

non-Japanese forms in their work. Groups such as Seinen-dan led by Hirata Oriza frequently perform overseas and invite foreign artists to Japan. The company's website is in Japanese, English, French and Korean. This appears quite liberal-minded, and open to cross-cultural influences. However, as I have noted in my own writings,<sup>2</sup> and as Uchino explains in detail, the absorption of foreign influences is aimed at reinforcing the Japanese particularity of their work, rather than forging new globally connected theatre.

In contrast to this particularistic Japanese work, Uchino optimistically theorizes about how intercultural collaborations by non-Japanese for Japanese consumption can “attempt to create a site of ‘internationalist vigilance’ against ‘the violence of terrorism’ and ‘the continued brutality of the civilized world’” (Uchino, p. 190). Thus, Uchino proposes an active function for live performance in a world within which such productions are often marginalized by economic forces and the general concept that the purpose of art is only to produce beauty rather than challenge its very existence.

As a manifesto, there are few faults to find with the book. There are a few quibbles some may have with its scholarly discourse. Uchino uses such terms as “neo-liberal”, “neo-conservative”, and “neo-nationalist” without definitions. As a Japanese theatre specialist, I believe I understand Uchino's usage, but these terms are problematic for some scholars in any context. They may be even more confusing for those without a deep knowledge of Japanese politics and theatre. In addition, Uchino's writing style is dense at times, requiring careful readings of certain passages. However, there are a few obvious places where words or punctuation is missing, causing the reader to wonder whether or not there might be something missing from other difficult passages. Finally, some of the indexing is misleading. Uchino follows the Japanese order of family name/given name throughout the book, however Hitsujiya Shirotama, the leader of Yubiwa Hotel, is listed in the index by her given name (Shirotama) under “S”, instead of the “H” of her family name (Hitsujiya).

These minor problems aside, Uchino's book is a welcome addition to the library of anyone interested in Japanese theatre and the arts today. While one might not agree with his assessments of individual artists, or his overall view of the future of global performance genres, Uchino's arguments are well formulated. As a stimulus for further scholarship and debate, the book is a must read for anyone teaching or researching contemporary Japanese theatre.

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*Mourning the Nation: Indian Cinema in the Wake of Partition.*

By Bhaskar Sarkar. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009. Pp. xi + 372.

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*Mourning the Nation* is an investigation into the long shadow cast by one of the most harrowing chapters in the history of the Indian subcontinent. It takes the event of Partition, in which colonial India was subdivided into the independent nations of India and Pakistan, as its object of inquiry and examines its covert and overt traces in Indian cinema in order to present what the author terms “the psychobiography of the nation”. A thoroughly absorbing, beautifully written, and forcefully argued account, this book is a major contribution to the flourishing field of Indian film studies.

The book moves from the years following Partition in 1947 to the present, with the intention of holding up to scrutiny all cinematic references to, and engagements with, the trauma. What emerges is a

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2 Swain, John D., *Nomads Still: Zainichi-Koreans and Contemporary Japanese Theatre* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2004).

historical process of slowly coming to terms with the pain, shock, rage, and shame of the event by filmmakers and audiences, as the transition is made from the “unspeakable” to varied attempts at narrativization over a period of several decades. Sarkar makes it clear that Indian cinema’s excursions into Partition territory, so to speak, are inextricably tied to the politics of nationalism and nation-building, the parameters of which proscribed any real or systematic treatment of its causes and impact through ideological and policy rationales. Indeed, one of the maneuvers that the author seeks to execute, with mixed results as I discuss below, is to simultaneously critique the ideology of nationalism while remaining within its theoretical and empirical frames and frameworks. Arguably, Partition serves as the exemplum of things gone awry within the body politic, and Sarkar does an excellent job in teasing out the tensions within individual film texts as the latter serve to artificially reconcile (as commercial films tend to do) an ethical approach to the trauma with the expediency of bringing the story to a neat resolution.

In an impressive introductory chapter, Sarkar lays out the theoretical underpinnings of his work, as well as explaining its aims and objectives. He locates his study within the area of inquiry devoted to trauma and memory, adding Partition to the canon of work on the Holocaust and other European agonies of the past century. He sees his project as constituting both an analysis, and an undertaking, of mourning work: “In a fundamental sense, I am assembling an archive of commemorative practices: hence, an archivist’s discriminating gaze comes into play” (p. 33). His emphasis on the politics of mourning provides support to the ethical dimensions of the inquiry, as he asks: “what futures do these mediations envision for social life in South Asia?” These may be seen as the three interconnected themes that run through the book: the relationship of Partition films to the work of mourning and memorialization; an interrogation of how this relates to Indian nationalist discourses; and the meanings and ethical implications of historical reconstructions.

