Book Reviews

Montez, Noe. *Memory, Transitional Justice, and Theatre in Postdictatorship Argentina*. Southern Illinois UP, 2018. 239 pp.

Noe Montez's monograph joins the growing archive of English-language studies of contemporary Argentine theatre and performance. It is an apt project that capitalizes on certain Argentine theatre artists' international prominence as well as current academic interest in what is commonly termed "memory studies." Montez focuses his account of 1990s and early twenty-first century Buenos Aires theatre through the combined concepts of individual memory narratives and governmental transitional justice. The approach is suitable to a study of theatrical activities during the Menem and Kirchner presidencies in that it allows the author to consider theatrical practice as both informed by and informing individual experience as well as state policy. Each of the four chapters looks at one facet of this relationship through multiple plays, the majority created by artists coming to the fore at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Chapter one examines how Menemism's "narratives of reconciliation and forgetting" were countered by resistant narratives in plays and productions by El Periférico de Objetos, Javier Daulte, Marcelo Bertuccio, and Luis Cano. Chapter two's focus on Teatroxlaidentidad's inaugural 2000 festival begins with Patricia Zangaro's catalytic A propósito de la duda before moving to a consideration of identity narratives and artistic collaboration with the Grandmothers of the desaparecidos' children through plays by Héctor Levy-Daniel and Mariana Eva Pérez. Chapter three, through an analysis of productions by Damiana Poggi and Virginia Jáuregui, Federico León, Mariano Pensotti, and Lola Arias (her much-studied Mi vida después), surveys the postdictatorship generation's own "memory construction" projects against the backdrop of the tandem presidencies of Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner and renewed governmental inquiry into period abuses. Finally, chapter four analyzes the still-contested legacy and memory of the Malvinas/Falklands War running through plays by Julio Cardoso, Patricio Abadi, Mariana Masover, and Lisandro Fiks. The study concludes with conjectures regarding artistic memory construction under Mauricio Macri's administration.

This reviewer welcomes Montez's sustained analysis of individual plays, particularly those that have not received much English-language scholarly attention, as well as the various forms of transitional justice that have been attempted in postdictatorship Argentina, which are carefully traced. However, the book is marred by a recurring lack of specificity, completeness, and accuracy. Missing diacritics weaken dozens of endnotes, while source names and titles are misspelled and contributions are misattributed (e.g., in note 36 of chapter 1, I am credited with developing the idea of allegory under dictatorship, when in fact it is exclusively Ana Elena Puga's application). In the text, production dates are sometimes given incorrectly, supporting details are missing (e.g., the author mentions that "several politically charged performances questioned the [military] government's intrusion into public life" [3] but never specifies which performances), and important publications are left uncited, among them Irene Villagra's 2015 study of Teatro Abierto and Florian Becker, Paola Hernández, and Brenda Werth's 2013 collection, Imagining Human Rights in Twenty-First Century Theater, which corresponds to Montez's project and brings together multiple essays on Latin America, including Werth's own essay on postdictatorship Southern Cone theatre. The stakes involved in accurate and complete critical representation are larger than they may appear; to do anything less is to weaken the field of contemporary Argentinean theatre and performance studies. This contribution should therefore be read alongside and within the context of important studies already published.

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Gallardo Saborido, Emilio. *Diseccionar los laureles: Los premios dramáticos de la Revolución Cubana (1959-1976)*. Warsaw: Instituto de Estudios Ibéricos e Iberoamericanos, 2015. 416 pp.

A nation's awards for artistic expression can stand as a record of national values in yearly installments. Similarly, awards can also put power structures into sharp relief, showcasing what those in power consider to be important. In *Diseccionar los laureles*, Emilio J. Gallardo Saborido's examination of Cuban drama awards from the first days of the revolution until the heart of the *quinquenio gris*, the dynamic between selection committees—often featuring foreign selectors—and the revolution's increasingly stringent approach to artistic expression is in constant tension. This history of Cuba's theatre awards from 1959 to 1976 offers a layered understanding of the socio-political pressures upon the artists, critics, and scholars involved in the awards selection through meticulous research about the decision-making processes and politics surrounding the prizes. Throughout, Gallardo Saborido interweaves literary criticism, pertinent theory, and interviews with the protagonists involved to give

readers insight into the complexities of awarding prizes in times of growing suspicion about artists considered to be less concerned with showcasing the revolution's ideals.

