

other parts opaque as if on purpose, like the two slashes of the “free//style” and the “Afro//queer” he heralds, which might serve, as one student mused, to keep the reader, along with Guyton, open to all that remains in-between.

As we enter the second half of the semester, we will read Casey Avaunt’s “Bestowing Blessings and Cultivating Community: Lion Dancing in Boston’s Chinatown” alongside participant ethnographies by Emily Kaniuka (on moshing masculinities and whiteness), Beverly Bautista (on a typecasting career in commercial dance) and Somya Jatwani (on belly dance as restaurant entertainment). Tremendously helpful for the study of dance anthropology and cultural politics, these pieces render approachable the mammoth exercise of teaching subject position, participant-observation, interview, and critical reflection at any learning level alongside questions of cultural belonging, identity, and multiple (and even competing) allegiances within a single scene.

Editor Atkins and her team of contributors supply these tools throughout, lesson planning with readings and activities to be taught in sequence or reshuffled for needed use. This inspiration is a credit to the extensive collaboration of authors who we learn met numerous times through Zoom meetings to workshop book content and pedagogy. The effect is equal parts convincing and stimulating. The evident enthusiasm of the book’s introduction fulfills on its promise in this sense, reminding us that “the role that joy and pleasure play in popular dance is critical because they can galvanize people, act as resistance, cement the dance, and preserve it for future generations” (3).

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## ISHTYLE: ACCENTING GAY INDIAN NIGHTLIFE

By Kareem Khubchandani. 2020. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. 262 pp. \$80.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9780472074211  
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Let’s start with the beginning: of what this text is, and then what it does, followed by what it perhaps can do . . .

*Ishtyle* is part of the Triangulations series with University of Michigan Press, edited by Jill Dolan and David Roman, with associated editors Ramón H. Rivera-Servera and Sara Warner. Triangulations focuses on Lesbian/Gay/Queer–Theater/Drama/Performance and features groundbreaking titles such as *Butch Queen Up in Pumps: Gender, Performance, and Ballroom Culture in Detroit* by Marlon M. Bailey, as well as *Performing Queer Latinidad: Dance, Sexuality, Politics* by Ramón H. Rivera-Servera. With triangulations as a process to locate a target by knowing two other points in space, *Ishtyle* begins the process of mapping South Asian queerness through critical engagement with nightlife and self-creation. What is gay Indian nightlife? Where and how does it take place? How can scholars implement methodologies of gathering data through new practices of *accenting* knowledge for academe? These are the questions that Khubchandani works to answer by centering his family experience—informing us that this work is rooted in his own fleshy archive.

Khubchandani takes the meaning of “ish-tyl” from the way he and his cousins would mock each other’s style and adornment choices. I clocked/inferred this as an undefinable mockery and overexaggeration that perhaps accents gayness or references femininity. Khubchandani implies that this is how he and his cousins label dressing or acting a little “gay-ish,” and I think about his mother, and how much she, and Khubchandani’s aunts, inspire him and his sense of looking, fashioning, feeling, and interpersonal study. It is through dancing and dressing with the matriarchs of his family that we come to walk with Khubchandani and see the richness gay Indian life and nightlife has to offer culturally and epistemologically. But first, some music . . .

With a pause, I came to the acknowledgments section, which is keenly aware of how to say what cannot be written but felt and heard. Through a method of gay nightlife, he provides a list of hit song titles with a list of names that he is acknowledging. Khubchandani rehearses for us a listening practice of appreciation. Through the sonic landscape of this playlist, he provides us a script of care about the people, institutions, and collectives that has made this work possible. It is a kind and inspirational playlist that beckons the next generation of scholars, asking, “How can we offer more with our gratitude?”

In honoring queerness, Khubchandani's queer ethnography is a deep practice of storytelling his own wild experience of his journeys with his friends, family, and solo. First, with his dedication to his mother, his "ishtyle icon," we can infer this text walks around and in between influences and creations. This is especially clear with the preface, "In Search of the Desi Drag Queen," in which he beats his face/gets in drag and presents to us the creation story of his own female impersonation/academic drag persona LaWhore Vagistan as embedded in the performance politics of "South Asian/desi" drag and North American drag. LaWhore fiercely walks in and out of specific queer spaces—queer spaces that consistently practice a curatorial processing of queerness that picks and chooses how queer, or what kind of queerness, is allowed. Some examples of queer spaces she journeys through are the fetishization of South Asian drag characters, the "No Drag Rules" of both mainstream and underground queer space, the labor of queer drag aunties, and the current "Drag boom" brought on by academic study and popular mediated platforms such as *RuPaul's Drag Race*. Rather than having LaWhore draw up a taxonomy of acceptances, Khubchandani focuses this book broadly on how these dynamics create and recreate queer life or *accented style* of queer people who navigate these ever-changing (sometimes treacherous) communities in flux.

