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Power Plays: Knowledge, Dominion, and Control in the Theatrical Work of Juan Mayorga

by

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements……..3

Introduction……..4

Chapter One: Knowledge as a Mechanism of Power…….18

Chapter Two: History as a Specific Manifestation of Knowledge…….37

Chapter Three: The Power of Space……58

Chapter Four: Quests for Knowledge……..84

Conclusion……111

Bibliography…….117

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Introduction

Juan Mayorga is a contemporary Spanish playwright who expresses his understanding of the interconnection of the global community through his theater. He has become a nationally recognized artist whose work specifically explores a Spanish historical context with relation to the Francisco Franco dictatorship and post-dictatorship eras, as well as other generally significant historical contexts. His in-depth examination of the specific structure of theater and of its connection to history help to form his personal philosophy of theatrical representation. Mayorga contextualizes his work within the historically based content of his plays, through the spectators involved in his theatrical productions, and consequentially through the connections between the historical content and the spectators. Through the development of his philosophy in the eleven plays that I analyze, a clear emphasis develops on the relationship between power and knowledge. This relationship is central in defining his work, and thus I will explore it within a similar framework as Mayorga uses in order to fully contextualize it.

Mayorga was born in Madrid, Spain, on April 6th, 1965. In 1988, Mayorga graduated with a degree in Philosophy from Spain's National University of Distance Education (UNED) and a degree in Math from La Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM). He continued to academically pursue the sphere of philosophy, studying with and becoming a disciple of philosopher Walter Benjamin. He received his doctorate in 1997 after writing a dissertation focusing on the work and history of Walter Benjamin. Shortly afterward, he began studying theater with a number of different theatrical advisors and professors. His teachers include Marco Antonio de la Parra,

José Sanchis Sinisterra, Sarah Kane and Meredith Oakes. He proceeded to teach philosophy and *Dramaturgia,* the discipline and art of being a playwright, between 1998 and 2004 in La Real Escuela Superior de Arte Dramático of Madrid. He is an extremely accomplished playwright and has achieved a number of prizes and honorable recognitions.[1] Having been academically trained in other relevant fields besides drama, Mayorga is able to incorporate a multifaceted philosophical interpretation of theater into his text and his personal ideology. He is particularly conscious of the implications of utilizing theater as the chosen representative vehicle for his work, and integrates the singularity of theater accordingly. He specifically understands history as a strategy of power within the theatrical framework and demonstrates this awareness through a variety of forms of knowledge and expression.

Theater is a distinct form of representational art due to the particular medium involved. The crucial aspect of performance introduces an abundance of unique characteristics to theater, including both an inherent level of interpersonal interaction as well as a predetermined amount of individual interpretation. It thus becomes a dynamic form of artistic expression that is both active and engaging. Phyllis Zatlin describes this dimensionality in her essay "Theater and Culture, 1936-1996" when she asserts,

> Theater is more than a literary genre. The written dramatic text might be viewed as parallel with narrative or poetry, but theater encompasses performance and the practical considerations of bringing that performance to an audience. Theater is also potentially more

[1] Prizes: Born, Enrique Llovet, Caja España, Ojo Crítico de Radio Nacional en la temporada 1999-2000, Premio Nacional de Teatro 2007, El Duende al creador más original 1988-2008, Valle-Inclán 2009, Autor Homenajeado en la Muestra de Teatro Español de Autores Contemporáneos 2009.

> subversive than literary works intended to be read in private; thus it has frequently been subject to greater suspicion, censorship, and repression. On the other hand, theater may be more directly open to international currents; acting companies may tour abroad, and works staged at home may come from other nations and periods (Zatlin 222)[2].

The performance and resulting reception of theater by the spectators defines and enhances the art form, and according to Zatlin this intricate relationship assigns theater the status of being more culturally pervasive and accessible than other literary mechanisms. In times of general societal discord, this can be a very threatening aspect of theater—one that can cause discomfort and conflict. The subversiveness that Zatlin alludes to exists because theater is public and engaging, and thus allows for multiple, and potentially conflicting, interpretations. Subtext in theater can be less explicit but more poignant or controversial at the same time because of the subtlety involved in performance art. Mayorga accesses the subversiveness of theater within the content of his work, and this element of theater in turn helps to define Mayorga's unique artistic purpose.

The motivation behind Mayorga's theater is provocative and critical. He views theater as a vehicle used to question history, politics, authority, and the multiple layers of power dynamics that connect them together. He describes this concisely in his essay "Frente a Europa" when he states:

> Pero conviene recordar que el teatro, en Europa, no nació para obedecer. Si el teatro nació para la polis, no lo hizo para inclinarse ante ella, sino para desafiarla. Desde los griegos, en el teatro, arte del conflicto, el más importante es aquel que se abre entre el escenario y la asamblea, entre la ciudad y su máscara ("Frente" 3).

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[2] Parenthetical citations throughout the rest of this study refer to citations in the bibliography, located on page 117. Citations of authors with multiple entries are designated by shortened versions of the title of each work.

> [It is important to remember that the theater, especially in Europe, was not created to obey. If the theater was born for the population, it was not done with the intention of being complacent before the city, but rather to challenge it. Ever since the Greeks, in theater, the art of conflict, the most important part is that which is opened between the stage and assembly of people, between the city and its mask.]

Mayorga believes that theater is not passive and has always existed as an analytical forum for critical expression. It is thus a way of transmitting powerfully political and socially critical messages. The political and the social confront each other within the space of history, a space that Mayorga understands to be flexible and always relevant.

Mayorga believes that theater and politics are inseparable by nature due to both the public forum of theater and the dialogue that a performance creates between the spectators and the actors.[3] He harnesses the historical, political, and social powers of theater through this connection to unveil the misuses of power in each of the three spheres, and consequentially provides an educational opportunity for a spectator that accompanies the aesthetic aspects of the art form. Spectators therefore will leave a play written by Mayorga with critical inquiries, and thus might question the content of his work in a way that extends his message beyond the sphere of the theater. He achieves this goal of message circulation by employing the identifying characteristics of theater to create an interactive and interpretive space and by demonstrating the relevance of the past with relation to the active present. In doing so, Mayorga incorporates the past into his theater as a way to represent the danger of improperly wielding power within communities. He references specific historical accounts of situations where power is exploited and also politicizes more general societal plagues

[3] "Político" 2

in order to represent the abuse of power. He achieves this by incorporating a fairly satirical look at interpersonal interactions, which provides a clever and creative reflection on the dangers of misusing power.

Theatrical performance acts as a lens with which to observe human interactions by portraying situationally based depictions of reality within the subversive framework of representation on stage. Theater is thus a multifaceted and flexible art form. This idea is reinforced in the book *Theatre as a Sign-System* when the authors state, "Because drama (as opposed to poetry and fiction) requires the dimensions of space and time, the means by which it unfolds and takes its shape in these two dimensions constitutes an important consideration in the analysis of the theatrical context" (Aston and Savona 111-112). The dimensions of space and time in conjunction with the element of artistic representation create a formula for expression that is inclusive and significant. This combination of distinguished characteristics provides an interpretive space for participants in all facets of theatrical production. The interactive nature of the theatrical sphere allows for immediate engagement of the spectators, and this is only the most basic level of interaction that occurs. In addition to interacting with spectators, actors interact with the script, with the space, with and with each other. The consequential web of connectedness that is created illuminates the content of a play in a very unique way. Cultural expression prospers in this domain because each interaction that is presented in the theater has the ability to reflect an interpersonal interaction that occurs outside of the theatrical realm. The dynamic of interaction specifically between the action on stage and the spectators in the audience is crucial in developing an understanding of the singularity of theatrical

expression. Spectators have the ability to relate, empathize, and understand interactions that take place on the stage by virtue of the fact that an inherent understanding of human interaction exists in the relationship. This results from a spectator's ability to read emotions and understand tone. Mayorga interprets the relationship between actor and spectator as a symbiotic relationship, where both parties are equally responsible for the maintenance and success of the performance. In reference to the role of the actor he states, "Cada gesto, cada respiración, es un envío a la inteligencia del espectador, constructor último de la obra" ("Dramaturgo" 1). [Every gesture, each breath, is a message sent straight to the intelligence of the spectator, the ultimate constructor of the work of art]. Mayorga draws a direct line of communication between the performer's actions and a spectator's interpretation because it is ultimately the connection between them that works to define theater. The image that he creates of a physical network of interaction that exists between actor and spectator underscores the importance of the relationship.

There are many different vehicles of expression used in theater, thus rendering it an extremely interpretive space. Each level of interpersonal interaction produces a unique space for interpretation. Individual spectators understand each distinct interaction on the stage in a unique way, thus already establishing a forum for a plethora of different interpretations. It is also important to consider the possibility of different interpretations throughout the entire theatrical process, from playwright to spectator, from creation to final product. Each occurrence of a transfer of information that occurs in the very wide spectrum of theatrical interaction produces a space for individual spectators, actors, and miscellaneous participants to absorb and process the

information in a personally applicable way. The importance of such distinctive interpretation thus proves to be crucial in the understanding of theatrical production. A large amount of space exists for such interpretation as a simple function of the performative nature of the art form, and therefore such interpretation helps to define any individual production of a play.

Mayorga understands the progression of theatrical interpretation, the process of information passing between the various parties of reception on and off of the stage, within the framework of translation—an action that he deems parallel to theatrical understanding. He encapsulates the similarities between translation and theatrical interpretation by incorporating the philosophy of Walter Benjamin. In his essay "Frente a Europa", he states:

> Siempre que pienso en el fenómeno fascinante, misterioso, de la traducción, recuerdo la visión que de ella tenía Walter Benjamin: lo importante en una traducción no es lo inmediatamente traducible, sino lo que no tiene traducción inmediata, porque allí la lengua de partida plantea un desafío a la lengua de llegada. Intentando acoger lo que residía en la lengua original, el traductor ha de ahondar en su propia lengua.
>
> Esa visión benjaminiana de la tarea del traductor puede aplicarse a cada uno de los momentos del hecho teatral, porque el teatro es una cadena de traducciones, de desplazamientos: el texto es traducido por el director, cuya lectura es a su vez desplazada por los actores, etc. Finalmente, cada espectador completa el espectáculo –lo traduce- desde su propia experiencia ("Frente" 1-2).
>
> [Whenever I think of the fascinating, mysterious phenomenon of translation, I remember Walter Benjamin's vision: the important part of a translation is not what is immediately translatable, but rather the parts that do not have a literal translation, because it is there that the game of words presents a challenge to the already explained language. By trying to capture what resides in the original language, the translator must take a deeper look into his own language.
>
> The Benjaminian understanding of the duty of a translator can apply to each and every theatrical moment, because the theater is a chain of translations, linguistic displacements: the text is translated by

> the director, whose interpretation is displaced by the actors, etc. Ultimately, each spectator completes the show – through translation – from his or her own personal experiences.]

Benjamin highlights the importance of translation within the intangible aspects of language that makes it a complex process. In such linguistically uncharted territory, a translator is charged with adding cultural and personal contextualization to his or her work in order to successfully translate. This same process applies to participants in the theatrical sphere. Translation is a concept that corresponds effortlessly to the progression of theatrical interpretation, one that Mayorga declares extremely important to a successful theatrical production. The complexities of translation apply to the intricacies of interpretation because there are an infinite amount of possibilities within the sphere of interpretation in theater, due to the potential involvement of so many people as well as the nature of performance art.

A playwright has the opportunity to create a dialogue between the conductor of historical information and the receptive audience due to the established interpretational basis of theater. This very unique condition of theater as an art form, as well as an educational opportunity, allows for historical information to enter a more open-ended network of understanding. Any number of interpretations can emerge from different spectators in one single performance, let alone one singular play, and Mayorga harnesses this actuality of theater as a means of accessing historical knowledge in his plays. He acknowledges this distinct power of theater at the beginning of his essay entitled "El teatro como arte político" when he says, "El teatro se hace ante una asamblea. El teatro convoca a la polis y dialoga con ella. Sólo en el encuentro de los actores con la ciudad, sólo entonces tiene lugar el teatro"

("Político" 1). ["Theater happens in front of an assembly. Theater convenes the polis and engages in dialogue with the city. Only through the direct encounter between the actors and the city, only then does theater take its place"]. He goes as far as to assert that theater cannot exist without the aspect of political dialogue that is intrinsic to having an "assembly", or an audience. According to Keir Elam in his book *The Semiotics of Theater and Drama,* "Theatrical display has traditionally been founded on this informational function: the audience generally expects to receive a more or less coherent set of data concerning the represented world and to become interested in the events reported or depicted" (Elam 40). An audience member decides to engage with the play on a basic level by attending, and such agency allows for the nature of theater to be inclined to support an actual dialogue. "…The spectator, by virtue of his very patronage of the performance, can be said to *initiate* the communicative circuit (his arrival and readiness being, as it were, the preliminary signals which provoke the performers into proper action)" (Elam 34). When the audience initiates this dialogue, the opportunity for a playwright to incorporate his or her personal vision or agenda enters into the interactive theatrical experience. A playwright thus has the responsibility of ensuring that the expressive space is accessible and productive while also maintaining the structure that they create and support.

Mayorga creates this kind of space by establishing his belief in the respectful involvement and engagement of the audience as the base of theatrical experience because spectators are a fundamental part of the dialogical framework. He particularly admires José Sanchis Sinisterra, a mentor and teacher, for the way that he integrates the spectators into the production of his play *El lector por horas*. He

outlines specifically how Sanchis achieves this in his personal essay "El espectador como autor" [The Spectator as the Author] when he says,

> En *El lector por horas*, como en la vida, es el observador quien crea el sentido. Todo ello ha de ser entendido como un gesto moral y político. Sanchis respeta a su espectador. No lo trata como un consumidor pasivo que paga para que lo entretengan. No se dirige a su estómago, sino a su inteligencia. El espectador de Sanchis no puede conformarse con mirar; tiene que leer. Tiene que leer incluso lo no escrito. Tiene que escribir. "Lector por horas" reclama al espectador que lea y escriba ("Espectador" 1).
>
> [In *El lector por horas*, like in life, it is the observer who creates the sense of something. Everything must be understood as a moral and political gesture. Sanchis respects his spectators in this way. He doesn't treat them as passive consumers who pay so that he delivers. He doesn't aim for their gut instincts, but rather for their intelligence. Sanchis' spectators cannot conform by simply watching; they have to read. They also have to read what is not written. They have to write. *El Lector por horas* requires the spectator to read and write.]

Sanchis accomplishes this level of involvement with the spectator population because he orchestrates a constructive relationship with them, an aspect of the theatrical art form that Mayorga deeply appreciates. Mayorga understands this relationship in the context of his own work to be extremely inclusive, and he believes that the principles of socio-political dialogue fit appropriately within it. He puts more pressure on the spectator to be engaged because of his or her unique responsibility to interpret, and even goes as far as to presume that theater does not exist without the spectator. He states, "El teatro no sucede en la escena, sino en la cabeza del espectador. Esto es, en su imaginación y en su memoria" ("Dramaturgos" 1). ["Theater does not happen on the stage, but rather in the head of the spectator. That is, in their imagination and in their memory"]. Mayorga introduces personal experience as an important element within the personal understanding and interpretation of theater. Particular experiences

define the ethos and world-view of any individual, providing them with a specific framework for understanding. This consequentially becomes a factor in theatrical interpretation, an effect that Mayorga is acutely aware of. Personal bias of the participants therefore helps to create the final product of a play.

Mayorga's vision of his own theater is deeply connected to the past and how each spectator personally understands it. Such a theatrical framework provides a space in which Mayorga can bring historical knowledge into the consciousness of the spectators. Mayorga appreciates historical knowledge in the context of the present, and thus highly values historical input in his work as both a reference point and an inspiration. He describes his unique understanding of the past and his responsibility within it in his essay "Mi teatro histórico" [My Historical Theater] when he states,

> La frecuencia con que en mi teatro aparecen representaciones del pasado quiero explicármela desde esa convicción de que todos los hombres son mis contemporáneos, independientemente de su fecha de nacimiento. Todos me interesan, de todos puedo aprender, todos quieren hablarme y ante todos tengo una responsabilidad. Responsabilidad que en ningún caso me autoriza a presentarme como su portavoz. El pasado se me aparece como un espacio imprevisible del que quisiera hacer –por servirme de la dicotomía propuesta por Deleuze y Guattari en "Rizoma"- no calcos sino mapas. No pretendo reconstruir el pasado tal como fue -objetivo, a mi juicio, ilusorio, y que en todo caso desborda mi capacidad-, sino hacer de él mapas que destaquen puntos, líneas, accidentes relevantes para el hombre contemporáneo y quizá para el hombre futuro ("Historiador 2" 14).
>
> [I want to explain the frequency with which representations of the past appear in my theater with the conviction that all humans are my contemporaries, separately from their date of birth. I am interested in everyone, I can learn from everyone, everyone wants to talk with me and I have a responsibility to each and every one of them. This responsibility in no way however authorizes me to become anyone's spokesperson. The past seems like an unpredictable space for what it wants to do—to utilize the dichotomy proposed by Deleuze and Guattari in "Rizoma"—not copies but maps. I am not trying to reconstruct the past exactly as it was—objective, I believe, illusory,

> and in any case way beyond my capacity—but rather from it make maps that emphasize points, lines, relevant accidents for the contemporary person and perhaps for the person of the future.]

Mayorga comprehends the past through his theater, presenting society with the useful tool of a theatrical map. Such a tool can be used to encourage engagement in the kind of navigation that Mayorga identifies with through a tactical understanding of the past. Here he presents a historical relevancy that defines the content and direction of his work.

Mayorga selects the theatrical art form as the most effective and expressive way to engage in a multifaceted dialogue with his spectators and with the historical, political, and social content of his work. He connects with the representational nature of theater as well as with its specific social importance as a dimensional presentation that occurs person to person. This is an influential aspect of theater for Mayorga as is evident in his focus on interpersonal connections on stage and amongst the spectators. Inclusivity defines his mission, and by presenting this in relation to his theatrical philosophy, he achieves a meaningful connection with his spectators and his subject matter.

