Only with new capitalism has work displaced political action as a zone of emergence for important social, technological and even cultural developments.[19] Debates over human rights and technological development pervade work places and the management of firms. The context of work has become the testing field for human

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[17] A political example of the Borromini illusion was enacted by the Finnish government in the spring of 2011, when they wasted nearly three weeks in discussion on the amount of the Finland's long-term economic deficit. The virtual calculations offered by economists seemed so ephemeral – five to ten milliard euros – that politicians didn't trust them. (Cf. the blog of member Antti Koivisto, 3.2.2011).

[18] I do not think the body is the difficult element – the problems of bodily freedom and restrictions have been examined earlier e.g. by performative theory. The scene/context by comparison has changed substantially, yet it has not been theorized as much.

[19] See Sennett 2007, 149-52; Virno 2004, 49-51

workers in relation to new innovations in production. The scene of work has not lost its politically loaded meaning, even as ideological binaries of the right and the left may have.

Thus, I have chosen the sphere of human work as the scene/context to examine in this article. The context of work is proper for political performance also because it essentially concerns the human body. Thus, if one is up to criticize the virtual in the age of new capitalism, all the essential aspects – virtual (technology) and the body – are 'naturally' materialized in the context of work. Work is easy to simulate because everyone knows it and most even partake in it in their quotidian life.

Body politics in the social sciences

As a socially critical strategy, the 'aesthetical politics' of the virtual vs. 'concrete' is exemplified in analyses of new capitalistic work by sociologists Richard Sennett (2007), Scott Lash and John Urry (1994), and Juha Siltala (2004), and also performance scholar Jon McKenzie (2001). Focusing on processes essential to human experience (time, legitimation, senses, forms of discourse), they portray how work is arranged in the work places of new capitalism. In their analysis, the virtual performance capacity of technology has become the very criterion for the legitimation of work.[20] They do not speak about politics; their critique is aesthetical. This is especially important given Sennett's and Siltala's publicly announced left-wing sympathies – in their studies, however, political argumentation is absent or rather replaced by an aesthetic body politics. In other words, the body has taken over an agenda which earlier was represented by left wing politics: that of the position and human rights of the worker.

According to Lash, the co-existence of human agents and new technology (i.e. the human–machine interface) is a central social issue for new capitalism and the information age.[21] In the work places of the new economy, technology has had a pervasive influence on the human body: models of computer and servo technologies have become models of work management and hence of the cultural performance of workers.[22] The work place appears to be the central context of these transformations. Many important work activities take place below the threshold of human consciousness, and this has an effect on social time.[23] Lash defines this as the *speed-up* of culture. Jeremy Rifkin (1987) notes that nearly 50 per cent of American workers use electronic equipment, reducing the time-frame of work performance to nanoseconds.[24] Technology helps workers to perform tasks, but the human body does not adapt to it naturally.

Because of this speed-up, culture in general has become increasingly ephemeral.[25] For Sennet, this ephemerality entails that the social subject can no longer make

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[20] McKenzie 2001
[21] Lash 2002, 15
[22] McKenzie 2001, 76
[23] Lash & Urry 1994, 242
[24] Rifkin 1987, 14
[25] Lash 2002, 18

long-term life plans. While often life-long in modernity, work contracts have also become ephemeral. [26] Thus, technology has had a profound influence on human life.

There seem to be no limits to technology. This limitlessness creates an "excessive" desire to multitask, innovate, and indeed exceed oneself, a desire which drives across different thresholds in order to test the limits themselves. [27]

In trying to adapt to the virtual capacity of technology, however, the 'concrete' body suffers from stress and exhaustion. The bodily symptoms are alarming. However, if the conditions of work are to be changed, remarkable transformations in capitalist production are in order. Because of this, I argue, there is strong political potential to the aesthetic simulation of sociological literature.

In terms of the Borromini illusion, the sociological studies cited 1) simulate the virtual essence of work places (technology, the ethos of capacity) and 2) let the human body enter it. A battle of two perspectives begins. One is the performance capacity and productivity of the new capitalist industry, the state of economy. The other perspective are the bodily symptoms of workers in technologized culture.

I argue that one of the most important and also politically loaded questions of our time concers the position of the human agent in this virtual power matrix. What is the situation of the subject's welfare and his constitutional rights, his basic value in relation to non-human forms of technology? In what form do social power and ideologies now appear, and what do the new ideologies represent?

3. Body politics in the theatre

Closer to my own field, it is performance studies rather than theatre per se that best exemplifies the sociological body politics of work – and this distinction is of remarkable importance: in textual research, is much easier to employ the strategies of sociological literature. Jon McKenzie's *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance* (2001) engages the context of new capitalistic work: the cultural performances of work paradigms and of workers in the new economy, and the influence of technology on workers' bodies.

