prompt fresh investigations of a wider range of film styles, both internationally and historically.

While this discussion has focused on the challenges to historical consciousness arising from the changing configurations of the screen, it is not intended as a lament for a hypothetical and illusory golden age when historical sensibilities reigned supreme. Successful pedagogic strategies are already being devised to respond to the difficulties outlined here. Modules that focus on topics such as 'screening the city' or on developments in crime drama on television can, at their best, encourage historical understanding of media theory, explore the relation between the modern and the postmodern, and arouse curiosity about the evolving connections between aesthetics, technological knowhow and social preoccupations. The growing interest in screen music suggests another fruitful means of stimulating awareness of the difference between historical recognition and historical understanding (indeed the distinctive evocation of the past through sound rather than image raises the interesting possibility that this might be a particularly productive route to developing historical consciousness). Digitization and the World Wide Web look set to remove one major impediment to historical enthusiasms by enabling extended access to archive material, especially from television, where poor availability has previously hampered student interest, the feasibility of research projects, and publication. Lifting this barrier may of itself succeed in arousing the historical curiosity that is a key prerequisite for the flowering of historical consciousness.

Proliferating screens

WILL STRAW

One of the difficulties of talking about cinema in the present moment stems from the withering of a longstanding dichotomy between film and television. Alongside the 'vibrant colours and fine details' of IMAX,[1] we confront the obscure, flickering imagery of Quicktime film extracts on our computers. At both extremes, screen sizes and formats have proliferated, but the relationship between scale and a classical, primary experience of cinema is not obvious. The IMAX screen's capacity for spectacle is regularly employed in the service of 'minor' cinematic forms, such as the travelogue, just as the obscure

1 Charles Acland, 'IMAX technology and the tourist gaze', *Cultural Studies*, vol. 12, no. 3 (1998), p. 429.

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and tiny digital screen may restore something of the enchantment of the cinema in its most cherished historical moments.

Among recent artworks engaging with the cinema, one of the most compelling is the installation *In Your Dreams* by the Canadian artist Gisele Amantea (Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, 1999). The work displays thirty-one tiny snowglobes (those small novelties one turns over and shakes, producing a flurry of snow-like material) arranged along three shelves. Each of these globes, connected to a hidden video playback device, contains a mirror reflecting loops from long-ago films (Ingrid Bergman in *Joan of Arc*, Busby Berkeley choreographies, melodramatic quarrels, and so on). In a variety of ways, this installation suggests the multiple vectors along which our experience of cinema is being transformed. The snowglobes are both quaint – leftovers from an earlier regime of enchantment – and unexpectedly contemporary. As murky images flutter within them, barely decipherable from a distance, they resemble the popdown screens of planes or intercity buses, or the portable audiovisual playback devices we glimpse in the hands of nearby strangers. The installation, like these new technologies generally, sets in place a visual field in which a global industry's polished products are regularly reduced to murky fluctuations of movement and colour, unfolding at the margins of our vision or attention.

As the channels in which we glimpse the cinematic shrink and proliferate, we presume, nevertheless, that the audiovisual texts they display will be more or less identifiable, that an extended look will allow us to affix to them the familiar brand names of films or television programmes. While the spectacular quality of audiovisual texts is so often diminished, across the range of minor, low-definition channels through which they pass, our ability to identify such texts has grown. This recognizability is nourished by repetition, by an expansion in the number of windows and promotional sites through which these texts travel and accumulate the markers of distinct brands and identities.

Predictions about the future of audiovisual media have long been fixated on the dissolution of boundaries. Most accounts of contemporary audiovisual media stress the withering of differences between media channels, between discrete textual forms, between the simulated and the faithfully reproduced. Video, Raymond Bellour once suggested, is both the material basis and the symptom of all these passages and dissolutions, processes magnified in the computer's reduction of audiovisual texts to streams of code.[2] Global media, here, are to be imagined as an open-ended system of interconnection and passage, in which the distinct status of individual audiovisual texts is dissolved. This is the view of things most often embraced within a range of contemporary theoretical models, with their affinity for energetic lines, currents and flows.

Against these scenarios, however, we might set the detachability of

2 Raymond Bellour, 'The power of words, the power of images', *Camera Obscura*, no. 24 (1990), p. 7.

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the contemporary audiovisual text, its circulation as a discrete commodity across multiple sites of exhibition and consumption. As windows for the marketing of films proliferate, the branding of films as discrete entities is heightened, such that they maintain their distinctiveness across every channel of exhibition, from the retail videocassette to the pay-per-view event. More pointedly, television programmes are increasingly designed for an existence separate from the sorts of flow in which we once expected them to appear, endowed with a self-sufficiency that allows them to fit into the schedules of innumerable networks and specialized cable and satellite channels around the world. If the number of contexts for audiovisual texts is now chaotically expanded, programming itself has assumed modular forms which find easy entry into such contexts.

This is one effect of broadcasting systems which increasingly efface their place of origin, and of a programming industry marked by an international division of labour. Canadians have long been aware that their documentaries, half-hour animated series and hour-long historical dramas must be designed as 'strips' for the export market. They are commodities in an international economy which requires that they be slotted into schedules with little concern for a broader context of understanding. Specialized channels devoted to history, nature, lifestyle or addressed to various ethnic groups rely less and less on direct modes of address, on the sorts of discursive shifters which might ground their programming in a distinct place and time. Rather, they offer endless sequences of discrete texts, whose diversity of origins no longer strikes us as unusual.