Organized chronologically, *Diseccionar los laureles* focuses on the Casa de las Américas prize in theatre and UNEAC's José Ramos prize, the two most prestigious in Cuba for theatre. Additionally, *Diseccionar* traces the attitudes of Cuban cultural institutions toward their own works with the UNEAC prize and toward international works with the award from Casa de las Américas, giving the reader insight into domestic and international tensions surrounding Cuban cultural production at the time. This investigative work on the part of the author, then, makes for a valuable resource for those considering the impact of each award on the field of theatre, as well as those studying theatre's broader societal impact during this historical period.

Although a broader thematic focus beyond the bestowal of national prizes does not emerge in the work, at times the author does link works across stylistic categories of theatre, such as in the first chapter with absurdist theatre, or those works connected via what Gallardo Saborido terms the "núcleo épico-bélico del teatro revolucionario cubano" (96) during the late 1960s, in response to, in part, the absurdist theatre that preceded it. As the author notes in his extensive organization of quotes from other critics (including Cubans Norge Espinosa, Ileana Boudet, and Esther Suárez Durán), absurd theatre was not in line with the revolution's goals because it was too malleable to be understood unilaterally. Other parts of this main section further prove what was indeed successful in this period leading into the quinquenio gris, mainly, identifying the revolution's current threat. Thus, the author includes a subsection on award winners that treated the Lucha contra bandidos, referring to the period from 1959 to 1965 when counterrevolutionaries were suppressed by Castro's troops in the years preceding their victory at Playa Girón. There is another subsection on works that deal with Jehovah's Witnesses. While Gallardo Saborido doesn't always give the reader his conclusions about these groups and trends, he does amass the voices of many others—from the winning texts, but also from interviews and writings with critics—that will help scholars looking for detailed information about the critical dialogue surrounding the works.

Especially valuable is how Gallardo Saborido is able to bring readers back to the dialogues surrounding prize selection. Utilizing contemporary interviews with those involved in the selection committees together with critical writings from when the prizes were awarded, *Diseccionar* is able to recuperate a balanced perspective on this difficult period in the history of Cuban culture. Further, by grounding the manuscript in yearly awards, readers are able to dig deeper into the officially approved works of the period, and can reach conclusions about particular omissions in the awards' trajectories. An obvious example of an overlooked group would be female award-winners—only one winner in the years covered, and only a few more honorable mentions. Given that *Diseccionar* aims to discuss the frictions between ideology and art during the period (17), it would be helpful to identify and elucidate

what these kinds of absences say about Cuba then and now. Linked with more of the author's critique of the works at hand, the text might offer more than the sum of its historical events in order to explore some of the ramifications of those happenings. Furthermore, given the extensive space in the text dedicated to thematic analyses of the winning works, it would also be beneficial to consider the staging and reception of the plays, when applicable.

In a time when staging politicized works in Cuba by Cubans is still contentious, it is worthwhile to re-assess how theatre professionals saw the practice of their work from 1959 to 1976, a challenging period in Cuba and elsewhere for staging perspectives marginalized by those in power. Gallardo Saborido's impressive compendium of award-winning plays and the dialogues surrounding their selection takes stock of what it was like for juries to identify these artists. For readers, seeing how Cuban and international playwrights and theatre critics weighed what was important to the works, to the field, or, unfortunately, to the Cuban powers overseeing the awards, we come to a more nuanced understanding of the role of awards in contentious times.

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Noriega, Jimmy A. and Analola Santana, eds. *Theater and Cartographies of Power: Repositioning the Latino/a Americas*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2018. 302 pp.