McKenzie attempts to analyze what kinds of aesthetics would technology's influence entail, culturally and psychophysically. He shows how subjects perform to technological models in their leisure time. More important, he shows that the human body is a political issue. There is theatricality in work places.

McKenzie's great advantage and general substance lies in his analysis of casual workers. It is easy to identify with them. Almost every reader of McKenzie's or Sennett's books goes to work daily. Most readers of sociological books are like them. They are *the everyman*, their experiences can befall everyone. Thus, the body politics works perfectly: the body becomes political because the context is very convincingly shared by many.

However, there is a clear distinction between McKenzie's analysis and concrete forms of theatre. It is very problematic to adapt McKenzie's vision of theatricality and

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[26] Sennett 2007, 11-13
[27] McKenzie 2001, 188

performing bodies from the context of work to that of a theatrical stage, given that he analyses the concrete praxis of subjects who are not conscious of their performativity, nor aiming at any metacommentary on their culture through their bodily presence. They do not frame their bodily performances as theatrical. The illusion of their innocence is remarkably important for the reader's interpretation, yet also essential to the context of work.

McKenzie frames the workers in his analysis as performers and their work as a performance, but only succeeds in this on the level of text, of *textual narrative* – akin to sociological literature. I find it very difficult to place McKenzie's working subjects on a theatrical stage: the illusion of their innocence will be lost. Regarding how conventional theatre or performance art could materialize the average work context, McKenzie does not seem to have a solution. When he analyses cases of performance art, he *changes the context* radically – and this is a symptomatic act: he leaves the politically loaded context of work in the power matrix of society, and moves from this center of social work into a very marginal context of art and the queer.

For example, he analyses the case of *Chicken Woman*: a performance by Linda Montato, in which she placed wired gages for chicken in a gallery, with three chickens in each, moving them between the different cages over several days. In the performance process initiated by this act, Montato drove around the city playing chicken sounds on loudspeakers . . . and eventually became a chicken woman herself.[28] I admit there is politics in this act, yet it only engages the minor contexts of a gallery and the city. The context is not political – or everything is. And Montato, for sure, is not an average person in an average position, easily indentifiable for all.

Indeed, the leading position McKenzie's approach has achieved in the field of Performance Studies can well be criticized – and has, by Marvin Carlson (2004) – on the basis of his total neglect of traditional forms of theatre. In slightly different terms, he shifts into a context characteristic of postdramatic theatre, which Lehmann defines as a strategy of the psychophysical body: "In their relationship to the body theatre works become obsessed with fitness, health and – depending on the point of view – the either fascinating or uncanny possibilities of the 'techno-body'."[29]

Fitness, health, 'techno-body,' and AIDS, are central cultural issues of our time, and also present in our politics. Yet examples like Montato's *Chicken Woman* – or consider Needcompany's *The Lobster Shop* by Jan Lauwers – remain beyond sociological studies like McKenzie's, given their overtly political scene/context. I would define them as cultural critique.

It may be an old-fashioned modernist tendency to try to define binary boundaries for cultural critique and politics, virtual politics of art, and concrete politics. I legitimate my critique by the need I wrote about earlier: if everything is political, then nothing is.

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[28] See McKenzie 2001, 217
[29] Lehmann 2006, 96-97

A performance of work and workers: Jouko Turkka's
Era at the Theatre Academy of Finland, 1982–1985

The case I choose to materialize elements of the "Borromini model" comes from Finnish theatre education: theatre director Jouko Turkka's era at the Theatre Academy of Finland from 1982 to 1985.[30] I examine it in order to show how theatre can indeed materialize new capitalistic work as a context of psychophysical bodies, and employ the virtual cyberspaces of the media as its theatrical stage. Furthermore I want to show that it may lead to remarkable transformations in theatre's essence.

The case was about the *praxis* of work. It was a sociological case: actor students practiced acting studies for two and a half years. They were not intentionally performing their praxis as a theatrical representation. However, Turkka's era became the most visible case of Finnish postwar theatre history, in the media.

Turkka's era 1) materialized the context of work in a way comparable to McKenzie and the sociological literature, and also 2) 'the virtual' through the media space of the emergent information society; moreover, it 3) brought the psychophysical body into these contexts, and 4) aroused social controversy because of these combinations.

Turkka's main argument was that the conditions of the actor's work had changed in the Finland of the 1980s: professional actors were required new abilities of *freelance work*[31] in order to make a career in the profession. He argued that this change was a part of a larger cultural shift.[32] Turkka's solution was to build a performance environment into the space of theatre education, simulating the conditions of a new kind of work and thus accustoming the actor students, already in their education, to its new norms and challenges.

