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Joshua Neves and Bhaskar Sarkar (Eds.), *Asian Video Cultures*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017, 368 pp., \$28.95. ISBN 978-0-8223-6899-1 (Paperback)

Asia. Video. Cultures. The three keywords that editors Joshua Neves and Bhaskar Sarkar use as the pillars for their 2017 edited collection are expansive, deliberately inclusive in ways that invite engagement from different angles. Yet I assumed something quite specific when I picked up this book. Glancing at its title, I expected to read a volume that covered the history of video art and its emergence in Asia with local histories and case studies, a resource that has been and continues to be sorely missing. I imagined the book to be a corrective to the publications on video art that continue to perpetuate the centrality of the Euro-American canon, or even an illusion that nothing else existed. This is not what this volume is, but better for it. It made me question myself for even thinking such an endeavour would be attainable or even desirable—by providing such a diverse portrait of ‘Asian video cultures’ that its vibrancy is hardly containable in a single volume. Indeed, the strongest aspect of this volume is its cumulative force that convincingly declares, in the editors’ words, that Asian video culture is ‘always emergent, without any predetermined shape or stable destination’ (p. 16). Each way the writers approach the three key terms seems deliberately wide-ranging, itself a critique of how narrowly the term video, but even Asia and culture, had been addressed, and each case study offers insight into the many ways in which we could approach this subject. The editors assert at the outset they intend to ‘trouble, recast and pluralise’ these terms, and that they have certainly achieved.

It is not like what would traditionally be described as video art is neglected in this collection: Kay Dickinson’s chapter situates video works using found internet footage by the contemporary Lebanese artists Ali Cherri and Rabih Mroué in the Arab poetic tradition of copying and recitation; Singapore-German artist Ming Wong’s Asianised restaging of Rainer Werner Fassbinder film classics are proposed as a playful critique of national identity by Feng-Mei Heberer in her chapter; and Joshua Neves’ chapter explores reimaginations of factory life in Cao Fei’s *Whose Utopia?* (2006), among others. But what is striking is the collection’s refusal to centre these recognisable artists and, instead, its decision to place them among other popular uses and everyday phenomena concerning media across the continent. In such ways, their artistic practice is treated as thought-provoking but not necessarily exemplary. Neves and Sarkar suggest their volume is ‘not as interested in content, authorship, and ownership’ (p. 8) of video media; instead, it is invested in media’s circularity and connectivity that can be traced from the production of devices in factories to the user’s touch on the screen. In this way, we are encouraged to ask ourselves ‘what is video at this point?’ (p. 10), not

with resignation but with a sense of excitement that the porosity of this form continues to bring.

Neves and Sarkar propose for their collection to 'take the quotidian popular more seriously' (p. 3) with this volume. Indeed, they consider their subject of study to be sitting at the 'penumbra', which is the 'semi-dark belt during eclipses' (p. 2), of the hegemonic global. When we stare at an eclipse, our attention is swept away by its grandeur and we might not notice what surrounds it. In essence, the focal point of this volume is the 'local' that is inextricably tied with the global and yet somehow often overseen. As such, the vernacular takes centre stage in this volume, particularly in the section titled 'Intimacies', and in the unique modes of user participation and do-it-yourself media circulation that the chapters address. Rahul Mukherjee and Abhigyan Singh's chapter sheds light on the distribution of Mewati videos, censored by local religious preachers for what they interpret as their lurid content, across microSD for mobile phone viewing. Marc Steinberg's chapter introduces the media ecology of Japanese platform Niconico Video that is premised on participation and the blurring of official and user-produced content, offering insight on how media industries capitalise on participation. And Conerly Casey's chapter maps the entanglements between spirit possession and Bollywood videos in northern Nigeria through what she calls a 'sensory politics' (p. 177) with the 1995 incident of six hundred Muslim school children experiencing paralysis and other signs of possession. By focusing on the specificity of each context – how video as technology gets intertwined with social realities of the local – the volume stands against the flattening of local specificities that the term global sometimes brings and, instead, proposes a more polycentric model of the global that takes these into account.