In the eleven plays that I analyze, Mayorga harnesses this dynamic theatrical dialogue and the specific qualities of theater to focus his particular social discourse upon power dynamics, both intimate and more general. He exercises his historical understanding to express such dynamics. In the following four chapters, I identify four distinct levels of interaction and interpretation that Mayorga utilizes in his work in order to demonstrate a collective understanding of power and the implications of its abuse. These interactive levels progress from general to more specific as they

develop in his work, as reflected by the development of my analysis. The first level is the establishment of a fundamental connection between power and knowledge, and thus how that relationship allows for the interchangeable use of one in order to achieve the other on the stage. Knowledge and information provide the bases upon which power is gained, consumed, and manipulatively taken as the case might be. The second level in this progression is the identification of history as a specific form of knowledge. Mayorga aims to transcend historical and culture-specific boundaries in his discussion of history in order to effectively criticize abusive authority. Historical awareness is not only a definitive element of Mayorga's work, but it is harnessed in such a way so as to demonstrate the societal and cultural significance of power abuse. The historical content in his work also provides the spectator with an intimate connection to the past, a connection that Mayorga deems formative and necessary.[4] The third level in this sequence is the establishment of a relationship between theatrical space and the power/knowledge combination that enhances the development of specific power dynamics in distinct plays. Such space can be both physical and communicative. The fourth and most specific level is the examination of individual people interacting within the domain of power-charged knowledge that is historically contextualized and spatially defined. Particular relationships in Mayorga's work embody the exact dangers in the manipulation of knowledge into power by demonstrating situations in which characters are left with certain conditions of devastation as a result of such abuse. These conditions range from developing mental or emotional breakdowns to partner abandonment, and also include the

[4] "Historiador 2" 9

possibilities of insanity, depression, fear, discomfort, and personal relinquishment of self. Through the gradating development of his discourse, Mayorga asserts a unique methodology for understanding society and the individual's distinct role in it within the complex framework of the theater.

Chapter One: Knowledge as a Mechanism of Power

Juan Mayorga establishes the interrelatedness of knowledge and power as a foundation that supports and defines his theater in a sphere of social commentary. He represents the abuse of power its inherent danger through his theater. He harnesses the unique characteristics of theater to do so, and he also links the material of his work historically in order to provide a sustentative base. This in turn aids in the demonstration of power abuse. In many of the plays that I examine, the struggle to access power and authority is tightly interwoven with the knowledge seeking tendencies of specific characters. Knowledge proves to be a tool used to obtain power because of the correlation between the understanding of information and the ability to negotiate it. Once access is granted to a specific kind of knowledge or a specific kind of truth, the holder of the information can begin to walk the fine line between navigating and manipulating it. Knowledge as a tool is employed in this way to be utilized for the advantage of the person that possesses it, or for the advantage of the people and places that they represent.

Michel Foucault discusses the relationship between power and knowledge in depth in his book *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*. He does so within the context of the penal system and judicial punishment, but his argument is applicable to all relationships involving power and knowledge and thus is not limited to the carceral context. He begins his historographic account of punishment by examining the transition from strict corporal punishment to the more elusive form of punishment that exists in the current judicial system in order to define the space that the knowledge and power relationship occupies. He states: "The expiation that once

rained down upon the body must be replaced by a punishment that acts in the depth of the heart, the thoughts, the will, the inclinations" (*Discipline* 16). He outlines how punishment had to manifest itself elsewhere within the person once the strictly corporal aspect of punishment was replaced with other forms. This punishment, which resembles the exertion of power, began to infiltrate the "soul" according to Foucault, demonstrating how power, punishment, and justice transformed into a combined pervasive force upon the whole person. As his argument develops, he demonstrates how this new space is open and accessible to power through an altered form of knowledge. He illustrates this correlation when he says:

> That is to say, there may be a 'knowledge' of the body that is not exactly the science of its functioning, and a mastery of its forces that is more than the ability to conquer them: this knowledge and its mastery constitute what might be called the political technology of the body…In spite of the coherence of its results, it is generally no more than a multiform instrumentation…What the apparatuses and institutions operate is, in a sense, a micro-physics of power, whose field of validity is situated in a sense between these great functionings and bodies themselves with their materiality and their forces (*Discipline* 25).

Foucault establishes the connection between power and knowledge here as both necessary and institutionalized in the way we understand power as a function of society. The knowledge that he refers to has jurisdiction over the non-physical parts of the body, namely the "soul" that he mentions before. He describes this knowledge as a multifaceted and complex dimension, and he emphasizes its pervasiveness and applicability to interactions between people. In this way, he constructs and institutes a foundation for understanding the intricate and complicated relationship between power and knowledge that helps us to understand the socio-political implications of its use in Mayorga's work.

As Foucault demonstrates, and as we also see in Juan Mayorga's theater, knowledge can be understood within a variety of different contexts and meanings. Knowledge is information that is acquired through some kind of learning process; it is the understanding of actions that happen and of interactions between people. This information can be contextualized in various ways to apply distinct aspects of knowledge to diverse situations. Knowledge is intrinsically related to power due to the fact that power relies so heavily upon the possession of knowledge. Knowledge and information come in many forms, including both in the academic and practical settings. It is as easy to imagine, for example, a group or an individual gaining power due to his or her knowledge in political strategy, as it is to imagine a different group or individual gaining power due to his or her knowledge in common and applicable sense, depending entirely on the parameters of the situation. Therefore situational knowledge is crucial, and according to Foucault there exists an "…order, stability, authority, and regulatory power of knowledge" (Said 149) that functions situationally. Power depends on knowledge because generally in order to establish oneself in a position of power, there are various obstacles that must be surmounted by applying situational knowledge. Therefore It is important to understand knowledge as adaptable and malleable. When knowledge is manipulated in a negative way—intentionally and unintentionally—with relation to a struggle for power, abuse of control and authority prevails. The misuse of power is a highlighted issue when power dynamics are introduced in the majority of Juan Mayorga's plays. Various Mayorga characters procure abusive control by using divisive applications of knowledge. The different manifestations of knowledge in Mayorga's plays are

predominately used in a manipulative manner. The ultimate goal for such characters is to acquire power, and they primarily do so by establishing intellectual and physical authority over a subject that does not possess whatever kind of knowledge is at play.

The acquisition of knowledge in Mayorga's plays is the first step in the process of establishing authority and control in a situation or over another specific character. Power gain is the immediate second step that follows, almost by default, once knowledge is acquired. Usually this process starts with the establishment of a concrete power dynamic in which there are two parties that fall into the roles of "power" and "subject". Achieving or maintaining control over the "subject" serves as motivation to the "power" player.[5] The act of coming into power as a result of the achievement of knowledge takes various forms in his different plays, and Mayorga uses three major tactics to employ knowledge in a productive way throughout his work. These major tactics manifest in the quest for power through knowledge that Mayorga's characters experience, and they also reflect the use of universally manipulative social tactics. Specific Spanish history during the Franco dictatorship also informs his work, and the knowledge and power devices that Mayorga incorporates can be identified with similar strategies exercised by Franco and his regime. The first approach that Mayorga implements is the acquisition of power by concealing knowledge and information from another party in order to gain control. This reflects the immense use of censorship that plagued Spanish society during Franco's dictatorship, a censorship that Spanish society culturally rebelled to in response to Franco's death and the reinstitution of the monarchical democracy, lead

[5] *Subject and Power* 777

by King Juan Carlos I, of 1975. Franco's censorship saturated both the historical and cultural aspects of Spanish life. According to writer Lawrence Fernsworth, "…[The dictatorship] meant the liquidation of all things liberal; the turning back of history's pages for at least a hundred years. The liquidation of liberalism was what Franco and the Falange called 'the glorious movement'" (Fernsworth 240). Part of this "glorious movement" directly focused on the censorship of cultural expressions, and another component concentrated on redirecting the Spanish understanding of collective history, aimed specifically at Spanish youth. One textbook that emulates these efforts entitled *Primeras Lecturas* reads,

> Spain is a totalitarian country, ruled by our Caudillo…Governments are totalitarian when all power resides in one person on whom falls the maximum authority and also the maximum responsibility…The chief of the Spanish state is our Caudillo, the ever-victorious General Franco, whom we should also ask God to enlighten in the direction of the government of the fatherland (Fernsworth 241).

Mayorga represents the tactic of censorship in many of his plays, including *Himmelweg: Camino del cielo*, *El jardín quemado,* and *La Paz Perpetua*. In each of these plays, stronger and more commanding characters hide information from weaker characters so as to solidify power dynamics and obtain control in both interpersonal relationships and greater social contexts.

The play *Himmelweg: Camino del cielo* demonstrates this power-achieving technique through the incorporation of the intentional censorship of reality. Power in this play is ultimately achieved through the concentrated efforts of the character *el comandante* [the commander] in his attempts to censor the knowledge that he possesses. The play outlines the brief, yet extremely significant and calculated, encounter between a Spanish representative of the Red Cross and life in a German

concentration camp during the Holocaust. El comandante employs the technique of theater as a means to disguise the reality of the concentration camp that he controls, underscoring Mayorga's belief in the political power of theater. Theater is itself representational, and el comandante utilizes this specific theatrical trait to deliver an altered truth to the unnamed Red Cross representative. While introducing this plan to Gottfried, his forced co-conspirator and Jewish prisoner in the concentration camp, el comandante says,

> Durante las próximas semanas, usted y yo trabajaremos juntos. Por así decirlo, usted será mi traductor. No me refiero al idioma, no estoy hablando de idiomas. Estoy hablando de psicología…Tenemos un proyecto que compartir…Pero es mucho más importante, y más difícil, que nos transformemos nosotros mismos. Todos, ustedes y nosotros. Que aprendamos a relacionarnos de otra manera. Eso exigirá una preparación. Tendremos que aprender a mirarnos de otro modo…Los actores conocen esa sabiduría. ¿Tiene usted alguna experiencia en el teatro?…Por así decirlo, tenemos que componer un guión (*Himmelweg* 24-26).
>
> [You and I are going to work together. You will be, in a manner of speaking, my translator. Not in the sense of language, I am not talking about languages. In the psychological sense…we have a joint project. But much more important, and more difficult, is the way in which we transform ourselves. All of us, you and us. We must learn to deal with each other in a new way. We must learn to look at each other in a new way…with the wisdom of actors. May I ask: have you any experience of the theatre?… You might say, we're going to write the script (Johnston 47-50).]

El comandante manipulates the knowledge of reality he and Gottfried possess, and together they are able to exert power over the narrator of the play by controlling every aspect of his visit to the concentration camp. Even though Gottfried's involvement is not voluntary whereas el comandante's is, it is only through a combination of their efforts that el comandante's plan is successful. They create a "*guión*", a script, to guide the falsified version of life that el comandante wants to portray to the outside

world. Through this series of scripted interactions, the pain and suffering of the prisoners is concealed to the eyes of the naïve visitor.

Interpretation is an important factor of theater as an art form, yet el comandante manipulates the idea of theater to define and direct every aspect of life, thus eliminating all room for what he perceives as potentially detrimental interpretations made by the Red Cross representative. He creates and practices a script that is so precise and detailed that he is able to achieve a total censorship of the art form itself. His actions thus do not represent the actual power of theater in the way, for instance, that Mayorga's artistic decisions do, but rather they represent the extent to which he manipulates his power and knowledge to attain a specific goal. Mayorga discusses the command of power that el comandante achieves through the use of this coercive theater when he writes in a presentation about the play,

> …El conductor de la representación, el comandante del campo… Tiene ante sí la ocasión de realizar el más ambicioso sueño que ningún director de escena concibió jamás: la obra de arte total. Pero la perfección de esa obra exige de él que sólo piense en el arte y en nada más. Que deseche cualquier rasgo de compasión en su mirada. Entonces sí, entonces todas las vidas reunidas en el campo estarán a su completa disposición, como muñecos en manos del titiritero ("Presentation" 1).
>
> [… The conductor of the representation, the commander of the camp… he has a great opportunity to achieve the most ambitious dream that no play director has ever achieved: the total work of art. But the perfection in this kind of work of art demands that the director thinks only of the art and of nothing else. That he unravels any trace of compassion in his gaze. If that happens, then all of the lives united within the camp will be at his complete disposal, like puppets in the hand of the puppeteer.]

The complete and total work of art that el comandante accomplishes demonstrates a lack of human sensitivity and illustrates his extreme focus on maintaining absolute

authority. He uses theater as a means to conceal the truth from the narrator, thus achieving total control over him.

Mayorga establishes an important theatrical connection between his play and the meta-theatrical play that el comandante directs through the use of specific theatrical elements. The stage directions are the most accessible theatrical components used to demonstrate this. Stage directions are typically composed of information that may not have been immediately obvious to the actors from the body of the dialogue, such as how to enter the scene, or location on the stage. Although this more traditional use of stage directions is present, there is another kind that actively informs this play. The second type of stage direction fits itself in a space between an engaging narration for the spectator and a stage direction for the meta-theatrical production that takes place in the concentration camp. This proves to be slightly confusing at first glance because there is barely a separation between the stage directions, the play that el comandante directs, and the overarching framework of Mayorga's play itself. A reader is able to understand Mayorga's intentions of creating a mildly satirical atmosphere in the stage directions at the beginning of scene II, entitled *Humo* [Smoke], when they read,

> *A estas escenas pueden acompañar otras, mudas, procedentes de la narración anterior: niños en columpios con forma de animales, un viejo que lee un periódico, un vendedor de globos, la bendición de una comida judía… Los personajes miran de vez en cuando a un espectador como si se hiciesen conscientes de que están siendo observados por él* (*Himmelweg* 11).
>
> [*The following scenes may be accompanied by other silent scenes taken from the preceding narration: children playing on animal-shaped swings, an old man reading a newspaper, a balloon seller, the orchestra, the blessing before a Jewish meal… Once in a while the*

> *characters look at a spectator, as though conscious of being watched* (Johnston 19).]

These directions are meant for the characters within the meta-theatrical production, and the meta-theatrical characters that are described are painfully plagued with a level of discomfort at acting in this environment. They exhibit such signs of anxiety and distress by unintentionally acknowledging the audience, and the tone of this particular stage direction expresses their uncertainty and self-consciousness. The subtlety of subjectivity embedded in these stage directions implies that these actors occupy a space more akin to a prison than a stage. This represents yet another mode of incorporating theater into the demonstration of the abuse of power.

The narrator expresses guilt and remorse at not seeing through the lies that el comandante presents to him because he is completely fooled by them, and as a result all the potential power that he has as a Red Cross representative is usurped. When he reminisces on the impressions that he feels during his visit he says, "Ellos parecían estar haciendo algo útil. El comandante sobre todo, daba esa impresión, de estar haciendo algo útil" (*Himmelweg* 4) ["Everyone seemed busy doing something useful" (Johnston 9)]. The idea of doing something useful explains that the narrator assumes that all of the people that he meets are doing their jobs, and that there is nothing to be concerned about. In truth, the people he meets are all characters in a big fabricated play that el comandante directs. The inference that the narrator makes suggests that el comandante is an extremely talented "director". He uses both his knowledge of the reality of life in the concentration camp and his understanding of theater to conceal the devastating truth and gain the position of power.

The second method of power seizure in Mayorga's work occurs through the intentional reconfiguration of knowledge in the form of historically and socially accepted facts. Within this technique, knowledge is viewed as dynamic as opposed to fact based and constant. The Franco regime implemented this device in the context of incisive censorship. Franco achieved this by creating a falsified understanding of national and international affairs amongst the Spanish community through the commandeering and control of media in Spain. At the time of the civil war, radio was the primary source of media-produced information that reached the Spanish people. Radio was an extremely widespread manifestation of the media because it was accessible to the masses privately and publically, including in places of social importance such as bars and restaurants. Newspapers and publications were not as readily available nor as accessible as radio broadcasts and thus did not have as much importance before or during the war. Thus during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and towards the beginning of Franco's dictatorship, "…radio was the principal medium of news and propaganda. Its impact was immediate and its message could cross battle lines" (Deacon 311). Franco exaggerated his use of the media to the abuse of it, starting "In 1937 [when] Franco's military government established Radio Nacional de Salamanca, the germ of the future Radio Nacional de España (RNE). Once the war was finished, control over all media was arrogated to the state. An order of 6 October 1939 subjected radio to blanket censorship" (Deacon 311). Control of these media sources was established through force during the transition between the war and the dictatorship, and then this control was utilized to disseminate propaganda. Such propaganda utilized the same fact-manipulation tactic that Mayorga

incorporates into the acquisition of power through knowledge in many of his plays, including *Cartas de amor a Stalin*, *La paz perpetua*, and *El traductor de Blumenberg*.