Turkka arranged the performance environment to be as discontinuous (no reliable time perspective), as hectic (the speed-up) and as productive (the capacity) as possible – materializing the three major shifts in legitimation, time, and perspective. He underlined the students' everyday praxis and behavior as cultural performance.

Turkka also argued that given the speed-up of the theatrical field, he would not teach permanent acting techniques but rather, abilities to make any style and technique one's own as fast as possible: to adapt, to survive, to win.[33] Thirdly – and this is of remarkable importance – Turkka strictly forbade all political terminology, arguing that all meanings should be conducted through the needle's eye of the actor's body.[34]

Turkka required his students to embody the degree of capacity present in Anglo-American films and television, whose cultural influence hit Finland hard in the 1980s. Capacity was performed through extreme sports and extremely hard psychophysical

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[30] See Ollikainen 1987 and Kallinen 2004: Turkka was Professor of acting between 1981 and 1982, and Rector of the Theatre Academy between 1983 and 1985.

[31] Prior to the 1980s most actors did get regular employment, but since then the profession has become more free lance based. Turkka foresaw this. See Ollikainen 1988.

[32] Cf. Alasuutari 1996, Siltala 2004

[33] Ollikainen 1988, 16, 197. Kirsikka Siikala, *Helsingin Sanomat* 29.8.1982. These postulates match quite perfectly with Sennett's, about new capitalistic workers: see Sennett 2007, 11-13.

[34] See Siikala, *Helsingin Sanomat* 29.8.1982

exercises, as a training method; through extreme productivity on the part of the theatre institution[35], and through unforeseen public attention and visibility in media.

Life in the performance environment was exhausting and some students were about to burn out from time to time.[36] Thus, the demands of capacity on the workers affected their bodies much as Sennett, Siltala and McKenzie have documented. However, the students were very motivated: they announced this view to the media and supported Turkka. But witnessing the exhaustion of their bodies catalyzed protests in the social context: Turkka's education created a cultural strife in media discourse: many commentaries – positive and negative – were published in newspapers and television. But it also became a political matter, forcing politicians to take a stand on it.

Virtual performance

As the most visible and discussed period of Finnish postwar theatre, the very form of Turkka's era was characteristic of social crises or political strife. The period continues to be debated through to the 21st century. It must be taken into account that the era was a *simulation*: it was simulating, not opposing, new capitalism. Thus, it had to be effective. Rob Shields writes about simulations:

> Virtual worlds are simulations. Like a map, they usually start out as reproducing actual worlds, real bodies and situations; but, like simulations ... they end up taking on a life of their own. Somewhere along the way they begin to diverge, either when it is realized that no map can be so complete that it represents an actual landscape fully, or when they become prized as more perfect than messy materiality. As virtual worlds, they become 'virtuous', utopian. [37]

In my opinion, the concept of the 'utopia' materialized in Turkka's era in two ways: 1) as a social issue, and 2) as theatrical form. Its subject was the political utopia of new capitalism in Finland in the 1980s. As Daniel Miller argues, the economic activities of new capitalism are an abstraction, disconnected from all other spheres of activity – but, like religion, they still have a power to change the world.[38] Turkka's educational simulation was of this very utopia: in Finland, the whole society strove to adapt to the economical and political structures of new capitalism and new liberalism.

Turkka's era was an institutional panorama. It simulated how all classes, in the 1980s in Finland, took part in the emergence of new capitalism in a united, almost holy manner. It can be compared to Baroque paintings or Romantic panoramas which, apart from institutional content and meaning, had an *institutional placement* in their time. The cultural performance of Turkka's Theatre Academy in the media was a panorama, a large painting portraying those who attended its national institutional

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[35] See Kallinen 2004, 92. Before Turkka's era, the amount of student productions was circa 10 per year. In his first year the amount increased to 33. In the pinnacle in 1986, one year after Turkka's era, the Theatre Academy presented 54 public performances.

[36] Interview of actor student Satu Silvo in Paavolainen 1999, 133

[37] Shields 2003, 4

[38] Miller 1998, 196; Shields 2003, 161-2

project and its cultural aesthetics: collectively, all figures were placed in groupings, all classes united in some collectively shared enterprise – like the religious events enacted in baroque churches.[39] Indeed, Turkka's era was ultimately baroque in style.