Countering the treatment of Asia and other non-Western media activity as occupying the 'shadowy peripheries of global media' (p. vii) in Euro-American media and cultural studies, Asia is re-centred. Indonesia, according to Patricia R. Zimmerman, has the second highest number of Facebook users in the world at the time of writing her chapter. Currently, in 2022, they sit at fourth with India having the most number of users for both Facebook and Instagram globally, which makes us question why characteristics of social media use in the region rarely get brought up in broader discussions on social media. Michelle Cho's chapter, for instance, studies the 'reaction videos' that circulated in response to the 'Gangnam Style' video that became the most viewed video on YouTube in 2012 (since usurped by another South Korean hit 'Baby Shark', which is the first YouTube video to reach 10 billion views). Despite the global dominance of 'Gangnam Style', the responses it generated outside of South Korea, seen in the reaction videos, expose a pervasive treatment of it as a curiosity rather than taking up the opportunity to study the socio-digital context from which it stems. Again, many of the chapters in this volume demonstrate the value of examining the specificity of media use and circulation, and serve as reminders of the staggering numbers of people who interact with video technology across the continent.

Reviewing this publication some years after its publishing date, I am struck by how much Asian video cultures have evolved: China-born app TikTok recently became the most popular app among Gen Z in the United States; Facebook has been accused of facilitating the genocide of Rohingya people in Myanmar; netizens of Hong Kong, Myanmar and Thailand formed the Milk Tea Alliance, an online network and show of

solidarity between their youth-led movements for democracy; and the Korean series *Squid Game* (2021) became the most viewed show ever on US-born streaming service Netflix. I began this review by sharing how I was confronted with my own narrow definition of video in engaging with this volume. Appropriating the editors' central metaphor, I'd been looking directly at the eclipse without noticing the shifts in light that are taking place around it. What the penumbra, in this case, shows is that video has been and still is evolving. The strength of this volume is that it opens the subject for further debate, and it will surely remain a resource to parse through the ever-evolving culture of Asian video for years to come.

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Usha Iyer, *Dancing Women: Choreographing Corporeal Histories of Hindi Cinema*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020, 269 pp, \$35.00 (paperback). ISBN: 978-0-19-093874-1.

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Focusing on the dancing films of the 1890s, Tom Gunning (2003, p. 85) described the serpentine dance performed by Loïe Fuller as a precursor to the 'pure joy in motion' of early cinema. Fuller's modernist style innovatively used light, motion and new technologies of illumination to create a visually spectacular dance form. Signposting the importance of motion in cinema, Michel Chion (2019) has suggested that dance is the common thread linking music and cinema as 'allied arts of motion'. One needs to add a crucial layer to these interweaving forms: that of the body in motion, a receptacle of movement in the cinematic assemblage. Usha Iyer's *Dancing Women* directs us with great flair to mobile *choreomusicking* bodies, to unpack dance as Indian cinema's 'particular sonic, visual, and kinesthetic attractions' (p. 5).

Scholarly work in film studies has fallen short of any serious engagement with Hindi film dance. Discussions on 'song and dance sequences' have overwhelmingly focused on the song's relationship to narrative (Prasad, 1998; Vasudevan, 2010), its extra-textual circulation and sonic dominance through the use of the playback system (Jhingan, 2011; Majumdar, 2009; Sundar, 2016). Iyer nudges us to take a second look at song-and-dance spectacles, in the process eschewing ideological readings and representational burdens.

Dancing Women is an exhaustive map of the histories and 'movement vocabularies' of dance on screen, one which mobilises theoretical debates on the labouring female body interfacing with other bodies, spaces and the apparatus of cinema. The book is an extremely important intervention that unpacks the material practices of film dance and the spectatorial pleasures that they offer through the mobilisation of the corporeally charged female body. Thus, Iyer opens her introduction through a textual analysis of '*Muqabla Humse Na Karo*', a dance number from *Prince* (Lekh Tandon, 1969), in