La paz perpetua is a prime example of this technique because multiple characters in the play attempt to control each other through the calculated rearrangement of knowledge that they either have or claim to have. The three principal characters, personified canines named Odín, Enmanuel, and John-John, utilize this kind of manipulation for personal benefit in the competition that they are participating in. The characters Casisus, another personified canine, and *el Ser Humano*, the human being, are representative of higher powers that also use exploitation of knowledge as a means of control. The three rival dogs share the same goal of winning the contest through one synonymous methodology: to confuse and intimidate the opposition by introducing reconstructed knowledge and information that the other dogs do not have, or simply do not understand. Odín, Enmanuel, and John-John are competing to be the K7 dog, which is understood to be an antiterrorist canine position working alongside the human race to ensure protection and safety for society at large. The ideal profile of this dog, therefore, is perfection. The fact that some candidates possess certain information or skills that the others do not therefore proves to be important in the pursuit of the position, and consequently also in order to achieve the highest level of power. The individuality of each competitor can be observed through the different ways that they interact with each other. John-John and Odín are presented as almost complete opposites while Enmanuel exists slightly outside of their rubric. The relationship between John-John and Odín can be easily

understood from this portion of dialogue, while discussing Enmanuel while he is not present:

> **Odín**: Su boca dice una cosa y su olor expresa otra. [Enmanuel] Actúa como si fuese nuestro amigo. Pero no está aquí para hacer amigos. Está aquí porque quiere el collar blanco, y solo hay un collar blanco. Él sabe que tú eres un rival invencible. Por eso se ha inventado lo de las cámaras. Perro listo.
> **John-John**: ¿No hay cámaras?
> **Odín**: ¿Cuándo sacó el tema? Justo cuando estabas a punto de darle su merecido. Cree que con su labia te va a anular. ¿Sabes lo que me acaba de decir sobre ti?
> **John-John**: ¿Qué? ¿Qué te ha dicho de mí?
> **Odín**: "Mucho músculo, pero tiene menos calle que Venecia"
> **John-John**: ¿Que tengo menos calle que Venecia, eso dice el muy cabrón? ¿Qué quiere decir con eso?
> **Odín**: Venecia. Esa ciudad sin calles, toda de agua (*Paz* 11).
>
> [**Odin**: His mouth says one thing but his smell says another. He acts as if he's our friend. But he's not here to make friends. He's here because he wants one thing and one thing only, the collar. He knows he can't beat you fair and square. That's why he invented all that stuff about the cameras. Smart dog.
> **John-John**: Are there not cameras?
> **Odin**: When did he start all that? Just when you were about to give him what he deserves. He thinks he's going to beat you with words. Do you know what he just said about you?
> **John-John**: What? What did he say?
> **Odin**: "Lots of muscles but a few streets short of Venice."
> **John-John**: A few streets short of Venice, is that what that bastard said? What does that mean?
> **Odin**: Venice, the city with no streets, all water (Johnston 18-19).]

In this encounter, Odín shows his very intuitive and perceptive side, as he knows exactly how to aggravate John-John. He disguises himself to John-John as an accomplice and someone who John-John might easily relate to, and even goes as far as to bestow him with complements in order to gain his trust. Odín creates a negatively glorified image of Enmanuel, one that has enough competitive instincts to use insulting comments about his competitors and intentional trickery in order to

distract them. In reality, just minutes before Enmanuel is the one to say, "Que gane el mejor" (*Paz* 9). ["May the best dog win" (Johnston 15)]. He is clearly more passive than Odín characterizes him to be, so this fabrication reveals Odin's manipulative abilities. Mayorga introduces Odín's intuition and instinct as the competitive angles that he uses to his advantage within the contest. John-John is characterized by his physical strength and apparent social status in the outside world, which is represented by his expensive education and carefully calculated mix of breeds. Although in possession of these two valuable traits, he is relatively unintelligent, as shown above when he cannot contextualize the colloquial and playful reference to Venice. He is unable to manipulate the others in the same way due to the simplicity and lack of dimensionality in his foundations of knowledge.

Enmanuel gains power over John-John by distracting and confusing him with the topics of religion and philosophy. He also consistently shows stability and an even-keeled disposition that allows him to engage in disciplined interactions with Odín, who lacks a similar kind of self-control. While attempting to distract John-John from starting a fight in which he is almost guaranteed to lose, he cleverly introduces the concept of God, an idea that is too complex for John-John to understand. This action quickly changes the focus from the fight to John-John's confusion. His perplexity is expressed in various lines of dialogue where he simply responds to Enmanuel with a silent, "¿?"(*Paz* 12-13). Although Enmanuel demonstrates the most personified and sophisticated knowledge base as revealed through the previously mentioned interactions, his fate changes drastically at the end of the play. It is at this point that the human being is represented as all-powerful, and Enmanuel is essentially

punished for even attempting to fill that role. El Ser Humano goads him into producing the fundamentally Right answers, yet he is still punished in the end and his spirit is eventually broken. His emotional strength and motivation reside in his personal world-view of religion and philosophy, and once that is taken away from him, he disassociates from the competition, as well as from his own life. This change is evident in the following section of dialogue between el Ser Humano and Enmanuel:

> **Enmanuel**: Sólo soy un perro.
> **Humano**: Nunca fue el perro tan necesario al hombre. La humanidad está en peligro, no nos abandonen. Estamos luchando contra animales.
> **Enmanuel**: Vencerán si nos hacen actuar como animales (*Paz* 34-35).
>
> [**Immanuel**: I'm only a dog.
> **Human**: Dogs have never been so important to men. To distinguish between what's right and wrong, only a dog's heart can do that. Humanity is in danger, stay by our side. We are fighting against animals.
> **Immanuel**: They'll win if they make us act like animals (Johnston 56-57).]

Each character in this play assumes a different role in the manipulation of knowledge, and ultimately those who succeed do so from gaining some form of control. The audience is left not knowing who wins the competition between John-John and Odín in the end, but it is clear that the human representative has maintained control through the representative death of Enmanuel.

The last major tactic that Mayorga uses to represent the achievement of power and control is a technique that builds upon the leverage that one party has already established upon another. Once a power-subject relationship is defined, an arrangement of tactics used to contrive knowledge can be employed to further promote the power player, as well as increase the figurative distance between both parties. The aspect of Franco's regime that is reflected in Mayorga's third discussion

of knowledge as power is the use of military force to implement political persecutions and purges immediately following the end of the Spanish Civil War. Although he was militaristically criticized, he had a particular knack for creating a positive feedback loop with regards to his power.[6] He did so by applying the power that he had already acquired in order to receive more. Franco used his military victories as leverage to purge occupied territories of any person who opposed him militaristically or ideologically, a tactic that became very important in the organization of his dictatorship after the Spanish Civil War. Paul Preston writes in his essay "General Franco as a Military Leader" that,

> Franco had written [General Emilio] Mola a letter in which he revealed this obsession with the thorough purging of captured territory. It was a strategic vision which would not change substantially in the course of the war and one that was deeply imbued with an essentially 'colonial' mentality. He made it clear that, for him, the cumulative conquest of ground and the subsequent annihilation of all resistance in the 'occupied zones' meant more than rapid victory (Preston 28).

Mayorga's powerful and power-hungry characters take this specific method and generalize it in a way that mirrors Franco's aggressive militaristic style, particularly in his plays *Animales nocturnos* and *El jardín quemado.*

The method of building upon already established grounds of authority is expressed effectively in the play *El jardín quemado.* This play also happens to be one of Mayorga's few works that focuses its subject matter directly on the historical content of the Spanish civil war, Franco's dictatorship, and the transition to democracy, as opposed to just being influenced by Mayorga's experience and understanding of it. In this play, Doctor Garay is the character that primarily utilizes

[6] Preston 22-23

the third tactic for gaining power and control. He uses his power as an esteemed medical professional to keep control over the prisoners turned "patients" as the director of the mental institution, where he exerts unchecked dominion and control. The other principal character, Benet, investigates the abuse of power in the San Miguel mental institute that Garay operates. Due to the coinciding progression of Benet's investigation and the timeline of the play, the spectators and the characters move together in the process of discovering the truth. Benet begins with a mountain of accusations that are clarified and centered throughout the play through the process of investigating and questioning the patients in the facility. Eventually he is able to prove to the spectator that Garay is a far cry from innocent, and that he has actually manipulates his status as a doctor and as the primary caregiver to the "patients" as a means to literally imprison the occupants of the facility. The tension between Garay and Benet comes to a point in the following segment of dialogue:

> **Benet**: (*A Garay*) Tiene suerte de vivir en un país democrático. Tendrá un juicio justo y una cárcel sin torturas.
> **Garay**: ¿Piensa que la cárcel me da miedo? No me creerá si le digo que sólo me preocupan ellos. ¿Qué será de mis muchachos sin mí?
> **Benet**: ¿Sus muchachos? Sus presos, querrá decir.
> **Garay**: ¿Mis presos? (*Acaricia a un interno*) ¿Están cargados de cadenas? (*Acaricia a otro*) ¿Dónde ve las marcas de tormento?
> **Benet**: Les robó hasta los nombres. El paredón no le bastaba y les dio un castigo peor que la muerte (*Jardín* 50-51).
>
> [**Benet:** *(To Garay)* You are lucky to live in a democratic country. You will have a fair trial and go to a jail without torture.
> **Garay:** You think I'm scared of jail? You won't believe be if I tell you that I am only worried for them. What will happen to my men without me?
> **Benet:** Your men? You mean to say your prisoners.
> **Garay:** My prisoners? *(He caresses an inmate)* Are they weighed down by chains? *(He caresses another)* Where do you see the scars of torture?

> **Benet:** You robbed them of everything, even their names. The torture at the wall was not enough and you gave them a punishment worse than death.]

Garay forms his defense upon the literal meaning of prisoner, and the implications that come with that social condition. He continues to defend himself and use his status as a doctor, or in other words a highly educated guardian, to purge himself of the blame. Even though Benet is justified in his instinct to want to free the imprisoned patients, Garay continues to build on his foundation of power by playing a god-like role, which results in a very open-ended conclusion to the play. While addressing Benet towards the end of the play, Garay exclaims, "Devuélvalos al infierno. Lléveselos a todos. Llévese a uno si puede. Volverán. Treparán por el muro para volver a mi lado" (*Jardín* 55) ["Return them to hell. Take them all. Try and take one if you can. They'll all come back. They will climb all the way over the wall to return to my side"]. He acknowledges a faithfulness to him that his charges have that very much resembles that of a religious higher power. He is meticulous and focused in the way that he uses his status in San Miguel as a point of leverage in order to ensure his authority. Although a spectator can make assumptions and individual interpretations about the final scene of the play and what theoretically follows, ultimately Garay is successful in securing his position of power within the constraints of the play.

These tactics can all be contextualized within the realm of the new cultural growth that occurred after the Franco regime ended, and Mayorga harnesses the unique way of representing such political conflict within his theater by reflecting the societal transformation and uncertainty during that time. Santos Juliá refers to this cultural change in its historical context as,

> The very rapid growth in the appreciation of democratic values gave rise, as a natural consequence of the Transition, to the suppression of censorship in artistic circles – which had been in force since the end of the war – and the recovery of freedom of the press, which had disappeared after Franco's victory. In that new climate, almost everything seemed possible…In fact, the Transition was experienced and perceived as an explosion of freedom after forty years during which any form of cultural expression had had to go before a board of censors (Juliá 111).

Mayorga's work fits into this rubric as a part of the aforementioned cultural awakening by assuming the difficult but important role of providing a warning for societies of the future. As an active member of the Spanish community that experienced Franco's dictatorship in the second generation, the societal importance of his work moves immediately beyond the natural rebellion phase to the social deconstruction phase. His work is therefore more focused on interpreting the general past and responding to it in an applicable way for the future, and thus it provides commentary and guidance as opposed to theater that is heavily imbibed in reaction.

Throughout his work, Mayorga illustrates the danger between knowledge and power by highlighting various forms of its abuse as a result of specific reconfigurations of knowledge, as well as by introducing a basic understanding of the connection between power and knowledge. He demonstrates this by connecting his work to a very tangible past, and his plays become vehicles of memory used to honor the past and avoid the same errors that it suffered from.[7] Thus it proves not only important to simply remember the past, but also to truly understand it through its application to an interpretive art form like theater. Specifically in his work, Mayorga examines the problematic relationship between knowledge and power, one that can be

[7] "Historiador" 145

divisive and competitive when misused. This tension stimulates pressure to pursue knowledge, by whatever means necessary, including by force and manipulation. The most conducive place for examining such tension is within the historical space that exists within his work. Possession of knowledge generally leads to control and power over other characters, the spectators, and various situations in Mayorga's work. The quest for knowledge proves itself to be at the crux of the drama of many of his plays. This quest translates into the way in which character development occurs, and it acts as a defining process for many of the individuals represented in Mayorga's work.

Chapter Two: History as a Specific Manifestation of Knowledge

Historical knowledge is a specific concentration of information that is based in experience and facts relating to the past. An underlying struggle for control fundamentally exists in the realm of history due to basic competition that permeates the process of historical recording. Chronicled history generally reflects the reality of the majority group, the population that holds the power, because recording history can be understood as a privileged action. History is documented for the purpose of education, and therefore if solely those in power dominate the historical sphere, it potentially promotes a problematic educational structure. If stretched to the extreme, the field of historical knowledge might promote abusive power-seeking and authoritative tactics. Due to the power dynamics already active within the realm of recording history, the struggle to control representations of the past is perpetually intertwined with the struggle to control the present. Walter Benjamin, the primary source of philosophic influence and information for Juan Mayorga, outlines the dilemma surrounding history in his essay *The Concept of History* when he states,

> The nature of this melancholy becomes clearer, once one asks the question, with whom does the historical writer of historicism actually empathize. The answer is irrefutably with the victor. Those who currently rule are however the heirs of all those who have ever been victorious. Empathy with the victors thus comes to benefit the current rulers every time" (Benjamin 4).

Historical power therefore lies in the hands of the party who has control and authority—politically and socially. In this way, historical knowledge can easily be misused as a method of gaining additional control, as opposed to being incorporated as a productive tool of engagement through education or positive political development. The past exists as a space of high contention because of its inherent

power to either undermine or support present day authorities. It is an accepted social norm that society learns from its mistakes, political and social, in order to avoid the repetition of such errors. Yet whoever has control over the dissemination of historical information also obtains a special kind of control over the political present. This means that such political mistakes can be manipulated to fit a personal or political agenda, defeating the entire purpose of recording factual history in the first place. Herein lies the dilemma with historical knowledge.

Juan Mayorga incorporates this complicated idea of the past in his theater to highlight both the misuse of historical power and the historical misuse of power. These multifaceted aspects of his work are contextualized in Spanish fascist history, the history of other contemporaneous dictatorships, and general historical insights. Mayorga's philosophy about the connection between the past and the present states,

> Para vivir, individuos y sociedades necesitan coser su presente a ese tejido mayor que es la Historia. También para vivir, sociedades e individuos necesitan del olvido…La Historia, antes que un asunto del conocimiento, es un asunto de la vida. Antes que un problema de la razón pura, responde a un problema de la razón práctica. La pretensión de escribir una Historia desconectada de intereses actuales, una Historia capaz de exponer el pasado 'tal y como fue', es una peligrosa ingenuidad. Así como resulta ingenuo y peligroso aspirar a un teatro histórico desinteresado ("Historiador" 147).
>
> [In order to live, individuals and societies need to sew their present to the greater quilt that is history. Also in order to live, societies and individuals need to be able to forget… History, even before it is a matter of knowledge, is a matter of life. Before it is a problem of pure rightness, it responds to the issue of practical rightness. The pretension of writing a history that is disconnected from current interests and issues, a history capable of exposing the past 'exactly as it was', is a very dangerous naivety. That is why it becomes ingenuous and dangerous to aspire towards a disinterested historical theater.]

The deep connection between the past and the present that Mayorga describes is crucial in understanding the importance of historical knowledge, and its misuse. He discusses the dangerous ingenuity that arises when history is charged with reflecting fact due to the complexity of recording history and the power dynamics that are already invested in the act. In order to avoid this, Mayorga suggests that our present be ever connected to and conscientious of the monumental idea of the past, so that the present does not lose sight of it. His concern with a disconnected past influences his personal understanding of theatrical work, and of his own duty as a playwright. In his essay "Dramaturgo como historiador" [Playwright as Historian], he establishes a very transparent connection between the work of a playwright and the work of a historian, as the work that they do is similar. He outlines this idea and highlights the differences in the following passage of his essay:

> Hay un teatro histórico que presume de estar más allá de todos esos intereses, un teatro que se reclama ser espejo de la historia. El dramaturgo de este teatro se rige por el mismo principio que el historiador académico: fidelidad a las pruebas documentales. La acumulación de referencias documentadas crea cierta ilusión de objetividad. La obra parece reconstruir un pasado. El espectador puede sentir que ha sido desplazado a aquel tiempo. Que puede contemplar directamente aquel tiempo.
>
> Sin embargo, el mejor teatro histórico no pone al espectador en el punto de vista del testigo presencial. Pues lo importante no es lo que aquella época sabía de sí misma. Lo importante es lo que aquella época aún no podía saber sobre sí y que sólo el tiempo ha revelado ("Historiador" 4).
>
> [There is a historical theater that presumes to be more involved than all of those interests, a theater that claims to be a mirror of history. The playwright of such a theater is governed by the same principles as an academic historian: loyalty to the documentary tests. The accumulation of documented references creates a certain kind of illusion of objectivity. The work of art appears to reconstruct the past. The spectator can feel as if they have been transported to a time in the past, that they can directly understand and contemplate that time.

> However, the best historical theater does not put the spectator in the point of view of receiving a time-appropriate testimony. It is not so important to understand what that epoch thought of themselves. What is important then is what that time could not understand about themselves, what only time has revealed.]

Their common goal is documentation of the past in a contextually appropriate way, although the definition of 'contextually appropriate' might differ between historians and playwrights. For Mayorga, the role of the playwright in this arena is to reveal the truth about the past to the spectator, a process that cannot occur solely by incorporating recorded history into the form of a script. A playwright must interpret the past in such a way as to illuminate new understandings of it that are relevant to the present and the future.

Mayorga views his role as a playwright as fundamentally based in the political and the historical. He identifies the genre of his work as "historical theater," even though some of his plays do not have specific historical allusions. One main goal of his work therefore becomes to form accessible ways to understand the past. He decidedly states that "El mejor teatro histórico abre el pasado" ("Historiador" 5). ["The best historical theater opens the past"]. Theater is thus used as a means of access, a way through which both spectators and participants in the play can learn to comprehend the past within an applicable framework. By placing his work into the category of historical theater, he explicitly outlines this objective. The idea of "opening the past" connotes the need to access something that is not explicitly available in the socially accepted version of history. This is one of the most important aspects of his argument. He outlines this function when he says,

> El teatro puede hacer visible una herida del pasado que la actualidad no haya sabido cerrar. Puede hacer resonar las voces de los vencidos,

> que han quedado al margen de toda tradición. En lugar de traer a escena un pasado que conforte al presente, que lo confirme en sus tópicos, puede invocar un pasado que le haga incómodas preguntas. Teatro crítico ("Historiador" 3).
>
> [Theater can uncover a wound from the past that reality has not known how to heal completely. It can make the voices of the defeated resonate, the voices that have remained in the margins of all traditions. Instead of presenting a past that comforts the present on the stage, one that confirms its topics, theater can invoke a past that asks uncomfortable questions. Critical theater.]

