THE BODY AS INTERFACE:
AMBIVALENT TACTILITY IN EXPANDED RUBE CINEMA

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TOUCHABLE INTERFACE, TACTILE EXPERIENCE

On an airplane, a middle-aged American salesperson Joe is attracted by Anna Maria, a beautiful but naïve Italian airhostess. During a stopover in Bangkok, he films her with a movie camera (fig. 1) and keeps after her everywhere like a child begging maternal affection. While he never stops pestering her, a psychiatrist gives her fiancé advice that she should act more sluttish because Joe is a psychopath fixated on her purity. Anna Maria's sudden promiscuous manner and attire at a bar, then, disappoints Joe utterly so that he laments the loss of his 'dream girl' by projecting her virginal image onto the wall of his room. He kisses and hugs the mirage, which also glimmers on his own body, comically yet pathetically (figs. 2-6).

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Entitled *Virginity* (*Illibatezza*), this is the first episode of a peculiar omnibus film *Ro.Go.Pa.G* (1963) — the acronym that combines the directors' names: Rossellini, Godard, Pasolini, and Gregoretti. These impressive auteurs unfold four unrelated sections about the film's rough premise, "the joyous beginning of the end of the world." Rossellini's *Virginity* received harsh criticism as the film's "weakest and least interesting segment," a "frivolous and dismayingly pedestrian screwball comedy [that] couldn't be further removed in terms of its tone and style from the raw neo-realism with which he made his name."[1] But if we can ever renew film history by redeeming overlooked or dismissed fragments, *Virginity* may be redeemed. Rather than pulling it back to Rossellini's famed realism, however, I will reframe it in terms of *interface* that means the contact surface between image and spectator, a notion that can be applied to the camera, the filmstrip, and the screen. *Virginity* is a film in which the body-subject comes into physical contact with the medium-interface, raising new questions about the touchable interface and tactile experience. The focus in cinematic spectatorship shifts from eye to body, retina to skin, perception to sensation, vision to participation, and suture to *embodiment*. I will then define *interfaciality* as the intrinsic dialectic between two bodies, an embodied dialectic specified through multiple facets of what I call *ambivalent tactility*. A film within a film, i.e., an interface on screen engages us with this interfaciality that is hardly limited to the old notion of self-reflexivity. This time cinema does not address the subject's passive eye, but incites him to become an active body, complicating subjectivity, the embodied agency of interfaciality.

"WALKING" THROUGH PSYCHOANALYSIS, ACTING "OUT OF" NARCISSISM

The ending of *Virginity* perfectly serves to open our discussion. It obviously visualizes Joe's Jonah complex implied in the film's epigraph, a passage from

psychologist Alfred Adler about man's desire for "a refuge which had once protected and nurtured him: the mother's womb." Joe's love is nothing but a regressive search for the pre-Oedipal refuge through his surrogate mother Anna Maria. Furthermore, it is easy to psychoanalyze not just Joe the character but Joe the spectator, with a common 1970s vocabulary. Joe's darkened room incarnates the movie theater as "Plato's cave," where his "voyeurism" enjoys the pleasure of "fetishizing" the female body which is, in this reversed case, not a sexual but virginal object that looks more real and pure than in reality. In other words, the "suspension of disbelief" works through the "disavowal of the (double) knowledge" that the seen is non-existent and no longer true. Joe's reintegration of Anna Maria into self-centered imaginary signification is a privilege of the "transcendental subject," the secluded immobile spectator whose eye, however, identifies with the mobile camera that can take a god-eye's floating perspective unnoticed by the object. And in this sense, the theater-cave holds the screen as mirror — a "Lacanian mirror" that enables the subject's euphoric self-identity only through his *méconnaissance* of the image-as-other as self. In Joe's case, the screen reflects not the truth, but the false fantasy of Anna Maria's purity, her sheer belonging to him, just as in the lost mother-child bind, on both the perceptual and psychological levels.[2]

This classical account, however, presumes the spectator's hyper-perceptive but sub-motor state. What if he leaves his seat and touches the screen? Joe in fact appears and behaves like a poor crying baby with no theater etiquette. Paradoxical enough, his extreme approach to the screen puts in motion the Imaginary as the unconscious adhesion to the image, reviving the dormant materiality of the body and the interface. Yet this shift from watching to touch cannot achieve a real touch of the onscreen body because regained corporeality only contacts the apparatus. He experiences "the instrument 'in flesh and blood'," [3] a tactile disclosure of the material structure ideologically disallowed to the transcendental subject. Joe's assimilation to

the image becomes dissimilation when "acting out" turns into "action," just as the audience's crying in sad movies reawakens their being physically situated in a theater.[4] Through his bodily contact with the bodiless image, Joe finds out the virginal image is not an imaginary hymen his scopophilia can penetrate. That is, the dumb character does not remain a macho spectator, neither by hermeneutically decoding the "imaginary signifier" nor by psycho-semiotically debunking it as an "ideological apparatus." Breaking his shackles, Joe the prisoner moves not toward the outside of the cave but rather into its heart, thereby revealing the mechanism of illusion. While his desire must be regressive, his body might actually be progressive.