With their anthology Theater and Cartographies of Power: Repositioning the Latino/a Americas, Jimmy Noriega and Analola Santana have executed an ambitious project, one needed to advance Latin American/Latinx theatre and performance studies. Frustrated by the persistent hierarchization of North over South American performance and modes of analyses and by the consequently distorted understandings of Latinx and Latin American work, Noriega and Santana solicited contributions from artists and scholars across the Americas on the productive topic of "re-mapping" theatrical histories. Their introduction delineates how ingrained geographical understandings of our hemisphere have marginalized Latinx and Latin American art and experience and fail to account for contemporary phenomena such as globalization and migration. Noriega and Santana argue that the mobility and fluidity of theatre and performance make them particularly appropriate vehicles by which to "reimagine these geopolitical divisions that dissect the Americas into regions of dominion and subjugation, affluence and poverty, peace and violence, life and death" (9-10). While the animating proposal is compelling, performance's specific relevance for this task feels only implicitly explored by the anthology's end, perhaps due to the editors' broad prompts and to the variety of the contributors' perspectives, styles, subjects, and structures.

Yet the diffuse profile of these 29 newly published texts also brings benefit, providing varied English-language resources to professors looking to integrate or feature Latin American/Latinx theatre and performance. Noriega and Santana have done admirable work gathering diversely focused articles from some of the field's best scholars as well as texts from Latinx and Latin American theatre and performance artists that span theoretical, poetic, autobiographical, and even visual registers. The roster of pieces reflects the editors' attendance to inclusiveness; the selections balance artistic and academic perspectives and highlight distinctive voices from the whole hemisphere. In so doing, they have commissioned and published several new English translations, doing the important work of bringing previously unheard voices to an English-speaking readership.

While this swath of contributions accurately reflects the editors' desire to eschew traditional categorization and "borders" of knowledge, as a reader I did yearn for something more of a map, even if an unfamiliar one. Noriega and Santana have divided the book into five categories that they outline briefly in the introduction, but given each heading's capaciousness, an isolated introduction for each one, including further explanation of how each contributor in the section links to the theme, would have been welcomed. Similarly, while the introduction briefly notes contributors' identities, embarking as a reader on each selection, or at least each section, with deeper grounding in each writer's practice, oeuvre, and sociopolitical/aesthetic contexts would have made for a more informed and oriented reading experience from line one, rather than a gradual acclimation. The editors themselves note, "[b]ecause theater and performance are tied to the communities in which they are created, it is necessary to understand the social-political-aesthetic elements that inform the creation, production, presentation, and reception of each piece in relation to its locale" (21). I sought more acknowledgement of this location-based reality, somehow in concert with the overarching push toward hemispheric fluidity. A bit more wayfinding may have helped readers of Theater and Cartographies of Power in the enormous task of re-positioning the Americas, but this book does powerful work in highlighting and addressing this need.

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García-Peña, Lorgia. *The Borders of Dominicanidad: Race, Nation, and Archives of Contradiction*. Duke UP, 2016: 288 pp.

In *The Borders of Dominicanidad: Race, Nation, and Archives of Contradiction*, Lorgia García-Peña frames her exploration of Dominican identity with two personal experiences. The book begins with her own interpellation as a racialized subject in the US via a racist comment from a university professor and ends with her reaction to

increasingly visible violence against black and brown bodies in a global context. She acknowledges her particular position—its privileges and potential disruptions—as a discursive manner of linking her own body to the embodied knowledge practices that she traces on and off the island of Hispaniola. The text's principal trajectory follows the production of a racialized and embodied archive of Dominican nationalism and its movements, displacements, and contradictions. Indeed, the author highlights the root of *diction* as speech act, where normative dictions performatively enact particular histories and identifications and contra*dictions* become a theoretical tool for signaling those speech acts that enunciate or gesture to disruptions, displacements, and silences.

The author utilizes performance studies to relate these scholarly negotiations to an island forgotten and excluded by US-centric institutions. She joins in and elaborates on discussions of cultural importance around Dominican and diasporic identities by Caribbean and Latinx-focused scholars such as Silvio Torres-Saillant, Maja Horn, Dixa Ramírez, and Carlos Decena. García-Peña presents her research on a broad corpus of texts, materials, and bodies, spanning the nineteenth century to the present, to destabilize easy conceptions of the Dominican national project through what she calls living in El Nié. El Nié is an in-between space developed by poet and performance artist Josefina Báez that García-Peña theorizes as a bodily negotiation of the borders violently imposed on the racialized subject from the Haiti-Dominican Republic frontier and its resonances in the migratory subject between the Dominican Republic and the US. This body twists and troubles relationships to the Dominican nationalist archive's erasures, injustices, and silencings. As well, it provides García-Peña with a "rayano consciousness"—a borderland (rayano), embodied subjectivity that confronts violence and trauma through performance of "intrasolidarity dialogues" between Haitians and Dominicans (202). García-Peña's rayano consciousness disrupts Dominican nationalism and "creates a transnational, transtemporal interchange" that "encompasses the multiplicity of borders" imposed on and embodied by heterogeneous Dominican subjects (18).