Mayorga's theater therefore is to act as a vehicle that explores the past by sifting through its complexities and uncovering its hidden truths. This solidifies the concept of the past as a more fluid and interpretational field of study, as opposed to a collection of accepted historical truths. Historical myth enters into this dialogue as yet another reason that the concept of historical reality can be questioned through mediums such as theater. Henry Kamen suggests a particularly interesting definition of historical myth as "Even if unreal, a myth always has a point of origin, and that origin is related to our human consciousness and experience. The myths of world history are born out of perceptions and hopes that have formed our lives. They therefore reflect reality, even if they are not real or truthful" (Kamen ix-x). With this understanding of historical myth, it is easy to comprehend how a universal understanding of the past might be tampered with in order to serve a specific purpose. If every myth has its foundation in human experience and historical myth can easily replace the already unstable "true" history, then it seems plausible that one person or a group of people might manipulate historical myth in order to pursue a personal or political agenda. Francisco Franco employed this technique in a more targeted process through his tactic of universal censorship. During the first phase of his

regime, he attempted to silence all political expression that did not support him. At the same time, he was establishing a very strong relationship between the church and the state. This provided extra leverage for Franco to exert his dictatorial power over the country, and he was able to present himself and his regime as essentially channeling divine energy. Kamen proposes that the use of this technique was also intended to provide a response to the formerly accepted concept that Spain had been in a "perpetual decline" (Kamen 172) for many years. He asserts that Franco presents this counter-myth in order to disguise the more accurate historical reality of Spain. Kamen states,

> The most extreme form of this view was adopted by the regime of General Franco (1939-1975), when publicists proclaimed that virtually the entire history of Spain since the Catholic Monarchs was a success story punctuated by a few reverses, which were amply compensated by achievements. This optimistic approach, taken up by historians and clergy of the Franco years, was meant to present the regime as a fulfillment of all the aspirations of the Spanish people. If there had been failure, it was because the classic enemies of Spain were responsible (Kamen 194).

Franco manipulates the power that he obtains militarily to infiltrate the realm of historical knowledge by promoting historical myth. He was able to maneuver changes in national ideology and beliefs in order to support power that was originally taken by force. The falsification of historical facts that had been socially accepted prior to the Franco regime, mythological or not, demonstrates how the manipulation of historical myth can lead directly to the misuse of power. Historically based power therefore develops from the control and dissemination of historical knowledge.

Juan Mayorga responds to this specifically Spanish historical context and uses it as a framework to also engage in general European structures that relate politically.

As a member of the second generation of Spaniards to live under the rule of Franco's dictatorship, Mayorga's understanding of the regime came from first hand experience as well as from personal accounts from members of the first generation. Mayorga connects his first memories of the Franco regime to the idea of developing a sense of belonging, or conversely of having that seized from you by an authoritative power. He relates his first memory of this as follows:

> De niño oí decir a los mayores, de forma más o menos borrosa, en tono más o menos acusador, que Pedro había sido oficial de los rojos. Pedro era un tío de mi madre. Al acabar la guerra, se había marchado a Francia. Estando él en el exilio, su padre murió en España. Pedro volvió clandestinamente para asistir al entierro. Para entrar en su casa y despedirse de su padre, tuvo que esperar a que se hiciese de noche.
>
> Yo nací en 1965, de modo que no viví el primer franquismo. Pero la imagen de ese hombre que, por causa de sus ideas, había tenido que entrar a escondidas en su propio país, y en su propia casa, para despedirse de su padre, esa imagen me dio cierta idea del significado moral de aquellos años.
>
> En 1981, el 27 de Febrero, participé en la manifestación contra el intento del golpe de Estado que había tenido lugar el día 23. Había quedado en encontrarme con varios compañeros del instituto, pero ninguno apareció, así que hice solo el recorrido. Acabado el acto, me metí en el metro para volver a casa. Fue una casualidad -¿un milagro?- encontrarme en el vagón con un viejo al que reconocí: era Pedro, que también había asistido a la manifestación. Se emocionó al verme. Para él era muy importante que alguien de su familia –y alguien tan joven, con futuro- hubiese estado allí ("Recuerdo").
>
> [As a child I heard the elders, in a more or less blurry way, in a tone more or less accusatory, that Pedro had been an official of the reds. Pedro was my mother's uncle. At the end of the war, he left for France. While in exile, his father died in Spain. Pedro made a clandestine return to attend his burial. To enter his own house and say goodbye to his father, he had to wait until the dark of night.
>
> I was born in 1965, which means that I did not live the first Franquismo. But the image of this man that, because of his ideas, had to enter hidden into his own country, and into his own house, just to say goodbye to his father, that image gave me a pretty accurate idea of the moral significance of those years.

> On February 27th, 1981, I participated in a protest against the intended coup d'état that had taken place on the 23rd. I had planned on meeting up with various friends of mine from school, but none of them came, so I marched alone. When it was over, I boarded the Metro to go home. It was a coincidence—a miracle?—to find someone on the train that I recognized: it was Pedro, who had also attended the protest. He was so excited to see me. It was extremely important for him to see that a member of his family—and someone so young at that, with a future—had been there too.]

Mayorga is particularly struck by the fact that such an important familial rite is so infringed upon by the dictatorship. It is through that association that he understands the severity of the political circumstances during el primer franquismo, the first generation that experienced Franco's dictatorship, a time that he did not personally endure. The coincidental meeting of the very figure that was able to transmit such important knowledge to Mayorga has an impact on both parties involved. Pedro feels a sense of relief, connectedness, and pride due to the fact that another member of his family is invested politically in a similar way as he is, despite the understood hardships and compromises that come from such involvement. Mayorga feels reassured in his personal politics as well as in his understanding of franquismo because of this chance meeting. He also understands a more practical application of how to preserve the past as a means of understanding the effect that it has on the present and the future.

Mayorga contextualizes the drama of his work within a framework of the socio-political evils that develop as a result of the abuse of power in many of his plays. As Mayorga understands and manifests these principals into his work, he asserts that his ultimate focus is to be cognizant of the impact of historical knowledge and the specific responsibility that society has to engage with it when he proclaims,

> No vamos a guardar silencio porque tenemos memoria. El teatro es un arte de la memoria. Recordamos todas las guerras desde los griegos. Todas las víctimas, cada una de ellas. Y todas ellas están hoy, otra vez, en peligro. Porque sólo hay una forma de hacer justicia a las víctimas del pasado: impedir que haya víctimas en el presente.
>
> No vamos a guardar silencio porque nos debemos a nuestra ciudad, y también nuestra ciudad está en peligro. Ciudadanos: cada uno de nosotros está en peligro. Nos están educando para la barbarie. Nos están educando para dominar o para ser dominados; para dominar a otros o para resignarnos al dominio de otros. Nos están educando para matar o para morir ("Político" 1-2).
>
> [We will not remain silent because we have memory. Theater is an art of memory. We remember all of the wars since the Greeks, all of the victims of the wars, each and every one of them. And once again, every one of those victims is in danger. Because there is only one way to do justice to the victims of the past: prevent any victims in the future.
>
> We will not remain silent because we owe it to our city, and our city is also in danger. Citizens: each and every one of us is in danger. We are being educated for barbarianism. We are being educated to dominate and be dominated; to dominate others and to concede to the domination of others. We are being educated to kill and to die.]

The warning that Mayorga establishes in this piece contextualizes the way that he represents power in his plays. The idea of justice, both poetic and literal, is central to Mayorga's vision of knowledge and power, specifically within its historical context. History itself is an institutionalized tool in the educational process that can lead directly to corruption if wielded incorrectly, and on the other side of the spectrum it can be used as a constructive way to contextualize the present and the future. Mayorga utilizes this particular kind of knowledge in the latter sense in order to avoid the former understanding by integrating both historical occurrences and frameworks into his plays. He also introduces the contentious space within which historical knowledge is created and incorporates that information into his theatrical philosophy. The historical background in his plays allows spectators to understand how history is

a controversial space that, rather counter-intuitively, leaves ample room for interpretation and manipulation. That being said, Mayorga is also acutely aware of how historical knowledge can produce positive understanding that can be used to protect and inform the future.

Mayorga incorporates major historical frameworks in three of his plays that focus on historical knowledge as a space where power exists. These reference points are based on fascism in Spain, communism in Russia, and Nazism in Germany—three historical times that share similar societal corruptions. Such corruptions include the extreme abuse of power, control over an entire population of people, and the manipulation of historical knowledge. They also share the aspects of violence and censorship, two crucial social evils that aided the seizure of power for all of the aforementioned regimes. The three plays that best represent the implementation of these frameworks in order to highlight the power, and thus danger, involved in the misuse of historical knowledge are *El jardín quemado* representing Fascism*, Cartas de amor a Stalin* representing Communism*,* and *Himmelweg: Camino del cielo* representing Nazism. Each of these plays is set either during the regime or in a post-regime era. They each acknowledge the consequences and aftermath of a totalitarian government, all of which are at least partially caused by the abuse of historical myth and knowledge. These particular plays also acknowledge how power dynamics in the present day are constantly redefined by the past, which in turn helps to establish current social and political norms. By using this technique, Mayorga achieves an effect that is similar to one described by Michel Foucault in his essay "The Subject

and the Power". When he outlines ways in which to overcome an aggressor in a power-subject relationship, he states,

> It consists of taking the forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point. To use another metaphor, it consists of using the resistance as a chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations, locate their position, and find out their point of application and the methods used. Rather than analyzing power from the point of view of its internal rationality, it consists of analyzing power relations through the antagonism of strategies (*Subject and Power* 780).

Mayorga fulfills this task by introducing specific historical frameworks as significant in understanding the misuse of power, thus challenging their consequence and recreating their historical importance.

The play *El jardín quemado* is situated in the late seventies, almost immediately after Franco's regime comes to an end in 1975. The proximity to the dictatorship allows this play to take place in a time period that is blurred between a historical past and a new future, a very transitional time for Spain. The play was written in 1997 and thus historically has a much greater perspective on this time period, adding an interesting effect of retrospective awareness. Historical knowledge in this play is abused by the characters in a way that produces a set of confusing historical "facts" or understandings, and the use of this tactic in Mayorga's writing highlights the way power and authority can be achieved as a result of the implementation of such knowledge. In *El jardín quemado*, the main character, Benet, is in charge of the investigation of a mental hospital located on the island of San Miguel. The medical tribunal in Madrid mandates the investigation due to reports that it is being run unsatisfactorily by Doctor Garay. Reports include rumors of poor conditions in the facility and a lack of opportunity for the aging community of

patients. As the play progresses simultaneously with the investigation, Benet and the spectators begin to understand the impact that San Miguel continues to feel from the Spanish Civil War. The investigation reveals that the patients in this mental institute are in fact former prisoners of war, locked away at the war's beginning and essentially forgotten by the rest of the world. The ongoing oxymoron of the play is that the mental institution is situated in a garden that is actually a large pile of ash, the remnants of an actual garden that was burned completely during the war. In reference to this contradiction, Benet and Garay discuss,

> (*Benet toca la ceniza)*
> **Benet**: ¿Quien lo quemó?
> **Garay**: La Guerra.
> **Benet**: La ceniza está fría. ¿Por qué no han vuelto a plantarlo?
> **Garay**: La Guerra lo quemó para siempre.
> (*Silencio. Benet camina inseguro detrás de Garay. Observa en el suelo sombras de pájaros que nunca se posan en el jardín*) (*Jardín* 14).
>
> [*(Benet touches the ash)*
> **Benet**: Who burned it?
> **Garay**: The War.
> **Benet**: The ash is cold. Why hasn't anyone come to replant here?
> **Garay**: The War burned it forever.
> *(Silence. Benet walks insecurely behind Garay. He watches shadows on the ground of birds that never land in the garden)*.]

The finality of the condition of the garden is also reflected by the collective fate of the prisoners who have been converted into patients that inhabit the mental hospital. A large part of Benet's investigation is focused on uncovering the past by symbolically moving the ashes away to discover what actually happened at the site during the war. Benet reflects on this when he says, "La verdad esconde bajo la ceniza. [Los prisioneros] nunca salieron de aquí" (*Jardín* 19). ["The truth is hidden underneath the ashes. {The prisoners} never left from here"]. The hidden historical truth that Benet

searches for focuses on one famous former-republican poet named Blas Ferrater, who led a group of eleven other republican men onto the island of San Miguel in rebellion against the fascist troupes, but unfortunately his small republican brigade was captured upon arrival. Benet believes that this group of eleven men either remained incarcerated in the San Miguel mental institution or was shot to death when the fascist troupes were celebrating victory in the war, yet Garay remains stubborn for the entire duration of the play by declining to share any information that he might have. He defends himself by asserting that Blas Ferrater's republican men have nothing to do with his patients in the mental institution.

The line between pathology and reality becomes distorted as the investigation begins to rely more heavily upon the testimonies of the older institutionalized men who suffer from the combination of being mentally ill and having been incarcerated for approximately 50 years of their lives. Garay uses the uncertainty of this situation to insist that, "Durante mucho tiempo, la Guerra se olvidó de San Miguel. Llegué a creer que los soldados jamás abrirían esa puerta. Que jamás pisarían el jardín" (*Jardín* 40). ["For a very long time, the War forgot about San Miguel. I came to believe that the soldiers would never open this port, that they would never step foot in the garden"]. He establishes that San Miguel is a victimized community, affected negatively by the war and the dictatorship. This gives him an added sense of emotional leverage in the investigation, but Benet continues to understand it as an excuse, and thus categorizes him within the realm of defensiveness. As the group of patients becomes the primary resource for historical information in Benet's investigation, historical myth and misinformation are used increasingly more as tools

for manipulation. One of the patients named Cal, who exists very much on the brink of insanity, claims to be the magnificent lost poet Blas Ferrater. He exemplifies this manipulation of historical knowledge while discussing the death of the republican soldiers and how he, theoretically Blas Ferrater, was forced to literally choose who was to be shot out of the group of prisoners. He says, "¿Cuánto tiempo más necesitaréis para poneros en el punto de vista de la historia? No es mi mano la que os elige, es la historia la que os señalado. Es la historia quién decide qué debe morir. ¿Qué vale una docena de hombres frente a la humanidad?" (*Jardín* 55). ["How much more time will you all need to put yourselves in the historical perspective? It is not my hand that chooses you- history has singled you out. It is history that decides who should die. What do a dozen men matter compared to the entire humanity?"]. Here he expresses the power that history and the past possess, so much so that they are able to determine the fate of an individual. This emphasizes the importance of historical knowledge, especially when used to motivate evil actions such as murder, which in this case represents a celebratory and symbolic action of the fascist victory. The end of *El jardín quemado* leaves the spectators, as well as many of the characters, with unanswered questions. The true identities of the prisoners and various other characters are not entirely classified or understood, nor is the distinction between real and imagined ever clarified. In the context of the misuse of historical knowledge, national identity and collective memory are problematized due to the inherent uncertainty in events of such an isolated community. Nevertheless, the historical framework for this play allows for these questions to be asked and contextualizes

them in a way that establishes a larger structure of inquiry about the dictatorship and the war.

Cartas de amor a Stalin, written in 1998, takes place in the former Soviet Union during the era of Stalin. One of the characteristics of this time period that the play directly reflects is the censorship of all cultural expression that represented a threat to Stalinism or the country. This play, similarly to *El jardín quemado*, walks the line between the real and the imagined, sanity and insanity. Mayorga utilizes the context of Stalinism in this play to highlight how the abuse of historical knowledge can be coercive to the point of inducing insanity, and thus illustrates a method of perpetuating control over a subject. The drama follows a couple, Bulgákov and Bulgákova, that struggles with cognitive dissonance due to the fact that the oppression of the regime conflicts with their strong feelings of patriotism to their country, especially within Bulgákov. At the beginning of the play, Bulgákov is ready to forget his loyalties to the Soviet Union and leave because his four plays have been banned from the stage. As an artist and a playwright, this restrictive action is a huge burden to bear. To add insult to injury, he also suffers from a serious case of writer's block. He overcomes the writer's block when he begins composing letters to Stalin, begging him to let them leave the country. Little by little, the Stalin's character, an almost fictitious and ghostlike presence, takes control over Bulgákov. He essentially induces an obsession within Bulgákov to form a connection to Stalin that blinds him from both the pointlessness of his mission and his borderline insanity.