Nonetheless, my intention is not to simply reverse the Baudry-Metz psychoanalysis, but to reveal its inner contradiction and thus link transcendental to embodied spectatorship. In the first place, the subject is said to be positioned at the vanishing point of a god-eye's monocular (Renaissance) perspective — the ideological structure of representation and specularization empowering the subject to constitute and rule the objects ideally.[5] He identifies with the camera, thereby "with himself as a pure act of perception (as wakefulness, alertness): as the condition of possibility of the perceived and hence as a kind of transcendental subject, which comes before every *there is*."[6] The subject's identification with the object thus takes on his internalization of it, his symbolic command of the world launched only by and after his perception.[7] Notable (but not noted by Baudry-Metz) is the perceptual and ontological distance that the spectator-subject in the theater-cave takes from the screen-mirror, the necessary distance for unfolding the historically Westernized visual field along the Cartesian geometric coordinates. It is through this subjectively transcendental distance that the subject can objectify the world: the subjective objectification from the geometral point of the eye.

The mirror stage is the cradle of this subjectivity. The screen works as a mirror without reflecting the spectator, because onscreen others appear as his likes and "it

is no longer necessary that this similarity be literally *depicted* for him on the screen […] the primitive undifferentiation of the ego and the non-ego has been overcome."[8] That is, all imaginary signifiers on screen are 'refracted' duplicates of the original imaginary signifier in the mirror, the "reflecting" duplicate of the reflected subject. The original signifier submerged in the Imaginary is, conversely, the starting point of all imaginary signifiers organizing the Symbolic. The identification shift from camera to character opens the subject's closed circuit to an intersubjective or interobjective network, as my first-choice character is not only a subject but also an object for others in the diegetic society. Moreover, going back and forth between different characters, my identification ultimately reconstitutes the whole diegesis as a unified object, the Object that corresponds to, while integrated into, the transcendental Subject. In short, the screen is a big refractive Mirror (Imaginary Signifier) with its subset mirrors (imaginary signifiers).

Let me now replace this early Lacan's model of the Imaginary-Symbolic with his later model of its disjunction with the Real. The original imaginary signifier in the mirror is the first signifier, a "master-signifier" enabling one to represent reality. Then, what would come under its verso, an *objet a* emerging from the Real? Interestingly, Metz sees the screen as a mirror by virtue of the "Italian style" perspective, but more directly because "it encourages narcissistic withdrawal and the indulgence of phantasy which, pushed further, enter into the definition of dreaming and sleep."[9] This sounds contradictory, given that perspective is based on distance that the narcissistic screen-dream seemingly effaces. Remarkable here is the evolution of Baudry's cave metaphor through his two influential articles: he first lays out cinema as the "prototypical set for all transcendence and the topological model of idealism," but then, "a representation of the maternal womb, of the matrix into which we are supposed to wish to return."[10] In the former the "impression of reality" means "reality effect," whereas in the latter it is more like a "dream effect,"

the hallucinatory representation taken as reality, the "more-than-real" that causes "the submersion of the subject in his representations."[11] Opposite of the subject's transcendental integration of the other, this submersion implies his corporeal absorption into the womb with no distinction/distance between subject and object, perception and representation, active and passive, eating and being eaten. Such "undifferentiation between the limits of the body (body/breast)" renders the film a dreamy mode "anterior to the mirror stage, to the formation of the self, and therefore founded on a permeability, a fusion of the interior with the exterior."[12]

If the theater-cave evokes the uterus, imagine it as a warped surrounding screen that is not objectifiable in perspective along Euclidean geometry, as the dream space encompasses us while neutralizing our sense of distance. "We are what we dream," said Bertram Lewin who first coined the dream-screen-breast analogy Baudry repeats: "the dream screen is the dream's hallucinatory representation of the mother's breast on which the child used to fall asleep after nursing."[13] Freud argues that this child cannot distinguish itself from the mother's breast, the source of "oceanic feeling" that nostalgically refers to the all-embracing intrauterine bond between the ego and the world.[14] Kristeva clearly formulates three stages of the ego formation: (1) the fetus totally depends on the mother whose body is like the Platonic *chora*, a nursing receptacle, "an invisible and formless being which receives all things"; (2) for the newborn, the mother turns into the *semiotic chora* as a fixed space with a gap but without outside, providing an axis, a limit, a "projection screen" for its invocation; (3) the *mirror stage* follows in which the breast can appear as an illusion the infant creates like his mirror image.[15] These stages display the child's gradual separation from the mother's body experienced as (1) womb-screen, (2) breast-screen, and (3) mirror-screen. This naturally understandable process is unconsciously driven by Kristeva's other notion *abjection*, the child's attempt to become an independent subject by breaking away the mother, the *chora*

subsequently becoming an *abject*. Abjection is a precondition of narcissism, the self-protective desire of keeping the distance from what now seems threatening to annihilate one's identity.[16]

The narcissistic nature of the mirror stage might then insinuate the turn of the mother (hugging her child in the mirror) from an object (attracting the child-subject) to an abject (causing the horror of the undifferentiated). But the abject is by definition already absent for a narcissist, who refracts every object into an imaginary signifier so that the screen-mirror is relatively narcissistic. What I pay attention to is rather the potential of an imaginary signifier's turning back to a pre-abject object, a cause of desire that entices the ego into the undifferentiated; this is an *objet a* that opens the Real. No doubt the breast is a primal *objet a*, the mother's body part that the child hypnotically sucks and succumbs to. Attracted to the breast-screen, the subject does not remain in static self-satisfaction but goes back to a pre-mirror stage, shifting from "relative" to "primitive" narcissism.[17] The drive toward the image is so strong that it transforms the ego's appropriation of the imaginary signifier into the ego's self-abandonment to the *objet a*. The breast is a *signifier*-turning-into-*objet a*, an *interface* with the Real. Interfaciality underlies a double contradiction in psychoanalytic spectatorship theory: (1) there is a rupture between screen-mirror and screen-breast, (2) but it is a permeable rupture because our unconscious adhesion to the image, launching the Imaginary, can also reveal the Real out of it by the self-same force to a higher degree. It is this qualitative change of adhesion that *Virginity* shows. Stepping to the screen, Joe turns the imaginary into real contact, as though Anna Maria's face were his mother's breast to touch, even her womb to enter. This onscreen object is not "I" but "non-I," insofar as there is no self to identify with in the primitive child-mother union, the unconscious submersion in the immeasurable Real. By *walking through* the psychoanalytic theater-cave, Joe *acts out of* the narcissistic screen-mirror.