Performance proves to be a highly effective site for positing *rayano* consciousness because it underscores the multiplicity of borderings that García-Peña seeks to explore. Many of the book's objects of analysis are recognizably understood within a performance studies field, particularly the treatment of artists Josefina Báez and David 'Karmadavis' Pérez or writer-musician Rita Indiana. García-Peña juxtaposes such performances with other contradictions that receive similar treatment: quotidian gestures of solidarity at the Haitian border, exiled and diasporic writings against the Trujillo dictatorship (1930-61), Afro-religious spiritual practices, and popular music. The oscillation between diction and contradiction constantly re-directs the text back to a border between hegemonic and marginalized knowledges and uses the site of the border as a similarly performance-based and embodied praxis. Working through El Nié, García-Peña is able to push performance-as-methodology further. Performance demonstrates how El Nié "signifies [...] the body that carries the

violent borders that deter them from entering the nation, from access to full citizenship and from public, cultural, historical, and political representation" (4).

García-Peña splits her book into two overarching sections entitled "Founding the Archive" and "Diaspora Contradicts." The first three chapters focus on critical moments in Haitian-Dominican relations from the 1800s through the Trujillo regime, with particular emphasis on the ways that performative repetitions of particular national and racial narratives solidified the discursive regimes that would shape the Dominican Republic's identity. She also reads literary works about the Haitian Massacre of 1937 in contradiction to illuminate compassion within a traumatic event. By taking on the Massacre—as well as other trans-national traumas like the catastrophic 2010 earthquake—the author works through horrific events in the service of emphasizing the fluidity of spaces and subjects along the border that will lead her to theorize *rayano* consciousness.

The final chapter, "Writing from El Nié," takes up a poetics of the diasporic subject position, dominicanidad ausente or absent Dominican-ness, to disrupt historic and colonial bordering practices in the Dominican Republic. The Dominican migrant in the United States occupies a space that does not easily fit into racial politics of American blackness but endures a perceived lesser Dominican-ness on the island. The un-belonging that these subjects experience leads to "an interstitial space of belonging," El Nié (173). The performance work of Josefina Báez opens García-Peña to her most intimate and illuminating analyses. For the author, the "Dominican blackness" that Báez centers in her performances is always "transnational, transitory and translingual" (190). The communicative system that Báez builds through Dominicanish and other performances, with strange mixtures of languages, syllables, gestures, and dances, emerges for García-Peña as a "performative lexicon" that utilizes a "Brechtian alienation effect" as a manner of producing anxiety within the audience—to exile the public from their own linguistic and communicative practices (201). The author ends her discussion of this prolific performer and poet by signaling the ways by which Báez produces rayano consciousness and its status as "becoming," a future of dominicanidad outside the nation and in solidarity with the excluded Other (202). Indeed, García-Peña's rigorous scholarly approach opens the possibility of hope and compassion in the face of excruciating violence. She shows the reader how to make use of performative methodologies to read performance contradictorily, a corpus that remembers and re-members an Other consciousness that stakes out cultural and ethical alliances in a world so imbued with anti-black and anti-migrant rhetoric.

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Ford, Katherine. *The Theater of Revisions in the Hispanic Caribbean*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. 219 pp.

The Theater of Revisions in the Hispanic Caribbean by Katherine Ford argues that twentieth-century playwrights from the Spanish-speaking Caribbean repeatedly return to previous narratives to rewrite them, a process that contributes to the construction of national and regional identities. Ford's literary and cultural study usefully places in dialogue twelve dramatic texts written and performed between 1941 and 1994 in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico and frames this wide-ranging corpus with theories on adaptation, intertextuality, palimpsest, and archive. Only a handful of the plays have received notable criticism, thus the book constitutes a welcome contribution to Latin American theatre studies.