Within the progression of the play, husband and wife switch personality roles as Bulgákov resigns his power directly to Stalin, who becomes his only guide and

authority. He develops into a hermit-like figure, constantly staying home for fear that he will miss the long awaited personal phone call from Stalin himself. This call is theoretically supposed to inform Bulgákov that Stalin has finally received the long labored upon letter, and that he would grant the request to let him leave the country with his wife—a phone call that never materializes. Bulgákova transitions from being as supportive of a spouse as she possibly can to being endlessly frustrated by her loss of importance in their relationship. This is first demonstrated in scene four when she says, "Ya, ya sé: tienes que quedarte junto al teléfono. Si ni para mandar tus cartas te asomas ya a la calle. ¿Cómo vas a visitar a tu amigo? Tampoco puede telefonearle. Nadie debe tocar este teléfono. Stalin puede llamar en cualquier momento" (*Cartas* 18). ["Yes, I know: you have to stay near your phone. You don't even go out to mail your letters, so how could you go visit your friend? You can't call him either. Nobody can touch the phone. Stalin could call at any moment" (Padilla 10)]. Amidst this tumultuous time for Bulgákov and Bulgákova, Stalin takes advantage of their moments of weakness in order to assert his power and control. His ghostly figure first approaches Bulgákov when his wife is not there, when she is out of the house doing the errands that he can no longer do for himself. Stalin blatantly imposes his coercive and manipulative power over Bulgákov by pitting the spouses against each other, and by planting negative thoughts in his head. Towards the end of the play he says, "El arranque es magnífico: un hombre y una mujer a los que visita el Diablo… Lástima que el personaje de ella esté tan poco desarrollado. Te lo he dicho muchas veces: tu punto débil es siempre el personaje femenino" (*Cartas* 52). ["The beginning is intriguing: a man and a woman are visited by the devil…It's a shame that her

character is so poorly developed. If I've told you once, I've told you countless times: female characters are always your weakness" (Padilla 37)]. Stalin identifies himself with the powerful figure of the devil, which provides a stark contrast to Bulgákova's character who he describes as underdeveloped. In this contrast, he highlights the ways in which he believes that Bulgákova is not necessary to Bulgákov's personal improvement or stability. Stalin's character uses his historical and political authority to control his subjects in a way that accurately reflects the conditions of his political rule. In a manipulative but representative tone, Stalin states, "¿No sabes hablar de otra cosa que de lo mal que te va en la vida? Vives de las heridas. De chupar tus heridas. De que no se cierre la herida, de eso vives tú. En lugar de pasarte los días y las noches dándole vueltas a aquella maldita llamada, podrías hacer algo positivo" (*Cartas* 51). ["Can't you talk about anything other than how miserable your life is? You feed off your wounds. Always licking your wounds. You're wounds never heal, they're what you live off of. Instead of spending day and night turning that damn phone call around in your head you could be doing something worthwhile. You know what I'm talking about" (Padilla 36)]. Stalin completely undermines Bulgákov with this statement by devaluing the majority of the behavior that he exhibits throughout the play. In this accusation, Stalin implies that basing one's experience on a memorialization of the past is not productive, even though Stalin has served as the motivational force behind all of Bulgákov's compulsive behavior. Stalin's historical knowledge manipulates the contradiction in his character and represents how such information can be maneuvered to produce specific results linked to power and control.

Mayorga picks Nazism in Germany as the third totalitarian power to incorporate into the dialogue of historical knowledge in *Himmelweg: Camino del cielo,* written in 2002. In this theatrical demonstration of the exploitation of historical myth and knowledge, Mayorga dramatizes the actual historical content in order to demonstrate the complicated power dynamics that arise. In this play, through various artistic methods, Mayorga relates a historically based narrative account of guilt, misunderstanding, and deceit that has tangible roots in a German concentration camp. An American Red Cross representative introduces the emotions surrounding misperception and culpability at the beginning of the play. This figure becomes the narrator who, in and out of flashback, recounts the events of his visit to a concentration camp outside of Berlin when he was in charge of evaluating the conditions of the situation. His experience mirrors that of a spectator attending a theatrical performance, but the difference is that he does not choose to be an active spectator. He is not aware that reality has been altered so that he is presented merely with a façade. In actuality, an ensemble of enslaved Jewish actors that is directed by a German commander deceives him. The American Red Cross representative describes his feelings of doubt and uncertainty retrospectively when he says, "¿no había algo artificial en el modo en que se comportaban?(…)¿Cómo era aquel lugar antes de que yo llegase? ¿Cómo sería después?" (*Himmelweg* 6). ["…was there not something artificial about them? What had the place been like before I arrived? And what will it be like once I'd gone?" (Johnston 25)]. Even though he asks those questions now, he was fooled in the past and was unable to see through the falsified reality. The element of retrospective guilt enters shortly afterwards when the narrator admits to the

audience that he was trickes by el comandante and thus was unable to properly evaluate the concentration camp. He expresses the remorse that he feels for this when he says, "Pero, ¿quién sabía entonces todo eso? Ahora es fácil verme como un hombre ridículo, pero solo soy una persona como cualquier otra. Lo único que me distingue es que estuve aqui…" (*Himmelweg* 9). ["But who knew any of that then? Now, it's easy to see me as a fool, but I'm no different from anyone else. Except that I was here…" (Johnston 29)]. He illustrates the enormous sentiment of being one person in the face of hugely imposing abuses of political and social power. He also acknowledges the desperation that enters in such circumstances in which an excessive degree of abuse in historical knowledge is utilized to obtain control.

Representative of the other side of the picture, the deceitful and devious facet, is the creation of an actual play that is performed in order to present an anecdotal yet completely artificial picture of life in the concentration camp. El comandante identifies the different parts of the tour of the concentration camp as "actos" (*Himmelweg* 27) [acts] in order to fully represent how much of a performance it is. He uses his authority and control not only to produce this play, but also to use the Jewish prisoners, specifically the character of Gottfried, as pawns in his scheme to deflect universal questioning and pass the inspection. Mayorga illustrates that the misuse of historical knowledge in this play is connected to remembering, understanding, and processing the past. He also includes the meta-theatrical aspect in order to emphasize, and to some extent satirize, the use of theater for the intended falsification of reality in this historical context.

Power dynamics that spur from historical knowledge are complicated webs of historical myth and fact that overflow with subjectivity. History is an endlessly complicated space that is defined situationally, and thus cannot truly be validated or declared as true. Foucault outlines this difficulty in his essay "The Subject and Power" when he says,

> At every moment the relationship of power may become a confrontation between two adversaries. Equally, the relationship between adversaries in society may, at every moment, give place to the putting into operation of mechanisms of power. The consequence of this instability is the ability to decipher the same events and the same transformations either from inside the history of struggle or from the standpoint of the power relationships. The interpretations which result will not consist of the same elements of meaning or the same links or the same types of intelligibility, although they refer to the same historical fabric, and each of the two analyses must have reference to the other. In fact, it is precisely the disparities between the two readings which make visible those fundamental phenomena of "domination" which are present in a large number of human societies ("Subject and Power" 794-795).

Foucault discusses the various ways of interpreting history within the framework of the power-subject relationship, or in other words within the framework of any interaction where power is involved. The concept of domination is also introduced in this excerpt, and Foucault's definition of it epitomizes the kind of power that results from the manipulation of historical knowledge, as demonstrated in Mayorga's plays. Domination is the condition and social role that the victor or the powerful party assumes after successfully utilizing historical knowledge to attain their goals. Discrepancies in historical records stem from the instability that Foucault refers to, and this volatility is reflected in the use of history as a foundation for representing power dynamics in Mayorga's work. The misuse of the historical knowledge in Mayorga's theater is used to denote both historical power struggles and conditions of

abuse, but it is also a more general gesture of representing to such situations in a way that provides justice to the victims of historical exploitation. The use of retrospection both as a theatrical tool in his work and as an overarching theme within his plays allows for this kind of justice to be served on a more specific historical level.

Chapter Three: The Power of Space

Historical knowledge is located within the specific construct of space in the theater. The connection between power and knowledge is demonstrated physically through this construction of space in the theatrical realm. Controlling space and demanding attention with the amount of space that you occupy is an easily accessible symbol for a spectator to understand. This is an important aspect of theater, especially according to Erika Fischer-Lichte and Saskya Jain, as they believe that "performance must satisfy specific conditions of 'production' and 'reception'. The actors act, that is, they move through space, gesture, change their expression, manipulate objects, speak or sing. The spectators perceive their actions and respond to them" (Fischer-Lichte and Jain 38). Due to the performative nature of theater, the construction of space is instrumental in fostering a relationship between actors and spectators, as well as between the actors on stage. The use of space directly informs how the audience receives theatrical information. The occupation of space is a fundamental element of the interactions that take place between players on the stage, and therefore the intentional pursuit of space through the exchange of dialogue and information comes as a natural occurrence. Such interactions frequently mimic interpersonal communication that occurs off of the stage. The fight for space resembles a struggle to gain or maintain personal property by means of generosity, exchange, or trickery. Characters are rewarded with physical space when they successfully maintain authority in the interactive setting of such a struggle. Many, if not all, of the characters in Juan Mayorga's plays partake in this exchange between the occupation and consignation of physical space. Space ownership is determined by social and

political hierarchies of authority that are established between characters through their individual quests for knowledge. In three of Mayorga's plays specifically, possession and control of space are crucial elements that define the interactions between the principle characters and promote power dynamics at large. These three plays are *El sueño de Ginebra*, *El Gordo y el Flaco*, and *El chico de la última fila*. Each play demonstrates a unique method of space domination in the context of the relationship between power and knowledge, historical and otherwise.

There are a variety of methods used to visually represent the control of space on a stage. One device that encompasses many of these techniques is the use of written and representationally manifested stage directions, and in Juan Mayorga's work they can be seen as an absolutely integral part of the overall theatrical experience. Stage directions typically enlighten both the actors and readers in a conscious way while informing the spectators in a very different way, as they are seeing the stage directions acted out and not literally reading them. Many times, the stage directions turn into additional dialogical signs as they are incorporated into verbal and nonverbal actions. The confusing and somewhat controversial implications of the extra-dimensionality of theater as an art form add to this element of the definition of space.[8] The importance of stage directions due to the multi-faceted nature of their function is outlined in the book *Theater as Sign-Systems* when the authors state,

> Stage directions frame the dialogue in two senses: literally, in the layout of the page, and theatrically, in that they impart to the printed text the status of a blueprint for theatrical production. The production team is offered a series of indications of the dramatist's theatrical

[8] Savona 72

> intentions. The reader is offered the opportunity to read performance in action from the text, and so to stage the play in a theatre of her/his imagination (Savona 73).

The extra-dialogic nature of stage directions can enhance their significance, especially when used in atypical and creative ways. An archetypal manifestation of stage directions can be found as literal commands for placement of the actors and players on the stage, a sort of guide used to direct them through the dialogue. Juan Mayorga's theater complicates this version slightly by designating other varying roles for the stage directions other than the standard instructional role. One way that the stage directions differ is that Mayorga intermittently uses them as a channel of direct communication to the spectators. Another way that he incorporates a unique use of stage directions into his work is by occasionally designating them as the only space in which some characters actually exist. This is the case for those characters that are only described and rarely or never speak, such as in *El sueño de Ginebra* regarding the character of el hombre. This application however generally has more significance in the readership realm of a play, because viewing a play on the stage allows a spectator to see stage directions as part of the action, in that they are a combination of movement and communicative interaction.

Another manipulator of space that determines power dynamics in theater that is inherent in the art form of theater is communication, both verbal and nonverbal. Communication is always present in theater due to the relationship established between actor(s) and spectator(s) that allows for an intrinsic interaction between the two parties, one that is not specifically dependent on actor interactions with each

other.[9] One very accessible sign of control in the realm of communication is the presence of verbal interaction through monologue or dialogue. Tone and intent are important within this sector, as well as the ease with which a spectator can interpret verbal communication. Verbal and nonverbal communication are essential parts of interpersonal interactions outside of the sphere of theater, and thus the simplest way for a spectator or an actor to understand the construct of space and gain dominion over it is to control the oral transferring of information and knowledge. It is also important to take into consideration that the significance of verbal communication and the lack thereof are therefore manipulated in order to demonstrate authority in theatrical work. Dialogue between characters can demonstrate authority and status within a single interaction or within the greater context of the play.

One power dynamic that is present within the realm of verbal communication is the conspicuous existence of its counterpart—silence. Silence is typically interpreted as an indicator of a lack of knowledge and therefore power, which also signifies weakness. Mayorga uses this element in its conventional understanding in much of his work, but he also twists the standard interpretation in his play *El sueño de Ginebra* to demonstrate an atypical look at the passive power of silence in the act of controlling a space. When a character dominates the verbal interactions in a relationship, they typically dominate the relationship in general or are able to eventually command authority as a play progresses. Silence is usually a strong indication of a knowledge deficit, which in turn produces a lack of control and authority, and thus it becomes especially striking in *El sueño de Ginebra* that silence

[9] Fischer-Lichte and Jain 38

is used as a tool in the struggle for power in the opposite way. The main character of the play is an unnamed woman who is only identified within the text of the stage directions, and although it is very clear that she dominates the verbal production of the play, she demonstrates a plethora of weaknesses to the spectator. Her use of verbal communication represents complete insecurity, exemplified by her overwhelming use of questions as opposed to statements. Another gauge of her weakness is the fact that she is only introduced in the stage directions, as opposed to named in the standard theatrical form of distinguishing between characters—by introducing a character's name before each of his or her lines. In this way she is silenced within the formal constructs of the play. She is thus never fully acknowledged to the reader, even though the spoken content of the play is predominantly her own. Her only name is the generic *Mujer*, the Spanish noun for woman. Her timidity manifests in her lack of confidence as she attempts interaction with the character that shares the same physical space, another generically named character *hombre*, the Spanish noun for man. The immediate yet confusing power dynamic that exists between the two characters present on the stage reflects the similarly atypical use of silence as a form of power.

The very first exposure that the spectator is given in *El sueño de ginebra* is to the physical space, and the sound of dogs barking in it. The importance of the space is established in the first stage direction when the space is described as "…un gran volumen lleno de sombras, cuya entrada también se pierde en lo oscuro. La ventana está cerrada; la luz eléctrica, apagada. Bajo la ley de la sombra, todos los objetos carecen de forma precisa, salvo una caja" (*Ginebra* 1). ["…a great volume full of

shadows, whose entrance is also lost in the darkness. The window is closed; the electric light is turned off. Under the law of shadows, all objects lack precise form, except one box"]. The very timid character of la mujer immediately occupies this ominous and uninviting space verbally as she attempts to initiate contact with a person that is seen neither by her nor the spectators. The relationship between the two characters remains unclear and ambiguously discussed throughout the play. Various events are presented as precursors to the drama of the play, including the mysterious arrival of the unnamed male character and the apparent attempted murder of the woman's husband. The events that are alluded to are never contextualized in full, and end up adding to the air of uncertainty that permeates the play. Preliminary references to the weakness of the female character are predominantly located in two textual locations: the stage directions that describe her fear and uncertainty, and in the tone of her voice. Her tendency to ask questions reveals her hesitation, self-doubt, and lack of control. The stage directions expose her anxiety and agitation when they describe that "un ruido menor provoca gran inquietud en la Mujer. Ésta tarda en descubrir la causa del ruido -¿una gotera?; ¿una corriente de aire?" (*Ginebra* 2). ["One minor sound provokes a great uncertainty in the Woman. She takes a while to discover what causes the noise—a leak? A current of air?"]. When a simple and natural occurrence such as water or air causes her such a high level of restlessness, it becomes clear that she lives in a certain amount of institutionalized fear. Her lack of control persists and is highlighted on the following page when her frustratingly unanswered questions are followed by the repetition of the stage direction "No hay replica" (*Ginebra* 3) ["There is no reply"] seven individual times. She continues to fill the role of powerless subject

by admitting her insecurities, uncertainties, and fears through her tone as well as in her direct actions. Despite the fact that la mujer occupies the majority, if not all, of the verbal communication and therefore physical space, she remains the weak and subjected character throughout the entirety of the play, thus challenging the conventional understanding of verbal control.

The elusive male character is mentioned at the beginning of the play, but not actually heard until the end of the first act. Even so, the point where la mujer actually hears him is only located within the stage directions of the play as opposed to in a directed action or a quotation from him. As la mujer questions all of the tasks that the mysterious man succeeds in making her husband do at an undetermined time before their interaction, the stage directions state, "Se interrumpe al oír nuevas palabras del Hombre. Se aparta de él, escandalizada" (*Ginebra* 7). ["She is interrupted at the sound of new words from the Man. She separated herself from him, scandalized"]. This indicates that there might not be as much physical space between them as previously implied by her hesitant interactions with him. The spectator is never made privy to the scandalous words that the male character says, but it is clear that his power is nonetheless exerted over la mujer because her reaction is so reactionary and sudden. This reinforces the importance of his extremely subtle verbal contribution, because no matter how subtle, it still has genuine authority. As the drama unfolds it remains clear that he has control over the physical space, as well as eventually over her. The stage directions continue to reflect this power dynamic at the end of the play when they state, "La mujer espera réplica de las sombras. Las sombras contestan con un enorme silencio" (*Ginebra* 24). ["The woman waits for a response from the

shadows. They answer her with an enormous silence"]. La mujer is driven to her limit at this point by a combination of the bizarrely ambiguous events that take place and her many unanswered questions throughout the unfolding drama. This limit is represented by her confusing desertion of her husband as she decides to leave with the mysterious male character. Her very last line represents this personal compromise when she says, "Quiero que nos vean yendo de la mano hasta el puerto por la avenida. Quiero que lo vean acariciar mi pelo, quiero que me griten puta. Debe de haber un millón de ratas ahí fuera, pero nunca más voy a tener miedo" (*Ginebra* 25). ["I want them to see us walking down the avenue hand in hand all the way to the port. I want them to see you caress my hair; I want them to call me a whore. There must be millions of rats out there, but I will never be scared again"]. She references her fear of rats that she is previously very explicit about, and after she decides to leave her wounded husband to escape with this mysterious figure, she is no longer frightened.[10] Only when she has conceded all traces of power to el hombre is her fear relieved.