I AM "IN TOUCH WITH" SURROUNDINGS BEFORE I "TOUCH" SOMETHING

However, there is a more complex link between Joe and Narcissus. Unlike the common (Freudian) notion of narcissism, Narcissus in Greek mythology falls in love with a reflection in a pool, "not realizing it was his own." Far from configuring his imaginary identity, he is attracted by the unknown other whose dangerous beauty costs him his life. The mirror is less reflecting than attracting; his isolation from the image is not the indispensable condition for securing an ideal ego (misrecognizing the image-as-other as self), but the inevitable trigger of submerging himself into amniotic fluid (misrecognizing the self-as-image as other). This regression to the birth-state only leads him to death. The mirror stage turns from the first gate to the Symbolic into a "rear window" open to the Real; narcissism is no longer the transcendental ego formation, but the anti-narcissistic embodiment of Eros and Thanatos. Likewise, Joe's perception of the image is transduced into tactile action, the resistance to separation. Yet for this modern Narcissus, erotic death drive bounces back from the solid surface of the screen. He only experiences the technical material interface as a transparent but impenetrable gap between his body and the other's. His desire thus changes from conscious fetishistic disavowal ("I know it's just an interface but all the same…") through unconscious imaginary adhesion ("I want that body") to (un)conscious tactile ambivalence ("I can't enter it but all the same I can't help touching this interface"). And it results in the double bind of neither self-love nor other-love, neither happy life nor tragic death.

Kristeva's three-stage schema along with skin studies traces the origin of this interfaciality. (1) In the womb with no gap between mother and fetus, there is no proper touching but rather sharing the common boundary. But on the embryo's ectoderm, the brain and the skin begin to be formed as surfaces of tactile, auditory, and visual organs. (2) After its birth, the newborn learns through the skin where it

begins and ends, where its boundaries are. So "a common skin with the mother" gives way to "a skin of its own, discrete and autonomous" that the infant experiences from both inside and outside.[18] This corresponds to the 'breast stage' in which pre-spatial unity turns gradually into distinction between self and other, inside and outside. Drawing on Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Marc Hansen explains this primordial materialization of the sensible in terms of the *écart* as "always already differentiated, but differentiated amodally, prior to sensory differentiation (at a more basic level than the separation of the distinct senses)."[19] That is, the skin-forming *écart*, the original tactile schism between self and non-self precedes the distinction of tactile and visual senses; the second sensible tactility is, say, a suture of the first foundational tactility, since *before I touch something, my body is always already in touch with its surroundings*. (3) The mirror stage then implies not just the transition of the baby's body from interoceptive fragments to a "social gestalt," but "a fundamental, ontological form of being-with, the dedifferentiation of the mirror-image and the image of the other," in Merleau-Ponty's term, *flesh*.[20] The baby sees and feels in the mirror its bodily subjectivity situated in the common embodied space. Therefore, the mirror effect is actually not illusionistic self-idealization so much as the fundamental embodiment of (pre)subjective interfaciality between self and environment. Merleau-Ponty distinguishes the "body image" from the "body schema" through which the feeling body opens out into the space between it and its image. He stresses this tactile schema (originating with the *écart*) over the visual image (originating with the very schema). The latter is, say, a visual suture of the former.[21]

Hansen's radical argument is that if the mirror is a technology that interfaces body with surroundings, this technicity "finds its enabling, sensible-transcendental or infraempirical condition in the *écart* constitutive of sensibility."[22] Technicity is less instrumental than immanent as the primary *écart* yields the skin, the first interface, whose externalization takes the prosthetic forms of artificial interface like mirror

and screen. Just as the eye is an interface immanent in the subject, so the skin is an embodied interface that comprehends the retina. Thus, tactility grounds visuality. Now, *Virginity* implies that this primary tactility is reawakened by derivative tactile activity as opposed to visuality, and thereby the skin is reawakend as the primary interface. Joe's touch of the screen not only equates it with the (m)other's body to which his body vainly tries to connect and attach itself, but also confirms their always-already immanent detachment and disconnection; it presumes an *écart* that both motivates contact and hinders unification. This paradox peaks when her image is projected onto his body, when our attention shifts from her body on screen (screen-as-body) to his body becoming a screen (body-as-screen). His skin's direct overlap with her (image's) skin evokes the womb or breast stage of togetherness, while for the same reason reconfirming the skin as the first interface embodying the first *écart*. That his touch of the other only returns to himself further suggests a radically tactilized narcissism not in the Freudian sense of *ego-libido* as self-love, but in the sense of *object-libido* as self-abandon. The consequence of this is a perverted *ego-libido* as in masturbation.[23] On one hand, the impossibility of becoming-other turns into the possibility of becoming-interface, which reactivates the immanent being-interface; on the other hand, transcendental narcissism turns into the embodiment of anti-narcissism, which in turn arouses corporeal narcissism.