Ford's assertion that inherent in all writing is the act of revision and that the collective nature of the theatre endeavor uniquely positions it for the analysis of multiple forms of revision—whether it be the theme of rewriting mythical narratives or the process of producing the written script, or the activity of rehearsal and feedback from the audience—is convincingly exemplified throughout the book. The introduction (chapter 1) outlines the literary theories (Derrida, Genette, Hutcheon, Kristeva, Cixous) that support her study's examination of the role of rewriting in Hispanic Caribbean theatre. Importantly, Ford also touches upon theatre and performance theories proposed by Boal, Brecht, and Taylor, as well as key literary studies of the archival, foundational, and memorial impulse in Latin American letters (González Echevarría, Sommer, Quiroga). Finally, the introduction historically and culturally contextualizes the act of rewriting in the region by discussing the scripts of the Spanish Reconquista, the conquest of the New World, and the invention of new myths such as the Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre.

The study is organized in chapters that address collective creation and audience feedback, ancient Greek theatre, Christianity, and national historical myths. Chapter 2 considers collaborative rewriting in three published versions of *El paraíso recobrao* (1978) by the Cuban group Teatro Escambray. Along with the dramatic texts, notes and a transcript of the dialogue between the theatre practitioners and the community help Ford show how revising and rewriting in this case serves to hone a pro-revolutionary message meant to guide an isolated community that was slow to integrate with the Revolution of 1959. Chapter 3 examines the influence of Greek theatre in the most widely acclaimed Cuban, Puerto Rican, and Dominican works included in the book: *Electra Garrigó* (1941) by Virgilio Pinera, *La pasión según Antígona* Pérez (1968) by Luis Rafael Sánchez, and *Lisistrata odia la política: obra teatral en tres actos inspirada en un tema de Aristófanes* (1981) by Franklín Domíngez. Ford posits that the authors appropriate ancient Greek theatre to make visible their local theatre tradition's place in the Western tradition while at the same time challenging the canon of global theatre by expanding it. In chapter 4 the author turns to the use

of Christian myths and imagery and offers readings of La noche (1994) by Abilio Estévez (Cuba), ¡Hágase la mujer! (1987) by Juan Carlos Campos (Dominican Republic/Spain), and De tanto caminar: Auto alegórico en tres cuadros (1961) by Piri Fernández (Puerto Rico) that highlight how the recurring theme of doubt destabilizes the preponderance of Catholicism in the cultures of the Hispanic Caribbean. Biblical stories and religious symbols are revised in these plays to challenge certainty and generate an interrogative space for their audiences. In similar fashion, in chapter 5, revisioning nineteenth-century historical figures and myths in *La invasión* (1970) by Manuel Méndez Ballester (Puerto Rico), Plácido (1981) by Gerardo Fulleda León (Cuba), and Andrómaca (1983) by Ivan García Guerra (Dominican Republic) facilitates reflection on the interplay of race, gender, and political status in the collective identity of these nations. The book ends with a sixth chapter on the rewriting and reception of Abelardo Estorino's plays, La dolorosa historia del amor secreto de don José Jacinto Milanés (1974) and Vagos rumores (1992). Ford suggests that viewing the nineteenth-century Cuban poet Milanés from different historical vantage points "offers us a way to understand how a theater of revisions reconstructs theater's contribution to the construction of identity in the present through the past" (183).

Ford's monograph demonstrates the richness of the Hispanic Caribbean as a site for analyzing how revision, in its many guises, operates in the genre of theatre. One of the strong points of the book is the analysis of the Cuban plays in their literary and historical context. The study might engage more strongly with previous criticism on intertextuality in Latin American theatre and with more theories of theatre and performance in general, particularly in the chapters on the Greek intertexts and historical theatre. By offering detailed readings of the plays from a cogent critical perspective, however, *The Theater of Revisions in the Hispanic Caribbean* brings attention to works that have undeservedly occupied the margins of literary canons.

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Misemer, Sarah M. *Theatrical Topographies. Spatial Crises in Uruguayan Theater Post-2001*. Lanham, MD: Bucknell UP, 2017. 214 pp.

