

paying attention to frozen time, cyclical time (memory that keeps haunting) and elongated time (visible in the migrant labourer's arduous walk for survival).

At a spatial level, the pandemic continues to be everywhere in our bodies, homes, streets, theatres and airports (p. xvi). Barucha, without obliterating the inherent voyeurism, ethics and legality attached to photography, analyses them as physical evidence and forces us to witness, re-encounter and re-examine the spaces/sites (both physical and digital) that emphasize government surveillance, censorship, haphazard lockdown regulations, the sheer absence of care and the negligence of the governments (particularly the Indian government) towards people (pp. 52–8). He also focuses on the curb of our basic ability to touch, reach out and move freely within a space and its impact on our mental health at the same time as nature started to breathe and heal when the world stopped.

Ruminating on the horrors of 'Endings' (extinction, death) and 'Exits' (from a theatre) in its tangible and intangible folds, Barucha finds a more hopeful take by thinking of time in its cosmic, ecological and mythological expansiveness. He thinks of endings/exits as merely time in between-space where something new is beginning (taking shape), perhaps not yet completely visible. He urges us to breathe mindfully with each other, keeping in consideration our interconnectedness with nature and the ecology, emphasizing 'care of self with a deeper regard for the world, and, more critically, a renewed respect for the planetary resources' (p. 203). He asks us, 'Will we face the next wave with our eyes wide open or shut?' (p. 203) – a question we need to ponder individually and collectively to find practices and methods of mourning, healing and surviving as resistance. Barucha's style of writing is self-reflexive, often agitating, making it experiential, and I found myself teary-eyed while reading a few sections. Even though the book deals with dense theoretical arguments as well as dark subjects, his mastery in narrative writing makes it an easy read accessible for academic and non-academic audiences.

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***Uday Shankar and His Transcultural Experimentations: Dancing Modernity.*** By Urmimala Sarkar Munsî. Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2022. Pp. xvi + 281. £99.99/\$117.75 Hb.

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Uday Shankar, a doyen of Indian dance and choreography whose career spanned from colonial to postcolonial times in India, is a name to reckon with in the landscape of Indian and world performance culture. However, his experimental approach has often made his legacy a subject of debate, hindering research inquiries, leaving his extensive body of work rather underdiscussed. In this context, Urmimala Sarkar Munsî's book *Uday Shankar and His Transcultural Experimentations* emerges as a significant and much-needed contribution. In this book, Munsî offers a fascinating exploration of the life and creative evolution of Uday Shankar. With meticulous research and thoughtful observation, Munsî takes readers on a transformative journey, delving into Shankar's pioneering approach to dance and the experiments that defined his illustrious career.

By immersing readers in the historical and cultural context of Shankar's era, Munsî adeptly maps his niche in dance topography. She highlights the significance of Shankar's interactions with prominent artists like Anna Pavlova and Martha Graham, offering a glimpse into the intricate web of transcultural exchanges that influenced his artistic vision. The accounts of the foreign tours of Shankar's troupe allow readers an extensive survey of the influences that shaped Shankar's innovative, eclectic and diverse approach to dance.

One of the strengths of the book is how the author challenges conventional narratives surrounding Indian dance. She delves into Shankar's experiences as a foreign performer in the Western world but effectively disproves the notion that his success was simply attributed to orientalist fascination. Muni argues persuasively that Shankar's willingness to integrate Western dance forms, performance discipline and presentational rigour into his work was not a rejection of his own culture but a testament to his openness to artistic evolution and innovation. In doing so, Muni calls into question the simplistic characterizations of Shankar as an impressionistic adventurer and instead paints a nuanced portrait while negotiating complex cultural intersections.

In the lucid introductory chapter, Muni sets the tone for the book while recalling her association with Uday Shankar and his wife Amala Shankar (an illustrious dancer/choreographer). But the author must be credited for the immaculate balancing act that she sustains in the narrative of the book, wherein she not only writes in admiration of Uday Shankar but also objectively assesses the varied criticisms of Shankar's body of work and adequately offers rejoinders through her insightful and insider's knowledge of Shankar's *oeuvre*. Muni's careful selection of the guiding tropes, like the grammar and historiography of dance, to signify Shankar's style and philosophy is embodied in her statements such as, 'Kapila Vatsyayan criticized Shankar's dance and choreographic works, emphasizing the (undisciplined) free flow of movements and the grammarless-ness of his dance' (p. 12) and '[Joan] Erdman's research ... creates an opportunity for a historiographic exercise to understand the scope of the word "translation" when the work has not intentionally been recognized as a translation by the choreographer himself' (p. 15).

The book showcases Shankar's role as a cultural ambassador, bridging the East and West through his art. Through an interweaving of compelling arguments, Muni highlights the importance of celebrating his contributions as integral to India's cultural heritage: 'It is an effort to address the layered history in which Shankar becomes the agent of an intercultural conversation' (p. 16). To challenge traditional beliefs and advocate Shankar's inclusive philosophy of dance, Muni invites readers to re-evaluate his legacy and the impact of his transcultural experimentations. Her exploration of gender and of emotive expressions in Shankar's productions lends depth to the reader's understanding of his artistic vision and the cultural contexts in which he operated. A collation of rare pictures, archival evidence and quotes from interviews, as well as anecdotes of people from Shankar's world, are also part of the charm of the book.

*Uday Shankar and His Transcultural Experimentations* is a thought-provoking and meticulously researched book that offers a fresh perspective and resource on the life and work of Shankar to performers, students, researchers, pedagogues and culturalists. Muni's astute analysis makes this book a vital addition to the literature on Indian dance, transcultural exchanges and the legacy of Uday Shankar.

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***Contemporary Chinese Queer Performance.*** By Hongwei Bao. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2023. Pp. vii + 157. £104/\$162.69 Hb.

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I have always found queerness in contemporary China a rather depressing topic, especially for those of us who live in it, yearning desperately for a utopia, never to come, and it never stops wounding us. What forms of conviviality are possible when not only is queer survival