Penny Farfan stipulates her desire to produce a resource for students, theatre-goers, artists, and even season-planners. The book is highly readable, and thus likely to fulfill that capacious goal. The introduction provides a glancing orientation to what follows; dipping into this repeatedly serves as an amuse-bouche to whet the appetite anew when a reader might otherwise find their curiosity unfocused. Lesley Ferris's afterword emphasizes how feminist and queer plays emerge from a tradition devolved from writers such as Maria Irene Fornes, Ntozake Shange, Judith Malina, Simone Benmussa, and Nehad Selaiha. Ferris prominently credits the late Elyse Dodgson for fostering workshops in Central and South America, Africa, Lebanon, Eurasia, and India jointly with the Royal Court, which brought emerging writers in direct contact with working British playwrights. I earnestly hope for a third volume from these editors that will feature more of the legacy of thousands of works that arose from these residencies.

—*Tracy C. Davis*

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Contemporary PerforMemory: Dancing through Spacetime, Historical Trauma, and Diaspora in the 21st Century. By Layla Zami. Bielefeld, Germany: Transcript, 2020; 292 pp.; illustrations. $45.00 paper, e-book available.

—"If I let the 't' slip away,
The body is at home
becomes
The body is a home" (133)

Layla Zami's compelling study in *Contemporary PerforMemory* engages with seven works by international dance artists who—though spanning several continents—weave similar themes of intercultural and diasporic experience into their processes, addressing historical traumas while generating pathways of healing and resistance. The featured artists—based in Europe, Martinique, Taiwan, Palestine, and the United States—include Oxana Chi, Christiane Emmanuel, Chantal Loïal, Wan-Chao Chang, Farah Saleh, Zufit Simon, and André M. Zachery. The scope of Zami's research on artists spread geographically is intentional, though she is careful to mention that her approach is "connective rather than comparative" (41)—seeking meaningful threads that resonate across the works. Zami's theory of *perforMemory* emerges from these threads by centering moving bodies to examine how cultural memory and historical trauma are transformed over time. PerforMemory, Zami argues, "foregrounds corporeality as a mode of production and transmission of cultural memory" (29). She offers perforMemory as an active antidote to the enduring erasure that prevents the memorialization of historical and political traumas. Zami cites the related work of scholars of memory studies, as well as Toni Morrison's notion of "rememory," first used in the novel *Beloved*, to describe how the trauma of slavery is present and continually reemerging in the lives of African Americans. PerforMemory, Zami explains, exists similarly as "a noun and a verb [...,] both a performative process and a result" (28).

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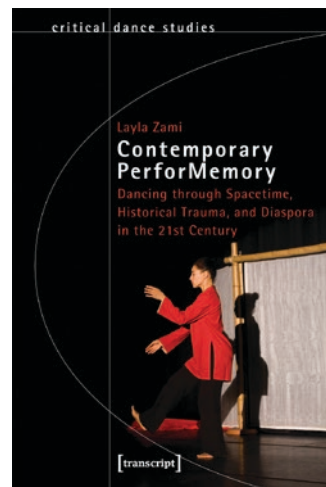
The text is thoughtfully arranged into four sections that intertwine personal narratives and performance analyses with musings from Zami's research diaries and interviews with the artists, in addition to engaging with related academic literature. Her multidisciplinary process is grounded in a postpositivist feminist approach; draws from diverse methods in memory and postcolonial studies, as well as critical dance and performance studies; and is aided by Zami's fluency in three languages. Throughout the book, several translations of interview excerpts and detailed notes are offered in German and French alongside the English text.

The first section, "Memory Dancescapes," introduces the seven works and explores how they each negotiate themes of memory and sites of trauma such as the Holocaust and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Zami identifies shared narratives around diasporic journeys, semi-autobiographical performances (she terms "choreobiography"), and a sense of memory timespace in flux—blurring distinctions between the past, present, and beyond. She examines how each artist's work interacts with and resists hegemonic histories, and how this repertoire of perforMemory can demonstrate the importance of dance in the "political remembering of traumata" (57). Specifically, she asks how perforMemory navigates Western constructs of time and space, and how this impacts "counter-hegemonic memory-making" (30). Referencing Diana Taylor (2003), Zami addresses the false notion of the superiority of written and visual knowledge transmission that represses cultural traditions considered ephemeral, including oral histories, gesture, dance, and performance. Instead, Zami's perforMemory rewrites the work of dance away from the art of the ephemeral and towards the moving body as a living archive.