Uruguay, expone la introducción a este volumen, se encuentra en la encrucijada de sistemas locales y globales cuya articulación es problemática y conflictiva a la hora de modificar las estructuras de identidad, poder simbólico y demarcaciones territoriales. En este contexto, los directores de teatro independiente desarrollan estrategias que en sus obras evocan una serie de espacios como metáforas para captar su realidad uruguaya como ejemplo del orden o desorden mundial contemporáneo, entrecruzando espacios y culturas bajo las corrientes de un poder globalizado de base múltiple.

El primer capítulo explora la obra de Gabriel Peveroti, Shangai (2001). Misemer hace una cuidadosa lectura de las ansiedades que despierta China en el orden global y los límites de la biopolítica en el contexto claramente distópico de la obra. Al mismo tiempo, este capítulo muestra las formas en las que los directores de teatro independiente, habituados a trabajar de forma cooperativa, urden colaboraciones con directores de teatro alemán a través del Instituto Goethe. La autora oportunamente aplica el concepto elaborado por Hans-Thies Lehmann de chora-graphy en su teorización del teatro post dramático y demuestra cuán central es esta idea al teatro uruguayo post 2001. El segundo capítulo, "Alternative Cartographies", se enfoca en la perspectiva de género para formar los mapas de la ciudad y los cuerpos en las obras Don Juan y el lugar del beso (2005) y Las Julietas (2009) de Marianella Morena, ambas, como se desprende de sus títulos, intensamente intertextuales y escenificando cuerpos a contrapelo del canon literario. En especial, el análisis de Las Julietas pone de manifiesto las tensiones entre lo nacional, la interpelación de la literatura y los bastiones del poder masculino, representados en la obra a través del fútbol como deporte nacional, los militares y el culto a los padres de la patria. El tercer capítulo, "Deluges, Holocausts, and Neo-Fascism", se enfoca en las obras Ararat o Las moscas sobre Valkulnichuk (2008) y Nuremberg (2009). En la primera obra, el espacio evoca los abusos a los derechos humanos en la historia reciente de Uruguay a los que superpone narrativas encuadradas en el monte que menciona la Biblia y el soldado ucraniano que inició el motín inmortalizado en El acorazado Potemkin de Sergei Eisenstein. Por otro lado, la autora subraya en Nuremberg (2009) de Santiago Sanguinetti la representación de la ciudad asediada por un diluvio de desmemoria para poner de relieve los temas de justicia, impunidad y redemocratización. Misemer relaciona muy acertadamente esta última obra con el tratamiento del fascismo en El campo (1967) de Griselda Gambaro, una dramaturga cuya influyente metáfora amalgama los campos de concentración del Holocausto europeo con un siniestro campo argentino y cuya relevancia en el contexto global y local es aún notable. Por último, "Mapmaking and Wayfinding in Gabriel Calderón's Staged Worlds" trata las obras Mi muñequita (la farsa) (2004) y Mi pequeño mundo porno (2006) y analiza cómo los espacios personales y conmemorativos se ponen en jaque a través de la elaboración de mapas que aluden a la crisis de moralidad que se desprende de un contexto postdictatorial de impunidad a los crímenes de terrorismo de estado.

Más allá de la rica exploración del tratamiento que recibe el espacio que se eclosiona para escenificar las crisis identitarias y las articulaciones de lo *glocal*, el libro se presenta como un imprescindible catálogo de una mirada generacional a la realidad uruguaya a través de su teatro independiente, con menciones y estudios de las obras indispensables de Santiago Sanguinetti, Marianella Morena y Gabriel Calderón, entre otros. Las imágenes que se incluyen en este volumen son pocas, pero bien seleccionadas mientras que las descripciones de las obras teatrales son elocuentes y útiles.

Para muchos de nosotros, la lectura de este cuidado, teóricamente denso y estimulante libro ayuda a salvar esa distancia entre las salas del teatro independiente del Cono Sur y nuestras posiciones académicas en el norte. La tarea crítica de Misemer nos sumerge en ese espacio que estamos destinados a imaginar pero no a explorar en persona, al menos no regularmente, del teatro independiente uruguayo. Su labor crítica y teórica nos invita a transitar esos espacios distantes y promueve hábilmente contactos productivos y sugerentes.

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