In short, touching the *screen-body* reembodies the otherwise imaginary interfacing with the other, while reactivating not only sensibility but its enabling condition of *écart* that subsequently disables any real touch of the onscreen body. And since this *ambivalent tactility* of the screen externally redoubles interfaciality immanent in the bodily subject, the *body-screen* realizes the same ambivalent tactility of the skin as a contact zone and unbreakable wall at once. "Screen-interface" turns into, or "desutured" to "skin-interface" and it entails "desuturing" the mirror phase which is the imaginary suture of the self's fragmented real (body) toward the symbolic world

(of others). So, rather than showing reflected or refracted narcissistic self-images, the mirror can interface the self with the radical other (Real) to which it belonged prior to solidifying subjectivity, though this longing for the lost other or the loss of the self only brings a pulverized-then-perverted narcissism back to the solid body-subject. This way, the desuturing imbrication of screen to mirror to skin restages the ongoing drama between the subject and the Real.[24] Walking through transcendental psychoanalysis and acting out of imaginary narcissism, Joe the protagonist of this drama leads us to an embodied phenomenology of the biological interface (skin), whose ambivalent tactility is externalized in the technological interface (screen). His physical confrontation with, and transformation into, a cinematic interface on screen can therefore work as an allegory performance or performative allegorization of this interfaciality. Undoubtedly, here is room for the redemption of *Virginity* from its oblivion.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE RUBE, "EXPANDED" RUBE CINEMA

With interfaciality in mind, we may now map the historical context of "embodied spectatorship" whose theorization seriously started after the sway of the 1970s psychoanalysis; though not simply dissmissable as reviewed above, this abstract Theory has been overall criticized for having "disembodied" spectatorship. What first draws attention is the 1980s historicist turn of film studies, especially the *cinema of attractions* discourse and its 2000s reloaded version regarding Rube films in view of media history. But I start with an unexplored point that could bridge the ostensive rupture between semiotic psychoanalysis and media archeology, a point from which to readdress some issues of narratology and enunciation theory.

It is notable that Metz applies Freud's double dream process to the screen by distinguishing the secondary "film story" (what is told, implying an action of

narration) from the primary "dream story" (emerging in turmoil or shadow with no narrative agency). The latter is still a story; "clearly or confusedly woven by the images themselves, [there is] a succession, whether organized or chaotic, of places, actions, moments, characters."[25] This distinction adds a significant nuance to the film-dream analogy in that there could be "dream story"-centered films or filmic aspects that disturb the linear narrative of "film story" unfolding in perspective space. The spectator's transcendental distance from the screen could shrink in terms of story as well as image, as his cognition of time could be swept into the embodied middle ground of what is happening on screen. Like the yelling audience whom Metz compares to speaking somnambulists, Joe in *Virginity* experiences a cinematic event without intellectual knowledge and interpretive reflection; an event less like a neatly integrated film story than like a dream story fully charged with instant and immediate excitations. But again, Joe's body betrays the material mechanism of this "waking daydream" as though he were a walking somnambulist with his finger indicating his own somnambulism.

I am tempted to see this daydream effect in light of the "cinema of attractions." Tom Gunning and André Gauderault assert that the exhibitionist presentation of visual spectacles overwhelmed the well-organized representation of diegetic stories in the pre-1907 cinema.[26] Such an attraction film, I say, might look like a dream story (not sedative or narcotic, but stimulating and ecstatic). Joe's energetic reaction reincarnates early spectatorship that is mythically typified, even if exaggerated, by the audience's rushing to the exits from a hallucinatory train coming at them into the theater. Yet Charles Musser argues that attractions as non-narrative aspects can be found in virtually all periods of cinema, just as stars attract the audience while being totally integrated with the story.[27] Touched on by Musser, Mulvey's seminal piece on visual pleasure also addresses this issue within classical narrative cinema. She contrasts narrative-driven voyeurism with fetishistic scopophilia that "can exist

outside linear time as the erotic instinct is focused on the look alone."[28] But we also know that the female body was a central attraction along with the phallic train even before the inception of the cinema. The first Edison and Lumière films, let alone many early films about women and/or trains, were preceded by Muybridge's photographs of nude bodies and galloping horses.[29] Figuratively, the cinema might have come into being through the intercourse of the woman's skin (hymen) and the penetrating animal/machine (phallus), two proto-pornographic attractions, with the latter's piston movement potentially motivating narrative progress. Or Lumière's train might have astonished the audience through its phallic intrusion into the theater-womb, fantastically tearing the screen-skin (which actually works as a shield from any such onscreen violence).

The Rube genre stages this naïve spectatorship and complex interfaciality in their inverse mode, i.e., the viewer's active approach to the screen (which actually hampers any contact). It is a cinematic satire of the maladjusted to new media who cannot tell reality from fantasy, theater space from screen space. In its nascent example *Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show* (1902) Josh the rube, like Joe in *Virginity*, is excited by Edison films showing a woman and a train, whose imaginary sexual coupling seem incarnated into a flirting couple in the next film – a 'primal scene' that Josh, in a fit of jealousy, tries to enter only to peel away the screen and becomes embroiled with the projectionist behind it (figs. 7-9).[30] Made in the same year as *Virginity*, Godard's *Les Carabiniers* (1963) has a more realistic scene in which a bumpkin touches and kisses a bathing woman on screen until his actions expose the raw apparatus of the illusion (figs. 10-11). Here, the figure of womb migrates from the darkened empty auditorium to the bathtub image, the screen really appearing like a skin to rub and caress. A cutting-edge version of the Rube may be the Tom Cruise figure in *Minority Report* (2002); media expert as he is at work, he repeatedly addresses and approaches his lost son and wife who appear in hologram as if resurrected, in his emotional womb-home (fig. 12).