Following the acknowledgements and preface, Khubchandani's introduction defines ishtyle as a "dialogic method for critical performance ethnography" that attends to the multidimensional textures and articulations of classed, raced, gendered, and national danced encounters in public (10–11). Split into three parts, part 1 of the text brings the reader to Bangalore with chapter 1, "BINARY CODES," exploring the United States, California Bay Area Silicon Valley technological *gay bro* influence on Indian gay nightlife. With chapter 2, "Dancing against the Law," we see how strategies of open possibilities in self-creation generate intimacies within and for desi and western drag. Part 2 returns us to the United States, and specifically Chicago's gayborhoods. In chapter 3, "Desiring Desis," Khubchandani traces how gay bodies become desirable in a

multicultural city, while using performance analysis of oral narrative to theorize how dancing ishtyle accents reveal the proximity of bodies to objects in racialized desire. In chapter 4, "Slumdogs and Big Chicks," *Jai Ho!*, a quarterly Bollywood gay party, is explored as a venue deploying the performatives of desi drag performance, including Punjabi, Hindi, and Tamil music, which reorganizes and rechoreographs often heterosexual spaces for alternative homosocialities. Part 3 is a critical interrogation of how mediated cultures and globalized racializations affect and shape queer nightlife, with chapter 5, "Snakes on the Dance Floor," which presents how nostalgic dances and gestures provide reparative or comforting accents, a relief from mainstream and gay masculinity judgmentalism. In chapter 6, "Raw and Uncouth," Khubchandani looks at how Indian street dance influences queer intimacies in and out of the nightclub, while providing in-depth storytelling of the very real dangers and liberations of sexual conduct that polices gay pleasure within its own caste systems of respectability or couth/"Koothnytz." And in his conclusion, he summarizes this book and the methodology of "nightlife [as] a highly curatorial practice, informed as much by its publicity and promotions, built environments, sonic landscapes, and geographical locations, as it is by fleshy encounters with others" (185). Much like this book's research, nightlife is a continuous practice of research and refinement to create a system for possibilities of queer existence.

Unlike this text, which is a deep understanding of the dynamic dances that make the possible limited or resisted, Khubchandani shows us how nightlife can often estrange people as much as it brings them together. For instance, in "Voguing at Frat Night," he writes, "It's not always easy to find a place to dance; making space for oneself, navigating the microgeographies of the dance floor, house party, and nightclub are political negotiations" (124). Sharing an experience with his friend Santosh, they conjure and curate ishtyle cautiously through mudra and Barata Natyam accents. "How do we make room to dance in dissenting ways when there is no space for our racialized choreographies, or when our racialized choreographies make us strange?" (124). But then, beside him "in this tiny circle [his friend]

Michael, a seasoned butch queen, is dipping, twirling, and duck walking, despite the congestion around him... [He] draws on particular church and ball-culture call-and-response repertoires that move his friends and make room for his dance and desires” (125). This impromptu tiny ball and cipher is porous and protective for its dancers, rechoreographing the dance floor to permit dissenting ways of dancing. Khubchandani’s critical description of this encounter provides us with fertile ground to write about the power of brown accent, and black spatial choreography, through racialized dances of joy, freedom, and unity. These tools for accenting and making space continue to be danced into development as responses to homo-social politics.

For me, as a Two-Spirit Butch Queen artist and scholar, it’s rare to read studied writing that speaks from such risk, and intimately focuses on the queer flesh, the homegirls, friends, nightclubs, dark room, and dangerous streets. Khubchandani is not writing as a third-person observer, nor is he strictly writing from personal experience. He is writing from both thoughts of LaWhore and himself to critically engage gay nightlife systems. The intimate vulnerability that Khubchandani curates and catalogues takes extreme bravery, and we, as a next generation of brown queer scholars, need this book to help us to be brave too.

In conclusion, for Khubchandani, “curation is only one part of the labor” (190)—though a very important part. Self-creation, fabulousness, and research and study of local and globalized media become very important in this work, and within the context of queer nightlife. This intimate and deeply thoughtful text is necessary for dance scholars and students of nightlife, globalized South Asian culture, and queer underground public performance, which is danced, embodied, and sometimes UP IN DRAGS! As he states, “Fieldwork changed me, shifted my politics, and rechoreographed my body and gender” (164), and in reading this monograph, we experience this with him through the influence of queer and familiar aunties, hijras, trans men, media, friends, nightclubs, and through dancing with LaWhore Vagistan. This text calls out to us with the necessity of the drag reveal, to tell us what is under the wig—all the influences that make her, and helps us transform and become more

with her, and for our own projects. I hope through reading and walking with us through this book, you will transform too!

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## DANCING TO TRANSFORM: HOW CONCERT DANCE BECOMES RELIGIOUS IN AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY

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During the conquest and colonization of the Americas, dance writing—including the diaries and personal travel accounts of Christopher Columbus, Amerigo Vespucci, and Bartolomé de las Casas—played a prominent role in representing Indigenous culture and framing power relations. For many Europeans, Indigenous dancing signified religious otherness. The alleged idolatry of these dances helped authorize European invasion and domination. Moreover, Christian missionaries often construed Native dance as residual paganism. In their zeal, missionaries arrived in the New World to orchestrate mass conversions of Native peoples. Dance studies scholar Paul Scolieri has demonstrated that early modern conquistadors, colonizers, and missionaries integrated representations of dance “in narratives of discovery, encounter, and conquest” (2013, 1).

The fraught history of colonization suggests that Christianity—Europe’s dominant religion since the conversion of Roman Emperor Constantine in 312 CE—was intolerant toward dance. The annals of ancient and medieval history tend to support this notion, given the numerous dance prohibitions emanating from church authorities. Past scholars, including Ann Wagner (1997), likewise argue that Christianity constituted an anti-dance religion. Emily Wright’s book challenges these preexisting assumptions. *Dancing to Transform: How Concert Dance Becomes Religious in American Christianity* (2021) offers an alternative narrative about the place of dance in Christianity, particularly among Protestant and evangelical communities in America today. In this first