This diversity works against our ability to attribute any coherent ideological or civic project to a network (a British crime series from the mid 1980s leads into a recent *Law and Order* rerun, then to a new biography of John Kennedy, Jr, and from this to a public domain film from the early 1950s). Rather than producing a coherent and univocal sense of flow, cable and satellite channels presume prior acknowledgement of each programme's distinct individuality and integrity. That familiarity has almost always been produced *elsewhere*, in the prior history of these programmes, or of the national and generic codes upon which they draw. Science-fiction films, from *Robocop* (Paul Verhoeven, 1987) to *Starship Troopers* (Paul Verhoeven, 1997), imagine the television of the future as an unending system for direct address and interpellation. This runs counter to the economic logics of television programming, more and more dependent on the transnational sale of detachable audiovisual texts. Even CNN, in the wake of its merger with *Time*, moved from ongoing news 'flow' to a series of magazine blocks, each given a distinct, previously established brand and designed for individual sales or repetition.

In the mid 1980s, the French critic Guy Scarpetta noted the difficulty with which the idea of video as a process (rather than a

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3 Guy Scarpetta, *L'Impureté* (Paris: Grasset, 1985), p. 299.

product) found adherents within the artworld.[3] Instead, he suggests, the term 'video' quickly came to designate the *tape*, the discrete physical and commodity form on which televisual signals were encoded. Mobility in the audiovisual world came less from the withering of boundaries between channels, as ambitiously utopian scenarios had envisioned, than from the circulation of discrete texts through and across them. Similarly, the creation of ever more spectacular environments for the projection of films has done little to dissolve boundaries between the film text and these environments. Scenarios for the synthesis of technologically-based audiovisual forms have produced few popular examples of cinematic works which break through the frame of the screen, rather than simply extending or reshaping it.

The thirty-one snowglobes of *In Your Dreams* perfectly capture this proliferation of exhibition windows, even as close examination of each image reveals it to evoke a precise moment in the history of classical cinema. In its miniaturization, each of these moments is rendered punctual and fleeting, but this is not because the boundaries between them have broken down. On the contrary, that individuality has been reduced to the most basic visual gestures through which historical period, studio look or genre convention are conveyed. Each image now functions as the crystallization of a rich and identifiable aesthetic system, and has thus retained its individuality. Together, each image and its container – each film loop and snowglobe – produces an almost tangible artefactuality, and one could easily imagine them as domestic toys or curiosities. Like the scratches from old vinyl records employed in contemporary musical sampling, the murky, archaic qualities of image and snowglobe work to re-enchant those contemporary practices in which they are employed.

Here, too, we might express caution with respect to widespread ways of imagining contemporary audiovisual culture. Against every scenario which asserts the dematerialization of the audiovisual, its reduction to information and virtuality, we must note the contemporary explosion of artefacts. Quasi-cinematic toys and trinkets, portable storage and display devices and other material props of an audiovisual culture have proliferated, each offering images and sounds in distinctive ways dependent on their own technological complexity and purposes. As screens take their place in the corners of our kitchen or in a range of transportation vehicles, they mark and define space in ways which belie their status as simple carriers of an information whose origin is elsewhere. As much as these proliferating screens invite us to rethink the status of audiovisual information, they suggest that we consider new ways in which that information comes to be attached to space.

We may, in fact, amidst widespread discussion of dematerialization and virtuality, speak of an expanded life for physical artefacts, for cultural commodities whose tangible forms circulate throughout the

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world. The sense that this tangibility remains resonant in an age of imminent dematerialization may be seen in the preoccupation of so many recent artworks with collection and display. Among the many paradoxes of digital communication is the extent to which Internet-based commerce, most spectacularly through such auction services as Ebay, has resulted in millions of trivia items re-entering the marketplace for tangible artefacts and being sent across the world. We may also glimpse these countervailing tendencies in the growth of labyrinthine retail outlets in which books, music and videotapes – arguably those cultural forms most susceptible to dematerialization – are made available in ever-increasing numbers. New screens partake of this persistence of tangibility, affixing audiovisual imagery to a variety of *things* scattered throughout our everyday environments.

National pasts and futures: Indian cinema

RAVI S. VASUDEVAN

Looking back at Screen Studies over the past ten years or so, there emerges a strong impression of the ways in which historical analysis has provided the armature for several focuses. Research into preclassical forms in the study of early Euro-American cinema now constitutes a significant body of work, enabling us to think of narrative cinema in non-teleological ways. Simultaneously, film scholars have begun to explore many different histories as these are played out across the world and as they interact in complex ways. Here, the question of national film cultures has provided a crucial way of disaggregating wider theorizations of film. Initially this was often posed in a defensive way in order to highlight patterns of distinction and difference, emphasizing particularity against the hegemonic norms of narrative filmmaking associated with Hollywood cinema. Today, however, it is possible to pose another future for Screen Studies, one which might look to a more intricate cultural history of identity: to the web of exchanges, flows and translations that underlie cultural identity; to the negotiations of territoriality, in markets and geolinguistic spaces, that govern its changing terms; and to the ways in which these issues are reframed through new technologies of distribution and delivery.

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