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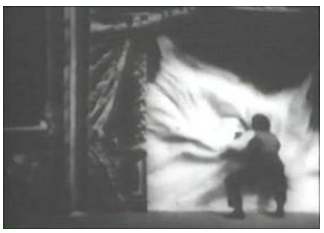
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Though Rubes have engaged with 'new media' interfaces throughout the cinematic century, such credulous characters are found in the 17th-century theater. Metz mentions Pierre Corneille's *L'Illusion comique* (1636),[31] and we could draw a genealogy of the Rube in literature and arts, going back to Don Quixote or even to Zeuxis and Parrhasius.[32] No doubt Zeuxis's painting was a visual attraction that literally attracted animal rubes, while he himself could be seen as the first human Rube deceived not by illusion per se — in which he would have tried not to suspend his disbelief — but rather by the illusionarily-turned apparatus, the curtain-looking canvas as the material basis of disbelief in illusion. In this regard, the double lesson of this original Rube story seems to evoke the notion of *discipline* on one hand ("you may look but don't touch") and to revoke that of *diegesis* on the other ("you may look but don't believe in its material existence") — the two keywords Elsaesser reconfigures in his update of the Rube genre study, which I will in turn retackle.

First, the Rube makes "the category mistake of thinking that the civilizational 'quantum leap' from hand to eye is reversible."[33] It is a laughable mistake that brings superiority to the audience, who thereby subtly internalize self-censorship, disciplined at the "meta-level of self-reference." More precisely, the cinema creates a "cognitive-sensory double-bind" in which both touch and sight are "at once

over-stimulated and censored, seduced and chastised, obsessively and systematically tied to the kinds of delays and deferrals we associate with narrative." So both senses are disciplined by the cinema that reflects modernity and its eye-teasing commodity displayed in the show window (though at least one can touch this capitalist fetish by purchasing it and bring an object "closer" by way of its "mechanical reproduction"). Building on Benjamin, Elsaesser thus see the early Rube phenomenon in the frame of modernity and its haptic-optic correlation.[34] At this point, let me recall the Jerry Lewis figure (he directs and plays himself), a Rube who seems to incite us to remedi(t)ate Benjamin's meditations through his comic experience of 'old' media like painting and sculpture. As Steven Shaviro analyzes them, in *The Errand Boy* (1961) Lewis pulls a string from a Samson statue with curiosity only to cause its fall and the consequent collapse of the whole display (figs. 13-14), and in *The Bellboy* (1960) Lewis's touch of a woman's clay bust slightly changes her face, and his struggle for restoration ends up with a total deformation of the original (figs. 15-16). Far from intending any blasphemy, this Rube's rude actions may rather imply "self-abasement before the social prestige of the painting," a masochistic abjection that comes from his hyper-disciplined state; he becomes "an anarchist not in spite of, but because of, his hyperconformism."[35]

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How is it that Lewis touches what he knows he must not? Rethinking Benjamin here, the traditional work of art retains the invisible but material trace of some initial or prior contact, whether the artist's brushing/molding or the patina of age; from this "indexical" sort of inherent touch exudes the Benjaminian *aura*, "a unique phenomenon of a [temporal] distance, however [spatially] close it may be."[36] We might experience this sacred epiphany not just visually but tactilely, as though it touched us by returning our look.[37] But this auratic tactility is still metaphoric insofar as the physical distance between work and spectator must be held for granted. Lewis, however, seems to instinctively reembody this figurative touch in his satirical rather than sacred manner and reacts to it by literally touching the work. Upon realizing his mistake, he makes every effort to reinstate the socioculturual rule only to exacerbate and debunk it. His unconscious infantilization and conscious overconformism thus incarnates the tacit tactile desire of the object and subject to contact each other. Thus, the cognitive-sensory double-bind seems immanent in all visual arts, though salient in the cinema, and Lewis turns it into an entropic vicious cycle until it reaches a comic catastrophe. The impact of modernity might be less revolutionary than evolutionary, accelerating (rather than inaugurating) a tactility that always underlies auratic visuality. For this reason, Lewis's encounter with traditional works has no less significance than his frequent self-reflexive appearance in a TV/film within a film. He makes a mess wherever he goes by touching whatever he encounters in spite of himself, though he often solves problems in spite

of himself too. The world undergoes a continuous fluctuation between order and disorder around this mobile Rube.