Equally as poignant in the pursuit of power within the space of a stage is physical communication that naturally occurs between players interacting. Occupation of physical space can represent the possession of control, and can also demonstrate interpersonal dynamics between different characters located within the space. Mayorga takes this to another metaphorical level in his play *El Gordo y el Flaco*, in which he identifies his characters by the physical space that they occupy. He plays with the concepts of power as achieved through physical mass when he has two characters that are named after their physical sizes, interacting in a codependent

[10] *Ginebra* 11

relationship. Mayorga complicates this special relationship even further in his ambiguous stage directions that precede the action of the play when he suggests that, "Esta pieza puede ser interpretada por un gordo y un flaco o por dos hombres de peso semejante. Podría suceder que el llamado 'Flaco' fuese más gordo que el llamado 'Gordo'" (*Gordo y Flaco* 1). ["This piece can be played by a fat man and a skinny man, or by two men of similar weights. It might also occur that the character named 'Skinny' weighed more than the character named 'Fat'"]. Throughout the play, the character that theoretically takes up the most physical space, el Gordo, dominates the power dynamic. He represents the leading member of the duo, and is characterized as more articulate and prepared than his counterpart. El Flaco on the other hand physically occupies less space and throughout the majority of the play is represented as spineless and dependent on el Gordo. Their relationship can be described as both sexual and professional, and in a complex way is also familial. As a result, they interact within various power dynamics throughout the play. They glide between lovers, friends, partners, and business associates with little recognition of the transitions as a self-defined professional comedic pair. Within each of these dynamics, the spectator sees el Gordo assert himself and el Flaco assume the submissive role. He demonstrates uncertainty through his use of questions that dominate his verbal contributions, similarly to la mujer in *El sueño de Ginebra*. Another dialogical manifestation of his dependency is that he tends to repeat el Gordo.[11] In an ending saturated with ambiguity and role-reversal, el Flaco stands up for himself for the first time and leaves his partner. The combination of rage and

[11] *Gordo y Flaco* 3, 9, 13

helplessness that follows from el Gordo demonstrates how traumatized he is by the loss of control and authority in his relationship. He responds by lashing out physically in his space, but ultimately ends up alone.

The discussion of weight in *El Gordo y el Flaco* defines the simplest layer of power dynamics between the two main characters. This dynamic is purely physical and yet it manages to permeate the other social aspects of their relationship by acting as a foundation. The first discourse that focuses on the size of their bodies is a personal reflection on the impact that their weight has on them, beginning at the time of their births. Both el Gordo and el Flaco contemplate how their sizes have affected them in two monologues that happen simultaneously and are interwoven with each other to feign dialogue, begun by el Flaco.

> **Flaco:** La gente le da mucha importancia a lo que pesas. Lo primero que hacen es ponerte en una báscula. "Dos novecientos": Lo primero que mi padre supo de mí. Nada de "Tristón", o "Pusilánime", o "Metepatas". "Dos novecientos".
> **Gordo:** A Mi viejo, igual. "Tres cien". Nada de "Optimista", "Emprendedor", "Desafortunado". "Tres cien". Desde el principio tuvimos problemas con la báscula.
> […They continue to switch off stating how much they weighed at different points in their youth; *el Gordo*'s heaviness is contrasted by *el Flaco's* scarcity…][12]
> **Flaco:** En la playa, todo el mundo me miraba.
> **Gordo:** En la playa, la gente se sentaba a mi alrededor a mirarme.
> **Flaco:** Siempre hemos tenido problemas con la báscula (*Gordo y Flaco* 6-7).
>
> [**Flaco**: People care so much about what you weigh. The first thing that they do when you are born is put you on the scale. "Two nine hundred": the first thing that my father knew about me. Nothing like "gloomy" or "fainthearted" or "meddling". "Two nine hundred".

[12] These brackets represent my own summary of the action between these two segments of dialogue.

> **Gordo**: It was the same with my old man. "Three hundred". Nothing about "optimist", "enterprising", "unlucky". "Three hundred". From the very beginning we had problems with the scale.
> (…)
> **Flaco**: At the beach, everyone looked at me.
> **Gordo**: At the beach, everyone would surround me and admire me.
> **Flaco**: We have always had problems with the scale.]

The two interrelated narrations of their formative experiences with weight in the context of greater society reflect the fact that el Gordo has always commanded a certain physical authority, and currently controls the space shared with el Flaco. In the first portion of this passage, there is an inherent negativity associated with el Flaco because of his small size and conversely an equivalent amount of positivity connected with el Gordo. The only negative word that el Gordo utilizes to describe himself is "unlucky", a character trait that by definition is not related to his own actions or agency in the world. El Flaco on the other hand is plagued with defining himself as a faint-hearted brownnoser who has a gloomy outlook on life. These attitudes continue through the end of this section when they compare the same experience of being on the beach, presumably in beachwear that is more revealing then other traditional clothing, and their respective negative and positive body images are compared. El Flaco reflects on this experience with a sense of shame and embarrassment, whereas el Gordo expresses a sense of pride in what he possesses physically. The simple addition of the phrase "la gente se sentaba a mi alrededor" (*Gordo y Flaco* 7) to his description of the event indicates a kind of company that he is connected with as well as pleased by, indicating that for him, being observed is positive attention that he welcomes.

The second discussion of weight comes in the form of the collective realization that they are "out of shape," consequentially followed by devising a plan to fix this problem. El Gordo is the mastermind behind the plan, and el Flaco is once again characterized by his tendency to passively follow.

> **Gordo:** Ya sé cuál es el problema. El problema es éste: no estamos en forma. Hoy por hoy, no somos lo bastante flaco y lo bastante gordo. Deberíamos mirarnos al espejo más a menudo. Mírate y mírame. Parecemos dos farsantes, dos que se hacen pasar por el Gordo y el Flaco. Nos hemos abandonado. Nuestro objetivo tiene que ser: engordar y adelgazar, respectivamente. Si yo gano los kilos que a ti te sobran, todo volverá a ser como antes.
> (*El Flaco intenta comprender las palabras del Gordo.)*
> **Flaco:** Nos hemos abandonado.
> **Gordo:** Eso es.
> **Flaco:** Ya no somos tan gordo y tan flaco, respectivamente.
> **Gordo:** Eso.
> **Flaco:** Nos hemos abandonado. Ya no somos tan gordo y tan flaco, respectivamente. Engordemos y adelgacemos, respectivamente, y todo volverá a ser como antes: ésa es tu hipótesis.
> **Gordo:** Empíricamente confirmable. Sube y verás (*Gordo y Flaco* 18-19).
>
> [**Gordo**: I know what the problem is. This is the problem: we are not in shape. Today, we are not skinny or fat enough. We should really look at ourselves in the mirror more frequently. Look at yourself and look at me. We look like fakes, two people trying to pass as Fat and Skinny. We have let ourselves go. This is what our objective has to be: gain weight and loose weight, respectively. If I gain your extra kilos, everything will return to how it was.
> *(Skinny attempts to undersand Fat's words)*
> **Flaco**: We have let ourselves go.
> **Gordo**: That's right.
> **Flaco**: Now we aren't fat enough or skinny enough, respectively.
> **Gordo**: That's right.
> **Flaco**: We have let ourselves go. Now we aren't fat enough or skinny enough, respectively, and everything will go back to normal like before, that's your hypothesis.
> **Gordo**: Empirically confirmable. Come up here and you will see.]

El Gordo demonstrates the control that he has over el Flaco by persuading el Flaco without needing to do more than simply state his beliefs as fact. The dilemma

presented here is that they have "let themselves go", and thus have disembodied the personas that accompany their body types and stage personalities. The conversation about change in this passage comes across as a desire for el Gordo to assert his power even more permanently, by augmenting their physical selves to further distinguish them as big and little, powerful and weak. His plan comes under the pretense of both propelling their careers as well as taking their personal relationship back to a time when they were happier and more compatible. As the drama of the play continues, it becomes clear to the spectator and to el Flaco that there is a personal agenda behind this plan.

In a third discussion of size toward the end of the play, various extremely negative impacts related to weight loss are used by el Flaco as divisive tools of argument. At this point in the play, el Flaco gains self-confidence and begins to critically question el Gordo, as opposed to his initial naïve questioning. As the character that would be affected by the negative aspects of weight loss, he introduces the topic first.

> **Flaco:** ¿Y envejecer a tu lado? ¿Qué puedo esperar? ¿Hay una fase C del plan? ¿Diuréticos? ¿Liposucción? ¿Anorexia?
> **Gordo:** ¿Por qué has tenido que pronunciar la palabra?
> **Flaco:** ¿Qué palabra?
> **Gordo:** Esa palabra, lo sabes muy bien.
> **Flaco:** ¿Anorexia?
> **Gordo:** ¿Por qué has utilizado la maldita palabra?
> **Flaco:** ¿Cuál? ¿Liposuccíon? ¿Diuréticos?
> **Gordo:** Está bien, tú lo has querido (*Gordo y Flaco* 40).
>
> [**Flaco**: Getting old by your side? And what do I have to look forward to there? Is there a phase c of your plan? Diuretics? Liposuction? Anorexia?
> **Gordo**: Why did you need to utter that word?
> **Flaco**: Which word?
> **Gordo**: THAT word, you know what I am talking about.

Flaco: Anorexia?
Gordo: Why do you have to use that damn word?
Flaco: Which? Liposuction? Diuretics?
Gordo: Its fine. You were the one that wanted it.]

Anorexia, liposuction, and diuretics are all "bad words" in the eyes of el Gordo, and el Flaco uses them purposefully in his fight for personal agency. El Gordo responds to the usage of these words as if they were offensive to him personally, because he understands the tone with which el Flaco uses them. The resentment-laden language demonstrates the beginnings of a personal rebellion, which indicates the start of a loss of power for el Gordo. Clearly opposed to this idea, he uses what little agency he has left to disparage el Flaco as much as possible, by writing him and whatever emotional issues that he has off completely. The concept of body mass as an influential factor in determining and maintaining power dynamics is widespread throughout this play. It establishes an initial relationship of authority that acts as a base for the other social dynamics that build throughout the play and determines the usage of space with relation to power.

The complexity of the relationship between el Gordo and el Flaco adds comparable complexity to the division of power between them. The different roles that they assume in their various relationships reflect the societal and contextual implications of their physical sizes. The romantic nature of their companionship complicates the professional, and in turn the professional confuses the personal. Throughout the play, they explore varying interpersonal dynamics that range from lovers to partners in crime, in the figurative sense. Within these different associations, el Gordo constantly demeans el Flaco and is continuously affirming his own authority. El Gordo navigates the different levels of their relationship in order to

maintain control over el Flaco and thus by using his size and smarts, he believes he can uphold a comfortable level of jurisdiction over his counterpart. As the play proceeds, el Flaco undergoes a slow but distinct character change while progressively gaining more confidence and self-awareness, and as a result he begins to speak out against his partner. El Gordo continues to fight this change and manipulate their interpersonal dynamics to ensure that el Flaco does not leave him. The physicality that develops as the play advances becomes a fight between the two characters for the ability to control the space that they share and is motivated by personal agendas. For el Flaco, this translates into him wanting to actually leave, whereas for el Gordo he will do anything it takes to guarantee that such an exit does not occur. El Gordo employs the web of interpersonal connections to do so when he says,

> **Gordo:** …¿Qué nos ha pasado? Hace tiempo que no hablamos. Demasiado trabajo. ¿Crees que nos ayudaría ir todos a un psicólogo? Reconozco que no me he portado bien últimamente. No te he escuchado, no he sabido escucharte. Sin embargo, tantas veces he sentido ganas de abrazarte…Te prometo que voy a cambiar. Démonos otra oportunidad. Empecemos de nuevo. Di el nombre de un lugar y allí viviremos.
> **Flaco:** DONDETÚNOESTÉS.
> *(Abre la puerta. Pero el Gordo le pone delante de las narices un papel amarillado y polvoriento.)*
> **Flaco:** ¿?
> **Gordo:** Firmaste un contrato, ¿recuerdas? Un documento. Establece la relación entre las partes. Los derechos y obligaciones recíprocas. Atento a la letra pequeña. ¿La ves? Ahí está: la Y griega (*Gordo y Flaco* 39-40).
>
> [**Gordo**: What has happened to us? A long time has passed since we last talked. Too much work. Do you think it would help if we went to a psychiatrist? I realize that I haven't been good to you lately. I haven't listened to you, I haven't known how to listen to you. Even so, there have been so many times where I have wanted to hug you… I promise that I will change. Give us another chance. Let's start over. Say the name of a place and that is where we will live.
> **Flaco**: WHEREVER YOU AREN'T

> *(He opens the door. Fat steps in and shoves a yellowing dusty paper in front of Skinny's face)*
> **Flaco**: ??
> **Gordo**: You signed a contract, remember? A document. It establishes the relationship between two parties. The rights of each, the mutual obligations. Mind the fine print… Do you see it now? Ah, there it is: the *AND*.]

El Gordo uses two distinct relationships in this passage to stop el Flaco from leaving the space. He incorporates the emotional in his apology-driven plea, playing to the aspect of their relationship that is romantic and personal. He expresses regret for his insensitivity and his shortcomings, but we see just mere moments later that there is not actually any sincerity behind his apologies because he switches almost instantly into professional and legal mode when he is challenged by el Flaco. Shortly after this original hostile encounter, the space for the fighting dialogue transforms into an imagined boxing ring.

> *(El Gordo y el Flaco suben a la cama cual si fuera un ring- se dirigen a rincones diagonalmente opuestos. Comparan los cuerpos.)*
> **Gordo:** ¿Qué pasa? ¿Te parece un duelo desigual? ¿Es que no crees en la libre competencia?
> **Flaco:** No sé. No lo veo claro.
> **Gordo:** Llevas razón: no tienes ninguna oportunidad. Durante décadas he desayunado algas marinas, cebolla y arroz blanco hervido con cerveza. Tú te has comido los restos. Durante años he dormido la siesta mientras tú limpiabas debajo de la cama. Para colmo, mi centro gravedad es más bajo que el tuyo…No tienes ninguna oportunidad.
> **Flaco:** No tengo ninguna oportunidad. La aprovecharé (*Gordo y Flaco* 42-43).
>
> [*(Fat and Skinny get on top of the bed as if it were a boxing ring – they direct themselves to diagonally opposite corners. They compare bodies)*
> **Gordo**: What's wrong? Does it seem like an unfair match to you? Is it that you don't believe in competition?
> **Flaco**: I don't know. It's not clear to me.
> **Gordo**: You are right: you don't even have a chance. For decades I have eaten seaweed, white rice and onion boiled with beer. You have eaten the leftovers. For years I have slept for siesta while you have

> cleaned under the bed. To top it off, my center of gravity is lower than yours… you don't stand a chance.
> **Flaco**: I don't stand a chance. I'll make the most of it.]

El Gordo admits to knowingly participating in the relationship even though it is largely unequal. In this passage, he acknowledges that they possess imbalanced levels of power in a physically demanding situation like a boxing match, because el Gordo has always dominated the aspects of their lives that correlate to fostering corporal growth. This entire scene that is influenced by their body sizes, and is largely a product of their professional relationship, occurs on top of the bed that they share, which once again connects the complicated sections of their lives together. The power dynamics of their romantic and personal relationship cannot be removed from those of their professional relationship, as demonstrated by this central scene. Eventually, el Flaco is able to push through the interwoven tangle of control mechanisms that el Gordo constructs throughout the play. Even as the tension and drama rises between the two characters, he finds a way out.

> **Flaco:** ¿Cómo pudiste apostar contra mi? En todas las películas, el Gordo intenta aprovecharse del Flaco. En todas las películas, el Flaco se la juega al Gordo.
> *(El Flaco se va con su maleta, caminando como un hombre común. Resbala y se da un culatazo, pero reacciona en seguida y sale. El Gordo se queda solo. Pausa…)* (*Gordo y Flaco* 51).
>
> **[Flaco**: How could you bet against me? In all of the movies, the Fat one tries to take advantage of the Skinny one. In all of the movies, the Skinny one risks everything with the Fat one.
> *(Skinny leaves with his suitcase, walking like any other man. He slips and hits his bottom, but he reacts immediately and leaves. Fat is left alone. Pause…)*]

Ultimately, el Flaco succeeds in exiting the space, leaving el Gordo alone and desperate. Despite his physical size and the control that he exerts throughout the play,

he is unable to stop the character development that occurs within his partner, which allows him to obtain control. El Flaco demonstrates a sea change in his attitude and disposition. The act of physically occupying a space defines the possession of power and control in *El Gordo y el Flaco*. Even as the power dynamics shift throughout the play, it is only through the authority over space that either character actually obtains power.

Mayorga incorporates another unique aspect of space with relation to power in his play *El chico de la última fila*. In this play, space and time are inseparable in a way that confuses each respective sphere, while at the same time the fluidity produced as a result of the confusion connects the characters in a distinctive way across both categories. It also allows for the central character Claudio to transgress normal space and time limitations in his literature and personal expression, permitting for a subtle acquisition of power as the play progresses. This connection between space and time is demonstrated primarily by the ambiguous and flowing scene changes. There is no actual separation between scenes in the script, thus the drama of the play moves fluidly together. It is through this technique that Claudio can maneuver different interpersonal dynamics and then designate them with differing physical spaces. He is able to interact with his teacher Germán at school and be instantaneously transported to the house where Rafa and his family live through his literature. On a more basic level, physical space in this play is also used to define Claudio as a person. The entire play in fact is named after his tangible location with relation to the rest of the students in his class. He occupies the last row in the classroom, insinuating a disassociation from the rest of his classmates that is

confirmed through the actions he takes in the play. Ultimately, Claudio utilizes a type of anthropological observation as a tool in order to permeate standard space and time boundaries through which he succeeds in obtaining power in most of his relationships. He interacts within accepted constraints of personal limitation in order to seek specific kinds of knowledge that he in turn uses to subtly control the other characters and the proceedings of the play.