However, the virtual utopia of Turkka's era concerned not only the content of its performance, but the structures and techniques of its widespread media spectacle: it was not 'concretely present' like theatre performed in a conventional theatre space, but 'virtually present'; it was information in the media. Originally it was Turkka who created the illusion of grounding his education on the 'virtual idea' of Finnish work in the 1980s. He promoted his basic idea for the media very intensively. Thus, from the beginning the substance of his theatre education was mirrored against many contextual factors. Because of these discursive and contextual mirrors and double-mirrors the media image of the era was akin to baroque ceilings, which render a dramatic space of swirling movement and trick the eye through forced perspective and mirrors: *much bigger than the actual event*, its size, a function of contextual mirrors.[40]

Turkka's era became a public *narrative*, much as the love episode of Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky has in the United States.[41] Over both cases, literary texts abound – in the latter, they range from law suits and legal reports to romantic biographies, in the former, they have been produced by researchers and former students alike. Yet the narrative status of Turkka's era cannot be divorced from its daily practices, motivated as his students were by the very narrative Turkka told them about themselves: that they represent Finnish citizens. Further, as both reach their power as narrative texts, Turkka's era can also be compared to sociological literature and to McKenzie's research. The issue is the same: a political narrative, a very concrete spectacle of workers, their praxis, and the influences of technology (speed, time perspective, capacity) on the human body. Moreover, as the *readers'* speech acts also partake of the general narrative, its discourse has also widened the length of its performance: rhetorical debate over the ethics of theatre education has not ceased even in the 21st century.

As such a cyberspace, Turkka's era also allowed into its discourse the thoroughly mediated interactivity of audience participation. I argue that in its form of media visibility Turkka's era materialized the 'virtually true' of the Borromini arcade: rhetorically identified with other media contents, it destabilized them by also admitting the human body. For sure it differs from any other theatre practice in Finland, and shows how large transformations an attempt to employ the aesthetic reflexivity of baroque virtual aesthetics and body politics can entail, when the political context is enacted properly.

What politics?

Was this complex form of different aesthetics a political theatrical performance? It certainly was not the "linear", ideological politics of modernity. We must ask whether

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[39] In palaces more earthly happenings, full of sexual content were shown.
[40] Cf. Shields 2003, 8
[41] See Maria Mäkelä in Hatavara *et al.* (eds.) 2010, s. 187-219

body politics, its origins not in the Enlightment but in "another modernity" – that of Baudelaire – remains politics, or is it just aesthetics?

Lash and Urry define *aesthetic reflexity* as self-interpretation and as the interpretation of social background practices, carried on while simultaneously being-in-the-world.[42] We need events to discuss, exposing essential elements of our time to public reflection. Politics needs "conrete life." It appears that Turkka's era revealed the social background of Finnish cultural practices in the 1980s in a way that one can discuss them afterwards. It is crucial that Turkka's actor-subjects appeared on the verge of exhaustion and psychophysical collapse – while at the same time, the new social atmosphere was conceived as one full of space, air and lightness. It now appears that the virtual aesthetics of the media and the finance market – which at first appeared to entertain people – masked the appearance of new power. Shields puts this as follows:

> At its pinnacle, the Baroque offered the thoroughly mediated interactivity of audience participation in the spectacle of its own rule. ... [It] 'was, like postmodernism today, at once a technique of power of a dominant class in a period of reaction and figuration of the limits of that power' ... we need to understand the culture of spectacle in the first Baroque as the beginnings of our own [time of new capitalism – J.T.]. To understand that the vertigo of imperial expansion, the terrors of absolute power and the morbid fascination with decay and mortality have been transformed into these virtual architectures is to catch a glimpse of the emergence of our own obsessions with the universe as our object of possession, our anxieties about absolute commodification.[43]

Thus, when Turkka and his actor students became part of the virtual spectacle of 1980s media, they intruded a realm of emergent social and political power. As merely entering the Boromini arcade suffices to collapse its perspectival illusion, the bodies of actor students intruded a discursive space full of lightness and swirling movement, and collapsed this illusion. The effect is quite the same as that materialized by Baudelaire in his poetry, during the Romantic period in pre-capitalistic Paris. This is the politics of the psychophysical in relation to the virtual essence of our time.

However, the form of aesthetic politics appears problematic from the viewpoint of political influence. The very content of the Turkka discourse remains open. It has not been understood as political – and neither has the poetry of Baudelaire. Both are known as cultural acts, which provoked cultural strife – culture, not politics. In this article, my narrative aims to introduce a view of Turkka's era as aesthetic politics – after thirty years. However, my text belongs to cultural studies. It is not politics.

What is politics? Politics lies behind the aesthetic forms of religion, economics and politics itself. It is something opposite to the body of an average worker.

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[42] Lash & Urry 1994, 5-6
[43] Shields 2003, 8, quoting J. Beverley 1993, 64 (*Against Literature*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), quoted in S. Cubitt 1998, 75 (*Digital Aesthetics*, London: Sage)

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