In this way Lewis evokes Jacques Tati, especially in *Playtime* (1967), where Monsieur Hulot incarnates a Baudelairian *flaneur* not as an urban dandy, but as a typical rustic wandering around ultimate modern Paris. Slick surfaces of products and buildings turn into reflective and attractive interfaces, which the Rube experiences with his skin as well as his eyes. He almost slips on the polished floor, tries the elasticity of a leather chair, and mistakes a glass reflection for the real person appearing from behind him (figs. 17-19). Tati's visual jokes are indeed tactile, even creating a surreal interface effect; when the window that a store person washes slightly tilts back and forth, the bus tourists reflected on it shriek with joy as if on a roller coaster (fig. 20). In the climactic restaurant sequence, Hulot touches the ceiling which collapses (like Lewis's touch of the Samson statue), turning the pure audiovisual carnival into an enjoyable tactile catastrophe (fig. 21). Merleau-Ponty's notion of *écart* as the primal separation from the world is continuously recalled through the subject's being-in-the-tactile-world. His playtime unfolds through an environmental rather than medium-specific interfaciality.

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Before going further into such "expanded Rube cinema," let's check Elsaesser's second point, diegesis. He argues that the Rube film literalizes the cinematic event as a process taking place between the screen and the audience, while the spectators *of* these films feel directly addressed by the on-screen performer.[38] The self-reflective diegesis thus operates deictic marks (I/you/here/now) whose referents depend on each collective audience's spatiotemporal specificity; that is, these enunciative shifters turn each viewing into a distinctive performance. In this sense, Elsaesser expands the notion of diegesis from the self-closed fictional world to the dialectic overlap of narrative integration and its spectatorial experience as attraction. Articulating "space/time/agency/subject," it can be understood irrespective of genre, style, or mode, "as not necessarily 'real,' but nevertheless as constituting a 'world'" while overcoming such dichotomies as "attraction vs. narrative."[39] Here, we encounter a double suturing: (1) like Uncle Josh, the Rube's experience of cinematic attractions is the narrative itself, so the filmic diegesis is constituted by the character's enunciative act as reacting to the diegesis of the film-within-the film; (2) the audience watches the Rube watching the film-within-the film, so their enunciative act as reacting to this

Rube film (e.g., laughing at the character while being disciplined) constitutes its extensively redefined diegesis including spectatorship.

The implication of (2) is that other media such as TV and video and their spatiotemporal locators/activators can co-constitute distinctive diegetic worlds, while the cinema can still confront us with Rube-like characters who engage with different diegeses through different interfaces as in (1). It is in view of (2) that Elsaesser incorporates enunciation into diegesis, as diegeses of TV programs may vary with viewing conditions.[40] But it is in light of (1) that films with the "expanded diegesis" may appeal to us both concretely and aesthetically, because the diegetic reality in which any mise-en-abyme fantasy is enunciated is also part of the film's diegesis.[41] The point is that attraction and narrative, reality and fantasy form a Möbius strip through the enunciative action which is made not by the enunciator, but by the addressee: not by the sender of a medium as message, but by its receiver in (2); not by the director of a film-in-the-film, but by its spectator as a character in (1). In fact, (1) takes the same mise-en-abyme structure, but where such a modernist film about film as *8½* (1963) often centers on the intellectual enunciator-director, the Rube genre retools the model with the emotional "enunciatee"-character. This allows us to reappropriate Metz's point (i.e., cinematic enunciation is found less in the deictics than in the reflexivity of exposing film's text as a performative act) from the perspective of spectatorship, which can in turn render deictic aspects more visible (as Elsaesser says) than Metz argues. In short, the Rube film has a spectatorial enunciation as diegesis which is desutured towards the explicit audience space.

Internalizing the externality of enunciation, such expanded diegesis diversifies the narrative of the (contemporary) cinema of attractions, especially when the character's contact with an interface lets him into an internal fantasy or lets someone out of it, instead of revealing material supports. Hollywood has a

long list of films in this "marvelous" genre — explicable even if supernatural: *Pleasantville* (1998) with teenagers sucked into a 1950s TV show set; *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985) with a 1930s movie star walking off the screen, and so on. But within this category the interface experience does not serve only for the smooth transition to a mise-en-abyme diegesis; it can rather draw attention to itself as an event of attraction that fissures the main diegesis, as shown in diverse films from action adventure *The Last Action Hero* (1993) to disaster thriller *Déjà Vu* (2006). I note *Déjà Vu*, because it particularly updates the idea of 'possible world' from the *Matrix*-type virtual reality — two spaces, real and virtual, unfold at the same time — by visualizing two time zones, past and present, that coexist in the same place. For instance, the ultramodern Rube-Cop has to adjust to this temporal bifurcation occurring in the road that he passes through, with one naked eye seeing the daytime present and the other interface-equipped eye perceiving the nighttime past of four days ago, while his head continuously receives information from a control tower, information he processes into bodily actions (figs. 22-24). What occurs here cannot be fully analyzed in terms of mere diegetic dichotomies such as actual reality vs. virtual reality, or reality vs. the Real. The question rather involves the unique experience of interface itself that takes place on the threshold between inner and outer diegeses. Before being sutured into this or that world, even the most upgraded Rube's struggle with the most upgraded interface holds the audience between attraction and narrative.