Claudio is identified and ostracized by the physical space that he occupies in Germán's classroom. The contextual label that he receives as a result of his location in the very back of the room denotes his abnormality, solitude, and distance from both his other classmates and society at large. His physical detachment allows him to extend beyond accepted social norms and exist in a liminal space, one where those with whom he interacts grant him behavioral leniency. Claudio is able to exist in such a space because society responds to his social distance with a natural reflex of fear and self-protection, and through this reaction he actually gains power in his relationships. The key to his manipulation of power is the very personal nature of his relationships. It is logical therefore that Juana, the wife of Germán who does not have a direct personal relationship with Claudio, would question his assumed authority whereas Germán, a character that is very close to Claudio, accepts it as form of art and expression. In response to being introduced to Claudio's writing for the first time she says,

> **Juana:** Repugnante.
> **Germán:** ¿Qué te parece repugnante?
> **Juana:** ¿No te parece repugnante?
> (…)
> **Germán:** Hablo con el director. Al chico lo castigan con una semana sin clase. O lo expulsan. O lo encarcelan. O lo fusilan. ¿Y qué?

> **Juana:** O con tus compañeros, con los otros profesores del curso. Y con los padres, eso por descontado, deberías hablar con los padres.
> **Germán:** ¿Para que no dejen entrar en esa casa?
> **Juana:** Con los padres de Claudio, el escritor. Ese chico necesita un psiquiatra. Puede ser peligroso. Es capaz de hacerles algo. Deberías cortar eso antes de que pase algo realmente malo.
> **Germán**: Es un chico cabreado, sólo eso. Un chico enfadado con el mundo. Y no es para menos. Mejor que saque su rabia así y no quemando coches…(*Chico* 10).
>
> [**Juana**: Repulsive.
> **Germán**: What is so repulsive to you?
> **Juana**: You don't think it's repulsive?
> …
> **Germán**: I'll talk to the director. They will suspend him for a week. Or they'll expel him. Or lock him up. Or execute him. And then what?
> **Juana**: …Or you could talk to his classmates, or with his other teachers. And definitely talk with his parents, that goes without saying, you should talk with his parents.
> **Germán**: So they don't let him into their house?
> **Juana**: No, with the parents of the writer, Claudio. This boy needs to see a psychiatrist. He could really be dangerous. He is capable of really doing something. You should cut this off before something really happens.
> **Germán**: He is just pissed off boy, that's all. A boy who is mad at the world. But it's better that he alleviates his frustration this way and not by burning cars.]

Germán ignores the warning signs and the misuse of power that Juana already recognizes because he is blinded by the personal nature of his relationship with Claudio, and because he has already become subject to Claudio's subtle control. At this point, he understands Claudio as a troubled teen that articulates his frustrations through his writing. He is unable to comprehend Claudio's actions as troublesome because the distance that Claudio establishes with his physical and representational location in the classroom ignites a nuanced fear within him. On another level he also relates to Claudio, sensing the same artist's spirit in him that he sees in himself. Juana holds him accountable for this personal weakness when she says,

> **Juana:** ¿Tú también te sentabas en la última fila?
> **Germán:** Es el mejor sitio. Nadie te ve, pero tú los ves a todos (*Chico* 11).
>
> [**Juana**: You also used to sit in the last row?
> **Germán**: It's the best place to sit. Nobody sees you, but you can see everybody else.]

The importance of being able to see everyone without being seen or observed defines the power that Claudio possesses in this play. Germán clearly expresses another level of personal connection with Claudio in this passage because he understands Claudio's locational motivation, even though it is through this exact aspect of his persona that Claudio controls Germán to a certain extent. Claudio is able to exert the same kind of subtle control over Ester and Rafa Padre due to the abnormality that comes with his self-isolation, and the combination of pity and fear that it produces. This coupling of reactions proves to be the point of weakness that Claudio accesses within his relationships in order to exercise authority. He is initially able to gain access to Rafa's family through the tutoring exchange that he establishes with Rafa, and he is granted continued admission through his coy implementation of power. Rafa Padre is particularly subject to the control that Claudio wields, as expressed by his sensitivity. This is evident in a conversation that he has with his wife concerning the success of his own son.

> **Ester:** La próxima semana tiene un parcial. Si no aprueba, deberíamos ponerle un profesor particular.
> **Rafa Padre:** ¿Y Claudio?
> **Ester:** Un profesor de verdad. No uno que sepa tan poco como él, que yo creo que entre el uno y el otro se confunden más que se aclaran.
> **Rafa Padre:** Pero a ese chico se le ve muy perdido. Se ve que para él esto es importante. No creo que sea un chico con muchos amigos.
> **Ester:** No podemos sacrificar a Rafa por ayudar a un extraño (*Chico* 21).

> [**Ester**: Next week he has a midterm. If he doesn't pass, we should get him a real tutor, a teacher.
> **Rafa Padre**: And Claudio?
> **Ester**: A *real* teacher. Not one that knows as little as him, and if you ask me between the two of them they confuse each other more than they help each other.
> **Rafa Padre**: But the poor guy seems really lost. It seems like this is really important for him. I don't think that he has many friends.
> **Ester**: We can't sacrifice Rafa to help a stranger.]

Rafa Padre is almost willing to sacrifice his son's success because he pities Claudio, an emotion that leads to Claudio's continued presence in the Rafa family home. Fortunately for Claudio, Rafa does pass his exam and his time spent in the house remains unquestioned any further.[13] The physical space that Claudio occupies in the "última fila" of the classroom creates an aura about him that deems him somewhat untouchable, even outside of the classroom. He is both feared and pitied because of the distance that he creates between himself and the rest of the characters in the play.

Claudio uses spatial control as a means to a specific end. This focused goal concentrates on his intention to express his love to Ester and receive a response from her. He essentially conducts an anthropological study on Rafa and his family in order to develop a close relationship with Ester. This intrusion into personal space is only accepted because of his established tutoring exchange with Rafa, but through that guise he is able to subtly assume power within his different relationships, despite class differences and other contextual obstacles. He introduces his plan to Germán in the context of an experiment when he says, "¿Por qué Rafa? ¿por qué elegí a él? Porque él es normal… Y yo me preguntaba, ¿Cómo será su casa? ¿cómo será la casa de una familia normal?" (*Chico* 9). ["Why Rafa? Why did I pick him? Because he is

[13] *Chico* 23

normal… And I asked myself, what would his house be like? What would the house of a normal family be like?"]. This inquisitive approach allows him the space to achieve a balance between observation and intrusion such that Rafa and his family do not detect his motives. As the play progresses, Claudio reveals more details of his purpose to Germán, with the intention of eventually doing so to Ester as well. When he exposes himself to Germán like this, he makes sure to do so in the context of their student-teacher relationship so that his personal incentives might be disguised by academic motivations. He is able to maintain control with this protective framework in place. When they are discussing the particulars of the plot of Claudio's story, Germán inquires about the specific detail that Claudio divulges of deciding not to open Rafa Padre's computer while snooping around in his office, which leads to the revelation of Claudio's real motives. He asks,

> **Germán:** ¿Por qué Claudio no abre el ordenador?
> **Claudio:** Lo que Claudio busca no puede estar en el ordenador. A Claudio ya sólo le interesa Ester. El secreto de Ester. Cuando entró en la casa, creía saberlo todo de ella. Pero ha descubierto que no la conoce.
> *(Silencio.)*
> **Germán:** En ese caso, falta una escena. *(Hojea la carpeta.)* Entre la escena de la terraza y ésta, falta otra que justifica esa transformación de Claudio.
> *(Silencio)* (*Chico* 35).
>
> [**Germán**: Why doesn't Claudio open the computer?
> **Claudio**: What Claudio is looking for isn't in the computer. Claudio is only interested in Ester. The secret of Ester. When he entered the house, he thought that he already knew everything about her. But he has discovered that he doesn't.
> *(Silence)*
> **Germán**: Well in that case, there is a scene missing. *(He flips through the folder.)* There is a scene missing between the one on the terrace and this one that justifies this transformation in Claudio.
> *(Silence)*]

Germán understands this information in the context of Claudio's anthropological examination of Rafa and his family, but in reality this is the first major indicator of Claudio's ulterior motives, propelled by his compulsive attraction to Ester. Germán even goes as far as to remove Claudio the character in the play from Claudio the character in his literature, indicating that through Claudio's subtle control over the situation, Germán is unable to understand the gravity of the information in his literature. Claudio's efforts culminate when he delivers a love poem to Ester.[14] She finally understands that Claudio has intentionally breached her familial space in order to express his love for her, but ultimately it is Germán who demands an end to the situation that Claudio constructs. He approaches the event lightly however, framing his demand within the context of formulating the perfect ending for Claudio's story. Under this pressure, in combination with the fact that Ester does not reciprocate his love, Claudio turns his destructive attention to Germán, even though he is the original motivation and accomplice in this "experiment". Claudio shifts his anthropological meddling to Germán by means of Juana, and when Germán discovers this he instantly understands the unethical actions that he has been unintentionally promoting throughout the play. When he realizes that Claudio has finished his story with an interaction with Juana, he states,

> **Germán:** El final es muy malo. Cámbialo.
> **Claudio:** No es el final. Continuará.
> **Germán:** No vuelvas a acercarte a mi casa…No vuelvas a acercarte a mi mujer. Si vuelves a acercarte a ella, te mato.
> **Claudio**: Desde que lo conocí, tuve ganas de ver cómo vivía. Desde la primera clase. ¿Cómo será la casa de este tío? ¿Quién vivirá con un tipo así? ¿Habrá una mujer lo bastante loca, una tía tan loca que…?
> *(Germán da una bofetada a Claudio. Silencio.)*

[14] *Chico* 43-44

> **Claudio:** Ahora sí, maestro. Es el final (*Chico* 50-51).
>
> [**Germán**: The end is awful. Change it.
> **Claudio**: It isn't the end. It is going to continue.
> **Germán**: Do not ever come close to my house again… Do not get near my wife anymore. If you do, I'll kill you.
> **Claudio**: Ever since I met him, I was curious to see how he lived. Ever since the very first class. What would his house be like? Who would ever live with a guy like him? Would his wife be crazy enough, a woman crazy enough to…?
> *(Germán slaps Claudio. Silence)*
> **Claudio**: Now it is, Sir. It is the end.]

Germán finally understands the severity of Claudio's intrusion as it becomes relevant to his own life. Claudio incorporates a similar framework of an outlined experiment when relating it to Germán. He succeeds in manipulating the other characters in the play through an exercised control over his physical location as well as by commanding power over the space and time in which the play exists. He defines the movement of time and space in the play because his narration melds into the drama of the play, making them inextricably connected to each other. His ability to disguise his motives until an exact and precise moment, without being even so much as questioned by those directly involved, demonstrates the authority that he commands within all of his personal interactions. This quality is significant in his acquisition of knowledge and therefore maintenance of power.

Juan Mayorga navigates the sphere of power within the space of the stage by demonstrating the importance of space, and by incorporating unique methods of expression and interaction to do so. He understands the importance of the stage in imparting a physical and visual representation of power, and thus he is able to illustrate different kinds of power dynamics that can exist within the space of the theater. The uniqueness of Juan Mayorga's use of space as a tool used to define

power relationships reflects the societal chaos within the realm of authority and power. History unfolds within these various spatial contexts, allowing for power dynamics to grow and develop due to the many different spatial interactions. The diverse forms of demanding, resigning, and exchanging of physical space within the context of the actual stage as well as the drama of any particular play allows for a development of spatial awareness and human interaction. Specific character development exists within the spaces of power relationships that occur in theater, thus enhancing the use of space within the connected framework of knowledge and power.

Chapter Four: Quests for Knowledge

"Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free"[15]

The possession of knowledge and information aids the process in which power and authority are gained or usurped. The more knowledgeable Juan Mayorga's characters are, the more authority they are able to exert over others—as is the case in most power-knowledge relationships as outlined in Foucault's essay "The Subject and Power". As information escapes them or is taken away from them, they accordingly tend to lose the ability to control their circumstances and their fates. Character development in Mayorga's plays correlates to the process of gaining power and authority through knowledge, a process that occurs in specific spaces and certain relationships. Within this progression of knowledge acquisition, the widely accepted dichotomy between good and evil blurs into a complex spectrum of questions that must be asked in order to designate one specific authority. Typically in his work, a character develops through his or her individual quest for knowledge that is motivated by the possibility of power, thus a character might feel selfishly empowered to use whatever means possible on such a quest. Foucault defines this process as:

> *A system of differentiations* which permits one to act upon the actions of others: differentiations determined by the law or by traditions of status and privilege; economic differences in the appropriation of riches and goods, shifts in the processes of production, linguistic or cultural differences, differences in know-how and competence, and so forth. Every relationship of power puts into operation differentiations which are at the same time its conditions and its results ("Subject and Power" 792).

The differentiations that Foucault references are the contexts within which people exist in power dynamics. It is within these contexts that Mayorga deconstructs the

[15] "Subject and Power" 790

traditional understanding of good versus evil as a strict dichotomy in order to demonstrate character development in his work.

In four of his plays specifically, he creates a model that represents the overlapping tensions of good versus evil within the power and subject relationship. The plays in discussion are *Cartas de amor a Stalin*, *Animales Nocturos*, *Hamelin*, and *La tortuga de Darwin*, and they were all published in the period of a decade (1998-2008). In examining this model, it becomes clear that Mayorga's work presents another complicated question about power abuse. In these four plays, the character is instinctively labeled as "good" due to societal norms often fails, even if his or her personal quest for knowledge is more genuine or constructive than a character that ultimately succeeds. Failure and success in this model can be gauged by how much power one acquires and if one's goals are met. Mayorga thus proposes the following conundrum: how does one participate in the crucial developmental spheres of knowledge and power while maintaining an intrinsic goodness? The dilemma lies in the literary evidence that a character that is representative of "good" does not typically prevail over a character that represents dominion and manipulation within his or her relationships. He presents multiple examples of interpersonal power dynamics in which one character's desire for authority and control subdues another character's genuine desire for integrity through interaction. He also presents the scenario in which the virtuous character is circumstantially forced to demonstrate a flaw that removes all virtue from his or her identity in order to prevail as powerful. The quest for knowledge is ultimately the quest for power, and Mayorga poses this important question about societal capacity for curiosity in knowledge without the

need for control or authority with the intent of maintaining a productive connectedness with the past.

The quest for knowledge in *Cartas de amor a Stalin* occurs in a pressurized situation of censorship and marital problems for the two main characters, Bulgákov and Bulgákova. The ghostly character of Stalin exercises his societal and political authority in order to procure complete power over the couple by means of controlling Bulgákov. He first integrates into the script through the stage directions followed by a deliberate entrance into dialogue only with Bulgákov. Before even engaging in dialogue, his influence and power is exerted over Bulgákov as a result of their respective social statuses. Stalin is much more politically powerful, and Bulgákov is an artist, as well as the direct subject of national censorship efforts made explicitly by Stalin's government. As Stalin incorporates himself as an actual presence in the play, his direct influence and power over Bulgákov becomes evident. When Stalin first appears physically in scene five, Bulgákov is described as, "Buscando la atención de Stalin" (*Cartas* 22) ["Trying to get Stalin's attention" (Padilla 14)] and "Luchando por la atención de Stalin" (*Cartas* 23). ["Fighting for Stalin's attention" (Padilla 14)]. This is the first change in Bulgákov's behavior that is linked directly to the influence of Stalin. Bulgákov's personality continues to transform as a result of the pressure from Stalin, and thus everything he says and writes begins to reflect Stalin. His behavior becomes obsessive, and the alterations in his character are evident in the following portion of dialogue when Bulgákov and Bulgákova begin to argue about his letter-writing obsession:

> **Bulgákov**: [Stalin] Quería conocer mis opiniones sobre el curso que está tomando la Revolución. Quería oírme hablar.

> **Bulgákova**: ¿Quería oírte hablar? Prohíbe la representación de tus obras; no te deja publicar una línea. ¿Y dices que quería oírte hablar? Quería tu silencio. No te llamó para que hablases, sino para cerrarte la boca.
> **Bulgákov**: ¿Me llamó para cerrarme la boca? Cómo se ve que no lo conoces. Es capaz de recitar escenas enteras de mis obras. Sé cuánto me aprecia.
> **Bulgákova**: ¿Te aprecia? ¿Sabes lo que su gente anda diciendo sobre ti en cada rincón de Moscú? Por toda la ciudad, todo el mundo me mira como si estuviese casada con el mismísimo demonio. Eso es obra de Stalin. Que todos escupan el suelo que piso, eso se lo debes a Stalin. (*Bulgákov no quiere seguir oyéndola. Para no oírla, escribe. Ya no la oye, aunque ella todavía mueve la boca*) (*Cartas* 31).
>
> [**Bulgákov**: He wanted to hear my opinions about the course that the Revolution is taking. He wanted to hear me talk.
> **Bulgákova**: He wanted to hear you talk? He bans productions of your plays; he doesn't let you publish one word. And you say that he wanted to hear you talk? He wanted your silence. He didn't call to talk with you, but to shut you up.
> **Bulgákov**: He called to shut me up? It's so clear that you don't know him. He is able to recite entire scenes from my plays. I know he thinks highly of me.
> **Bulgákova**: Thinks highly of you? Do you know what his people say about you all over Moscow? Throughout the city, everyone looks at me as if I were married to the devil himself. That is Stalin's doing. That everyone spits on the ground I walk on, that you owe to Stalin. *(Bulgákov is done with the conversation. To keep from hearing her words, he begins to write. Though she keeps moving her mouth, he no longer hears her.)* (Padilla 21-22).]

The defensive tone in Bulgákov's voice and the enormity of his loyalty to Stalin demonstrates Stalin's successful brainwashing methods. Even when Bulgákova is completely frank with Bulgákov, disclosing how the rest of the community looks down upon both of them with disdain as a result of Stalin's pervasive political pressure, he ignores it completely and decides not to listen. Stalin's character succeeds in commanding every aspect of control over Bulgákov, even to the point of destroying his marriage, and thus represents the danger and pervasiveness of the abuse of power within the personal sphere.