In the section titled "Diasporic Moves," the author examines various contemporary definitions of Black, Jewish, and feminist diasporas, highlighting how these are at times conflicting and unsettled among scholars. Zami later identifies "'diasporic dance art' as a form of connection, a tool of analysis that supersedes the plurality of geographical locations or sources of diasporic or racialized identity" (117). These connections are reflected in the diverse cultural and artistic influences that show up in each artist's work and process. Zami notes how dance artists in particular are frequently asked to identify or explain "what kind of dance they make"—an expectation for a concise definition restricted to conventional and imaginary ideas of what dance is, and what it can become. Rather, Zami describes how diasporic dance creates worlds and ways to welcome shifting identities. The section concludes with a discussion of the stage as a diasporic space, and the "dance space as a home place" (140) where movements of memory and identity occur and performances "personify emotional and political mobility" (127). Some of these works share themes of seeking, searching, and belonging, though the artists define the world in which the performance lives. Each holds the power to create and transport their presence and viewers through sensorial experiences in unique constructions of space, texture, movement, and metaphor.

Zami's study continues by exploring the complex ways perforMemory interacts with time in the third section, "Dancing the Past in the Present Tense." Through offering extended descriptions of her experience of time while witnessing each of the featured works, the author reflects on how the malleability of time in performance can work to counter Western constructs of historical chronology and temporality. At times, the passing moments are elongated, eternal, while the work of another artist may rapidly unfold with a specific immediacy. Zami reflects upon translating her multisensorial experiences into writing from her memories "in the future," adding that, "To perforMemory is to question what time actually means" (166).

Zami dedicates the final "Dance Dialogues" section to full transcriptions of interviews conducted with the artists. Within each, colorful details of the featured performances emerge, further highlighting artistic intent, also contextualized by a series of lovely photographs, and discussions of the artists' broader bodies of work. *Contemporary PerforMemory* is an immense and deeply moving contribution. Zami's unwavering attention to transparency in her approach and the honesty in her writing shines through. This work is rigorous, nuanced, and poetic—reaching beyond the confines of disciplinarity to illuminate the power of bodies in motion to recall, resist, and rewrite.

—*Cristina Tadeo*

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Art in the Age of Machine Learning. By Sofian Audry. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2021; 193 pp.; illustrations. $45.00 cloth, e-book available.

Working Backstage: A Cultural History and Ethnography of Technical Theater Labor. By Christin Essin. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2021; 286pp.; illustrations. $80.00 cloth, $34.95 paper, e-book available.

In his 1943 essay "Pythian Heritage," the exsurrealist Roger Caillois—whose *Man, Play and Games* (1958) would inform early work in performance studies—took aim at the artistic tradition of valuing chance, accident, and spontaneity. The surrealists he had broken from tended to oppose their unconscious automatism against the suffocations of rational planning. Caillois replied that the true surrealist repression was not planning, but skillful work:

> It does happen that wonders seem produced by chance or by fortuitous encounters in the depths of oblivion—which consciousness can barely reach, and which are bestrewn with fermenting shameful lusts and vague thoughts. But in fact, what people receive from inspiration is merely the fruit of their disquiet. Their sudden talent actually stems from sleepless nights. (2003:270)

Creative work may seem accidental and lucky to those engaged in it; audiences too may take an almost religious interest in the graceful results of "chance" composition. But in all cases, Caillois stresses, we confront nothing less than the lifelong labor of individuals and the cultures that produced them. As the past decade has seen a rise in digitally generated "surreal" images, "dadaist" poetry, and "automatically" produced art—along with an increased attention to the politics of labor—Caillois's critique resonates anew.

Two books, different in style and topic, recall this argument. Sofian Audry's *Art in the Age of Machine Learning* introduces readers to how "AI art" is actually made: with a lot of work and skill. He largely neglects, however, that these same computational techniques have influenced the world outside of artistic practice. Might the issue of "automated art" be broadened to encompass automation in the art-making workplace—such as the theatre? For an introduction to this other history of art-automation, and a spirited rebuttal to its attendant ideologies, readers can turn to Christin Essin's *Working Backstage: A Cultural History and Ethnography of Technical Theater Labor*. This rousing book intervenes not just in the fields of theatre and performance studies, though