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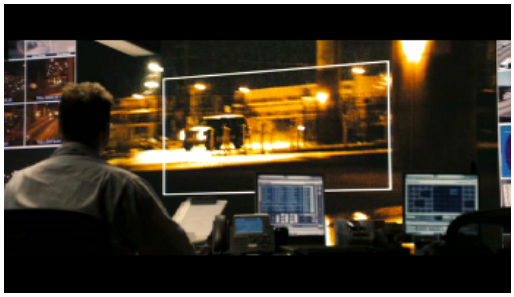
24 

No doubt Hollywood has deftly integrated the eventfulness of early cinema into "intensified continuity" of still classical narrative, never stopping its "remediation" that fuses "hypermediacy" and "immediacy."[42] This ongoing cinematic phenomenon accounts for Elsaesser's preference for the "ontological" term *diegesis* as "world-making" over Manovich's "technical" equivalent, *interface*.[43] But I would shed light on *interfaciality* in general rather than new media interfaces proper, inasmuch as the Rube film visualizes the cinematic event as nothing but the embodied experience of interface broadly redefined at specific and generic levels. In this regard, *Déjà Vu* evokes an early Rube feature made on the threshold of classical cinema: Buster Keaton's *Sherlock Jr.* (1924), particularly the scene of Keaton's maladjustment to the screen space, which the *Matrix* series digitally reloads. Just as Neo is perplexed by totally different landscapes unfolding whenever he opens a new door-interface in virtual reality, so Sherlock Jr. enters a film within the film leading him (not to film's material base but) first to an interfacial wonderland whose landscape keeps changing. Attracted and distracted, absorbed and disoriented, his body flips, falters, and falls (figs. 25-31).

25 

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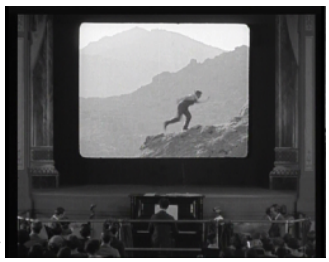
27 

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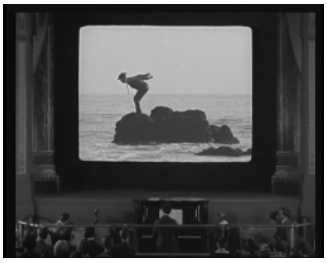
29 
30 
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32 

More discontinuous than standard jump cuts, this vertiginous montage of utterly unrelated backgrounds intimates the limitation of our inertial sensori-motor system in embodying interfaciality that potentially exceeds well-sutured illusionism. That is, this Rube experiences not an artificial interface of "body-image" (though this triggers his initial jump into the screen) so much as his own immanent "body-schema," whose malfunction in interfacial surroundings alludes to a primary tactility that results from the primary *écart* from the world. Only after this scene is he sutured into the diegesis of a mise-en-abyme film that gradually takes over the full screen (fig. 32), signaling the transition from attraction to drama, from a Vertovian "perception-image" with little room for relevant bodily reaction, to a Griffithian "action-image" which will be full of Keaton's acrobatic adventure. I would call such a narrative-integrated Rube scene the "interface-scene," in that it seemingly marks the threshold to an encapsulated second diegesis, while temporarily desuturing it. Hence, we have a crescendo in scale from *interface-image* (as seen for Joe in *Virginity*) to *interface-scene* (for the Josh figure in *Sherlock Jr.*).[44] This last Rube, in particular, visualizes not only sensual but immanent tactility fully embodied in his failure of the full embodiment of interfaciality. This performance

might allegorize the first condition of any spectatorship; our embodied experience of the cinematic interface, including the tactile gap from it, immanently precedes our diegetic immersion, even just when we look at the screen without moving like the Rube.

NOTES

1. Themroc, "RoGoPaG," *Eye For Film*, n.d., http://www.eyeforfilm.co.uk/reviews.php?id=5766.
2. See, among others, Jean-Louis Baudry's two classic articles "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematic Apparatus" (286-98) and "The Apparatus" (299-318) in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), along with Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, trans. Celia Brittan et al. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982).
3. Jean-Louis Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematic Apparatus," 296.
4. Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier*, 102.
5. Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematic Apparatus," 295.
6. Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier*, 48–49.
7. This is why Metz even suggests that we not only "receive" but "release" the film, "since it does not pre-exist my entering the auditorium and I only need close my eyes to suppress it." Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier*, 51.
8. Ibid., 46.
9. Ibid., 107.
10. Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematic Apparatus," 294; Baudry, "The Apparatus," 306. The first was published in 1970, the second in 1975 in *Communications* 23, the same issue that has an article by Metz including the citation just above.
11. Baudry, "The Apparatus," 310.
12. Ibid., 311.
13. Ibid., 310–11. See Bertram Lewin, "Sleep, The Mouth, and the Dream Screen," *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 15 (1946): 419-43; Bertram Lewin, "Inferences From the Dream Screen," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 29 (1948): 224-431.
14. Robert T. Eberwein, *Film and the Dream Screen: A Sleep and a Forgetting* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 26-27.
15. Ibid., 38-39.
16. The woman, the mother's body in particular, is often represented as abject: excremental (threatens identity from the outside) and menstrual (threatens from within). To "ward off the subject's fear of his very own identity sinking irretrievably into the mother" is to cut off this dirty and shameful abject and enter the father's symbolic authority. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 64.
17. Baudry, "The Apparatus," 313.
18. Claudia Benthien, *Skin: On the Cultural Border Between Self and the World*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 7-8. Benthien cites here Paul Valéry: "the human as an 'ectoderm' whose real profundity, paradoxically, is his skin," and refers to Freud's mention of consciousness as the "surface of the mental apparatus" and the ego as "surface entity." Developing this idea, Didier Anzieu coins the notion of "skin ego": a "mental image of which the Ego of the child makes use…to represent itself as an Ego containing psychical contents, on the basis of its experience of the surface of the body." A sort of 'embodied' mirror-stage ego, this notion concerns the skin as "a unifying envelope," "a protective barrier," "a filter of exchanges and a surface of inscription." Didier Anzieu, *The Skin Ego*, trans. Chris Turner (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 98.
19. Mark Hansen, *Bodies in Code: Interfaces with New Media* (London: Routledge, 2006), 60.
20. Ibid., 57-58.
21. Ibid., 58. The body image is the represented body as an object (noema) of intentional consciousness (noesis), whereas the body schema refers to "a 'prenoetic' function, a kind of infraempirical or sensible-transcendental basis for intentional operation." The latter is preconscious,

subpersonal, tacitly keyed into the environment and dynamically governing posture and movement. Ibid., 39-40.