Sarkar’s main strategy is to read different eras *into* filmic texts in terms of their temporal and affective relationship to Partition. In other words, the trauma of the event was most acute in the late 1940s and the 1950s, so Sarkar picks up on the subliminal messages contained in some commercial Hindi films from those decades. The chapters on Bengali cinema that follow constitute, for this reviewer, one of the highlights of the book. Given the complex national–regional dynamics of the Indian polity, and the eclipsing of Bengali cultural expressions outside Bengal, the effervescence of scholarship on Indian cinema has been overwhelmingly directed at the Bombay-based industry and its output. Thus a discussion of Bengali popular (and serious) cinema is a welcome addition to current work. But more importantly, Bengal was one of the states partitioned by the colonial powers and their surrogates, with the Muslim-dominated sections becoming East Pakistan. Sarkar’s affective history makes note of the physical and emotional toll that the Bengalis suffered in the aftermath of Partition, as the city of Calcutta filled up with refugees from across the border. Despite historical, linguistic, and cultural ties, the peoples of Indian Bengal now saw themselves as “ghoti” and “bangal” (hailing from the western or eastern parts of the state respectively), with the latter subject to various humiliations as they tried to establish themselves anew. A stark reminder of the recurring fate of refugees everywhere.

In his chapter on the “emblematic mourner”, the Bengali filmmaker Ritwik Ghatak, the author provides a deeply empathetic insight into this tormented figure. While not as widely known and revered as Satyajit Ray, Ghatak achieved a kind of cult status at the time of his death in 1976, and enjoys prestige as an avant-garde filmmaker. Sarkar discusses his Partition trilogy, revealing the meanings invested in melodrama as a form suited to the Bengali sensibility that both nourished and destroyed Ghatak. If he cannot quite explain why Ghatak’s films failed to arouse this sensibility, his careful attention to the films’ artistic innovations and commitments cannot but be persuasive.

Sarkar’s critique gets stronger and more pointed in the final chapters of the book, as he assesses Partition narratives from the 1980s and ’90s. His analysis of the celebrated though controversial television miniseries *Tamas* (1987), both in terms of the politics of its production and reception, as well as its cinematic strategies, lays out the parameters of a culture war in the Indian context. Sarkar is astute

in unpacking the gendered codes of the serial that play into mythicized notions of female purity, nobility, and sacrifice for the nation, despite the serious and pedagogical intent of an esteemed director. Even more trenchant is the author's critique of Deepa Mehta's film *Earth* (1999) in which aestheticized images aimed at a global audience commodify Partition violence. Sarkar writes that

[T]he nature of historical understanding – cognitive *and* affective – that the film affords remains grievously limited. Tableau-like shots of weary refugees streaming into town on foot or in bullock carts, or of the beautifully lit and aesthetically arranged corpses in the train, are presented like a series of picture postcards: as if the past were, indeed, a foreign country, an exotic location in time, now opened up for tourist contemplation and consumption through cinematic time travel. (p. 284)

Sarkar's overall point in commenting on trends in the more recent films about Partition is that, in reiterating dominant constructions of the trauma, or of Hindu–Muslim relations in India, they (and the viewing public) are unable to imagine other possibilities, other futures.

It has become *de rigueur*, in recent years, to debunk the paradigm of national cinema. While I do not have a problem with this per se, I have yet to see real alternatives to this approach in film studies, where even the “global cinema” or “world cinema” focus is often broken down into discussions of discrete national outputs. By simultaneously mounting a spirited critique of the nationalist framework, only to adopt it for his own purposes, Sarkar may be facing more of a conundrum than he is willing to acknowledge. His brief that nationalist discourses of the official variety tend to be homogeneous whereas actual national communities are fraught with divisions and difference is, I think, both obvious and simplified. We give official discourses too little credit if we think that they are oblivious to internal differences in the populations they address; the challenge is to interpret how hegemonies are maintained in spite of the significant ethnic and religious diversity of most nation-states. And scholars have long pointed out the constructed nature of nationalist imaginings. Sarkar's re-treading of this ground may be more of a political stance than a theoretical turning point.

I have two minor points of critique of Sarkar's argument, one methodological, the other epistemological. By telling only the Indian side of the story, so to speak, the “national” framework that he excoriates remains in place. Is it not necessary to take a more global or comparative perspective, that is, to look into the production of discourses and subjectivities on the other side of the border, in Pakistani society and cinema? After all, Partition affected both sides and given the cultural (as opposed to religious) affinities of the neighboring peoples, would not this broader framework address the very polarities and stock representations that come in for critical scrutiny? I realize the hazards of such an expansive undertaking (briefly referred to in the final page of the book), and as far as I am aware, no such study has yet been attempted. And the scope of the book is impressive as it stands, so it is perhaps a testament to the questions it raises that one looks for more untraditional approaches. Which brings me to Sarkar's understanding of his project of mourning work as having an ethical dimension. The task of historical revisitings of Partition, as he sees it, is to conjure up alternative futures for South Asia. Yet films are not utopian vehicles for a harmonious future but rather rooted in the rancors of their time and place, as *Mourning the Nation* has been at pains to point out. Given the difficulties of any real breakthrough in India–Pakistan relations over the past sixty years, the triumph of this political reality in cinematic codes and conventions can hardly come as a surprise.