22. Ibid., 59.

23. In this sense Joe is somewhat like a pornography spectator, whose watching is more or less intended to provoke touching which cannot help but bounce from the screen-body back to his own body-screen (as his body could, if vaguely, reflect off the onscreen body image). This perverted self-caress or self-love aroused on the skin-interface via the screen-interface is the most radical type of embodied spectatorship, central for internet pornography, cybersex technology, and virtual reality. One can find a study on related web-based spectatorship: Michele White, *The Body and The Screen: Theories of Internet Spectatorship* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).

24. Now, here, the Real is primarily the uterus or chora, with the skin redefined as a tactilely embodied interface that desuturs the classical mirror stage.

25. Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier*, 125.

26. André Gaudreault and Tom Gunning, "Early Cinema as a Challenge to Film History," in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, ed. Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 363–80; Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," in ibid., 381–88.

27. Charles Musser, "Rethinking Early Cinema: Cinema of Attractions and Narrativity," in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 411-12.

28. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 205.

29. Linda Williams positions Muybridge in the history of pornography, which nourished the "the frenzy of the visible," a "drive for knowledge" (Koch) aimed at scientia sexualis (Foucault). Far from a narrative form in the "masquerade of femininity" (Doane), hard core is "the one film genre that always tries to strip this mask away and see the visible 'truth' of sexual pleasure itself." Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy Of The Visible"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 48-50. Mary Ann Doane argued that female spectators only masquerade to take the male gaze that fetishizes the female body. Mary Ann Doane, *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, and Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 31-32. My point is, however, that the female body is shot and seen as the most fundamental attraction on screen whether for visual knowledge or pleasure. The difference lies in the degree of narrativization; pornography's minimal story progresses along with the sexual piston movement, whereas narrative film's minimal attraction temporarily disrupts the movement of the story.

30. It is a remake of a British film *The Countryman's First Sight of the Animated Pictures* (1901). For details of the "Uncle Josh" film see Miriam Hansen's piece earlier than Elsaesser's. Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 25-30. Other similar early films include *Mabel's Dramatic Career* (1913) and *A Movie Star* (1916). A following couple of (post)modern Rube films as well as theoretical cues are taken from Thomas Elsaesser, "Discipline Through Diegesis: The Rube Film Between 'Attraction' and 'Narrative Integration'," in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, ed. Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 205-23.

31. It shows a "naïf, who does not know what theatre is, and for whom, by a reversal foreseen in Corneille's plot itself, the representation of the play is given. By a partial identification with this character, the spectators can sustain their credulousness in all incredulousness." Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier*, 72-73.

32. A well-known Greek episode tells that Zeuxis's painting of grapes so lusciously invited birds, which flew down to peck at them, but when he asked Parrhasius to pull aside the curtain from his painting, the curtain itself turned out to be a painting; Parrhasius deceived Zeuxis who deceived the birds. Regarding this myth, Lacan points out that while animals are attracted to superficial appearances, humans are enticed by the idea of that which is hidden. Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), 103. Interestingly, the mural paintings of a 6th-century Korean artist Sol Geo are also reported to have fatally attracted birds.

33. Thomas Elsaesser, "Discipline Through Diegesis," 215.

34. Ibid., 213-15.

35. Steven Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 110-11.

36. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 243.

37. Mark Hansen, *Embodying Technesis: Technology Beyond Writing* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 120 and 140.

38. Elsaesser, "Discipline Through Diegesis," 215-16.

39. Ibid., 217.

40. As Elsaesser mentions, Noël Burch formerly tackled diegesis in relation to the media shift from early cinema to television. Burch, "Narrative, Diegesis: Thresholds, Limits," in *Life To Those*

Shadows, ed. Ben Brewster (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 243-66.

41. This is the so-called Branigan's Paradox; whatever Brechtian device debunking illusionism of a film-in-the-film still belongs to this latter film's diegesis, as if a sort of infinite regress of diegesis works. Edward Branigan, "Diegesis and Authorship in Film," *Iris* 7:4 (1986): 37-54.

42. I am using the terms rendered common by Bordwell's counter-postclassical argument: David Bordwell, "Intensified Continuity: Visual Style in Contemporary American Film," *Film Quarterly* 55:3 (Spring 2002): 16-28; and new media studies: Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1999).

43. Ibid., 218.

44. As for Sherlock Jr., Francesco Casetti precisely describes the scene at issue as the trope of early spectatorship, of unpredictable 'modern' experience, after which the character adapts to the world that the film discloses. This process is called "filmic experience" as attendance that passes through three instances: the experience of a place (theater), of a situation (real/unreal), and of a world (diegesis). Thus, cinema is "an interface between two worlds." Francesco Casetti, "Filmic Experience," *Screen* 50:1 (2009): 60-61. My intervention is to subdivide this interface into two scales and interrogate the suture-desuture dialectic down to the body-world relationship.