While Stalin is supposedly aiding Bulgákov in his letter writing efforts, he challenges the importance of Bulgákova and their marriage when he says,

> **Stalin**: ¿De verdad crees que te ayudará tenerla a tu lado? No parece el tipo de mujer que ayuda a vivir a un hombre. Mírala, precisamente ahí viene. En la cara se le ve que trae buenas noticias. ¿Será algo referente al Comité de Asuntos Extranjeros? ¿Habrá obtenido una respuesta a tu solicitud? Ya sabes, lo de vuestro viaje (*Cartas* 35).
>
> [**Stalin**: Do you really think that having her at your side will help you? She doesn't seem like the type of woman who gives a man a reason to live. There she is. Look at her. You can tell by the look on her face that she is bringing you good news. Will it have to do with the Committee of Foreign Affairs? Do you suppose she's gotten an answer to her application? You know, the one for your trip together (Padilla 24).]

By undermining the obvious efforts of Bulgákova, Stalin suggests that she is dispensable baggage and that Bulgákov should focus on cultivating a relationship with him instead. Bulgákov's attitude towards his wife shifts completely due to the pressure of Stalin. The levels of confidence in his wife that he demonstrates as well as how he expresses his compassion for her represents the transition in his attitude. In the very first draft of his letter to Stalin, he ends with the line, "…O se me expulse de la Unión Soviética junto con mi esposa" (*Cartas* 5). ["…Or expel me from the Soviet Union with my wife" (Padilla 1)]. By including his wife in the final clause of this letter, he illustrates how much he values Bulgákova. By the middle of the play his attitude has changed so drastically that he goes as far as to question his wife's routine reliability when he says, "No puedo confiar en el correo. Mi mujer debería entregárselas en mano, pero ¿puedo confiarme de ella? No ve con Buenos ojos nuestra relación. Debería llevarlas yo mismo a Kremlin"(*Cartas* 44 - 45). ["I can't trust the postal system. My wife should deliver them in person, but can I trust her?

She doesn't look kindly on our relationship. I should take them to Kremlin myself. And wait at the door of Kremlin for as long as it takes for your response. But I can't leave here. You could call at any moment" (Padilla 31)]. Bulgákov shifts from essentially considering his wife as his second half to not even trusting her to mail his letters because Stalin has conditioned him to change so rapidly. The representation of the most extreme transformation that Bulgákov endures and that the spectator witnesses occurs at the end of the penultimate scene, in a portion of dialogue that involves all three players. Bulgákova pleads with Bulgákov to abandon his letter-writing plot in order to rebuild their collective happiness and leave the country when she begins,

> **Bulgákova**: Sólo necesitamos estar juntos. Donde sea, Mijail, donde tú quieras, con tal de que estemos juntos.
> **Bulgákov**: ¿Irme de Rusia? ¿Ahora, cuando él está tan cerca de aceptar mi punto de vista? Mi última carta le ha producido una honda impresión.
> **Bulgákova**: ¿Por qué no te mata? ¿Por qué no envía a alguien a que acabe el trabajo? Habría muchos dispuestos a hacerlo. Todos ésos que me escupen. Todos me escupen, en cuanto menciono tu nombre.
> **Stalin**: (*A Bulgákov*) ¿Tiene que ir a todas partes con tu nombre por delante? Seguro que podría conseguir un pasaporte para sí misma. Incluso en el Comité de Asuntos Extranjeros, siempre que no vaya cacareando tu apellido. Dile que solicite un permiso para viajar sola al extranjero. Se lo entregarán al instante.
> **Bulgákov**: No querrá irse sin mí. Habrá que obligarla, Iosif Visarionovich. Sácala de Rusia, lejos de nosotros, donde no pueda hacernos daño (*Cartas* 56).
>
> [**Bulgákova**: All we need is to be together. Wherever that may be. Mikhail, wherever you want, as long as we're together.
> **Bulgákov**: Leave Russia? Now, when he's so close to accepting my point of view? My last letter impressed him deeply.
> **Bulgákova**: Why doesn't he kill you? Why doesn't he send someone to finish the job? There would be many willing to do it. All those people who spit on me. All of them spit on me when I mention your name.

> **Stalin**: *(To Bulgákov)* Why does she always have to throw your name around? She could definitely get a passport for herself, and she could even get help from the Committee of Foreign Affairs as long as she didn't keep using your name. Tell her to apply for permission to travel abroad alone. They will grant it immediately.
> **Bulgákov**: She won't go without me. She'll have to be forced, Josef Visarionovich. Get her out of Russia, far away from us, where she can't do us harm (Padilla 40).]

The end of this passage represents Bulgákov as a weak and helpless figure who looks to Stalin for guidance and protection. He is so influenced by Stalin and his accompanying ideology that he cannot see the selflessness that his wife emanates in offering to leave the country, as she once was extremely hesitant to do so. As soon as Bulgákov has gone as far as to beg that Stalin remove his wife from the country, presumably by force, it becomes clear that his attitude shift is permanent and that Stalin has triumphed over Bulgákov's sense of self. Stalin uses his ability to manipulate and direct in order to demand complete dominion over Bulgákov's fate, turning him into a puppet and making a mockery out of his plea to simultaneously be an artist and a productive member of society.

Bulgákova tries throughout the play to persist in supporting her husband, despite the frustration that she feels as Stalin usurps her position of power in her own marital relationship. She represents the "good" versus Stalin's "evil", and even though her motivation is clearly rational and constructive, Stalin's quest for control by way of power abuse suppresses her own pursuit of knowledge and happiness. At the beginning of the play, Bulgákova implores a unique approach to achieve knowledge and sustain control over the unstable situation with Bulgákov. She actually plays the part of Stalin in order to help her husband write his letter, a

decision that seems incongruous with her general sentiments toward Stalin. In defense of this decision when Bulgákov finds it preposterous, she says:

> **Bulgákova**: Si eso te ayuda, puedo…imaginar que soy Stalin y reaccionar como él reaccionaría ante tu carta. Puedo ponerme en su lugar.
> **Bulgákov**: ¿Ponerte tú en su lugar? ¿Tú en el lugar del hombre que ha prohibido mis obras?
> **Bulgákova**: Si eso te ayuda…
> **Bulgákov**: Casi ha vuelto loco a nuestro amigo Zamiatin. Ha fusilado a Pilniak. Ha logrado que Maiakowski se suicide.
> **Bulgákova**: Quiero ayudarte.
> **Bulgákov**: ¿Ponerte en la piel de ese hombre al que odio? Al que odias.
> **Bulgákova**: Con todas mis fuerzas, así lo odio. Pero incluso los hombres más odiosos creen tener razones para hacer lo que hacen. Necesitas encontrar sus razones para volverlas contra él (*Cartas* 8).
>
> [**Bulgákova**: If that helps, I can… pretend that I am Stalin and react the way he would react to your letter. I can put myself in his place.
> **Bulgákov**: Put yourself in his place? You in the place of the man who has banned my works?
> **Bulgákova**: If that helps you…
> **Bulgákov**: He has driven our friend Zamyatin insane. He executed Pilniak. He drove Mayakovski to commit suicide.
> **Bulgákova**: I want to help you.
> **Bulgákov**: By pretending to be the man I hate? The man you hate.
> **Bulgákova**: With every fiber of my being, that's how much I hate him. But even the most hateful men believe they have reasons for their actions. And you, Mikahil, need to delve into those reasons. You need to understand those reasons to use them against him (Padilla 3).]

Bulgákova continues to be supportive of her husband, and despite the distance that grows between them, she continues to explore options to help him. She perseveres through what turns into a hellish situation, even as she has to watch Stalin's power consume her husband completely and provoke a dramatic obsession. She demonstrates her resolve throughout the second half of the play, for example when she says, "Te sacaré de aquí, Mijail. Conseguiré esos pasaportes. Te sacaré de este infierno"(*Cartas* 39). ["I will get you out of here, Mikhail. I will get those passports. I

will get you out of this hell" (Padilla 27)]. She is presented as a heroic figure during the majority of the play, acting in loving devotion to her husband and his needs. Her failure however becomes evident at the end of the play, when she can no longer dedicate herself to helping her husband because succeeds, with the help of Stalin, in completely pushing her away. The very last stage direction indicates this profound sense of resignation when it states, "*La mujer ha entrado con sus maletas, vestida para salir de viaje. Ha ido al lugar donde Bulgákov escribía. Ha recogido el manuscrito de Bulgákov para llevárselo consigo. Ha mirado a Bulgákov por última vez. Se ha ido sin dirigirle un gesto de despedida"*(*Cartas* 59). ["The woman has entered with her suitcases, ready to go on a trip. She has gone to the place where Bulgákov used to write. She has picked up Bulgákov's manuscript to take with her. She looks at Bulgákov for the last time. She leaves without so much as a farewell gesture" (Padilla 42)]. Even though she attempts to exert her knowledge and her power throughout the play, Stalin's abuse of authority allows him to succeed in commanding all of Bulgákov's care and attention. Bulgákova leaves her own house, husband, and presumably country in defeat, because she is not able to assert her power in a successful way without using the tool of exploitation that Stalin implores.

Animales Nocturnos, published in 2003, presents a similar dichotomy between the power and the subject as does *Cartas de amor a Stalin*. *Animales Nocturnos* is concerned with the issue of racism that relates to both the unwieldy use of power as well as to the unsettling issue of assumed supremacy. The character that holds the power in this play is el Bajo, a native Spaniard who takes advantage of his status as a citizen and uses the "law of foreigners" as leverage in establishing authority over his

subject, el Alto. He is extremely passive aggressive throughout the entire play with both el Alto and his own wife, la Baja. His need for power stems from a lack of companionship in his marriage, and he assumes the role of overbearing parental figure to those whom he controls. The moral character in this play is la Alta, Alto's wife, who is adamant about standing up to the oppressive forces in their lives. She ultimately retreats from the difficult situation as a result of the pressure, failing her husband and leaving him in circumstances that she deems analogous to slavery.[16] El Alto and la Alta are in a socially precarious state from the start of the play. They are presented as an ambiguously uprooted younger couple and as the drama unfolds, it becomes clear that they have immigrated to Spain. El Bajo begins his reign of power over el Alto by subtly blackmailing him with the *ley de extranjería*, the law of foreigners. By coyly introducing his position of power in the first scene of the play, he establishes an authority that cannot be questioned due to the underlying legal threat that he presents of reporting the immigrant couple to the police. In the first scene, el Bajo has a selection of miniature monologues that describe this threatening framework accurately:

> **Bajo**: En cuanto a esa ley, yo no la redacté. Pero, tan pronto como oí hablar de ella, supe que iba a cambiar mi vida. No se me ocurrió de buenas a primeras, fui madurándolo poco a poco, y hasta hoy no me he decidido a poner en práctica mi idea. Pero le repito que no tengo nada contra ustedes. Tampoco es nada personal, simplemente he pensado que debía concentrarme en un solo caso, y el suyo es el que conozco mejor.
> **Bajo**: ¿Qué va hacer? ¿Ponerse a chillar delante de toda esa gente? ¿Llamar a la policía? ¿Por qué no la llama? Relájase, hombre. No le he llamado "hijodeputa". Sólo he dicho que es un extranjero sin permiso de residencia. Nada grave, salvo que, en aplicación de la ley tres siete

[16] *Animales* 33

> cinco cuatro, usted podría ser devuelto inmediatamente a su país de origen.
> **Bajo**: Todavía no he bebido una gota. No me gusta beber solo. No vuelva a levantarse sin mi permiso, por favor, no me obligue a hacer lo que no quiero hacer. Estoy intentando ser amable. No es nada personal, ya se lo he dicho. Yo no redacté esa ley, pero ella ha cambiado nuestra relación. Dos sombras se cruzan cada mañana en la escalera hasta que un día…
> **Bajo**: …A veces le pediré algo incómodo o desagradable, pero no con animo de ofenderlo, sino para comprobar su disponibilidad. Eso es, en definitiva, lo que me importa: estar seguro de su disponibilidad (*Animales* 3-5).
>
> [**Bajo**: And I didn't make up the law. But as soon as I heard about it, I knew it was going to change my life. Well, not straightaway I didn't. But I mulled it over and it was only today I decided to put my idea into practice. But listen, I'm serious, I've not a thing against any of you. It's nothing personal. I just thought I should focus on one case, and yours is the one I know best.
> **Bajo**: What are you going to do? Start shouting the odds in front of everyone? Call the police? Go ahead, do it. Relax. I haven't insulted you. All I said was that you're a foreigner, an illegal immigrant. No big deal, except that under Section 3754, you could be sent back at once to where you came from. Maybe it is 3475?
> **Bajo**: Not a drop. I don't like drinking on my own. Please don't stand up again without me telling you to, don't make me do anything I don't want to. I'm trying to be friendly. I told you, it's nothing personal. I don't make the law. But it has changed our relationship. Two shadows that pass on the stairs every morning until one day…
> **Bajo**: Occasionally I'll ask you to do something uncomfortable, or unpleasant, not so as to offend you, just to make sure you're willing. That's really what it's about, what matters: being sure you're willing (Johnston 4-7).]

El Bajo steals el Alto's freedom by demanding complete control over his availability. He requires dependability from el Alto that threatens his autonomy and prevents him from defining his own time. El Alto conceals this meeting and all of its implications from la Alta for quite some time, even though his first instinct is to disclose all of the proceedings to her in scene two.[17] He holds back out of a mix of fear and uncertainty,

[17] *Animales* 7-11

and eventually this combination of insecure emotions turns what was once a loving and communicative relationship into the complete opposite.[18] El Bajo is able to insert himself into the dynamic between el Alto and la Alta by demanding secrecy from el Alto, and thus his stipulations for el Alto become more complex. This pressure on el Alto escalates as el Bajo introduces the burden of being forced to halt communication with his wife. In the following section of scene four, el Alto remains silenced as el Bajo asserts his power:

> **Bajo**: Ayer volví a cruzarme con tú mujer. Por el modo en que me mira… No le gusto, pero ella no sabe por qué no le gusto. No se lo has dicho, ¿verdad?
> *(Silencio.)*
> **Bajo**: Per entonces, ¿qué le has dicho?
> *(Silencio.)*
> **Bajo**: Así pues, tenemos un secreto. Tú y yo. Compartimos un secreto (*Animales* 18).
>
> [**Bajo**: I bumped into your wife again yesterday. The way she looks at me… she doesn't like me, but she doesn't know why she doesn't like me. You haven't told her, have you?
> *(Silence.)*
> **Bajo**: What have you told her?
> *(Silence.)*
> **Bajo**: In that case you and I have a secret. We share a secret. (Johnston 23-24).]

El Bajo has so much leverage in their relationship that el Alto's character is reduced to silence and he becomes a follower with barely any room for personal expression. He transforms from a relatively self-confident character to a subservient version of himself, one that is entirely regulated by el Bajo. Beyond scene one, he never exercises any form of questioning or rebellion against el Bajo, who in turn becomes his master.

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[18] *Animales* 11

La Alta represents the principled character that follows the same pattern of failure as previously exhibited by Bulgákova's character. Although she intends to support her husband similarly, she also has a strong sense of self that initially encourages her to fight on his behalf and then supports her assertion of independence. Intuition leads her to express valuable concern even before her husband fully informs her of the situation of modern-day slavery in which he exists. She aptly mentions a story that becomes a motif throughout the entire play when she says, "'El zorro sabe muchas cosas. El erizo solo una, pero importante'. ¿Crees que el poeta se refería solo a animales?" (*Animales* 23). ["'The fox knows many things. The hedgehog only one, But it's an important thing'. Do you think the poet was only talking about animals?" (Johnson 31)]. This story is mentioned various times throughout the play, and it has extreme relevance to the different dynamics at work in el Alto's contrasting relationships with el Bajo and la Alta. The moral of the story is that even though a fox has a plethora of traits cultivated from being sly and creative, the hedgehog has one important and indispensible skill that makes him more competitive: self-protection. The clear representation of the fox in this play is el Bajo, but el Alto does not fit the characterization of the hedgehog because he lacks the ability to protect himself from the rule of control that el Bajo surrounds him with. La Alta, on the other hand, exhibits the instincts of the hedgehog in her unwavering efforts to protect herself and her husband. In her quest to prevail over the control and pressure of el Bajo, la Alta asserts her knowledge through her powerful opinion. She becomes determined to abandon their current living arrangement in order to escape from the humiliation that

el Alto suffers. El Alto's complacency is apparent in the wake of her outrage in the following section of dialogue:

> **Alta**: ¿Y la dignidad?
> **Alto**: Sólo es un juego desagradable. Uno más.
> **Alta**: ¿Te conozco? ¿Será que tantas dificultades nos han confundido? Hemos cuidado el uno del otro, pero eso, ¿era amor? Quizá hayamos confundido el amor con otras cosas: solidaridad, compasión…
> **Alto**: Dame tiempo. Él está cambiando, le estoy haciendo cambiar.
> **Alta**: Ahora entiendo por qué su mujer tiene esa cara de vencida. Porque no puede competir. Ninguna mujer puede compararse a un esclavo. ¿Es eso lo que has elegido ser, su esclavo? Yo no voy a verlo. Contigo o sin ti, mañana cogeré un tren (*Animales* 33-34).
>
> [**Alta**: And our dignity?
> **Alto**: It's an unpleasant game, nothing else. One more unpleasant game.
> **Alta**: Suddenly, it's as if I don't know you. All this struggling to survive, maybe it's complicated things. We've looked after each other. Was that love? Maybe we've confused love with other things: solidarity, compassion…
> **Alto**: Give me time. He's changing, I'm changing him.
> **Alta**: I understand now why his wife looks so defeated. Because she can't compete. No woman could, with a slave. Is that what you've chosen to be, his slave? I can't stand by and watch that happen. With you, or without you, I'm going to catch a train tomorrow (Johnston 45-46).]

She is overcome with self-doubt, and seeing the defeat of her husband crushes her. La Alta ends up leaving her husband in the final scene of the play, for a mystery man whom she meets while her husband is otherwise occupied with el Bajo. La Alta and el Bajo engage in an invisible game of tug-of-war for the energy and understanding of el Alto, and el Bajo wins the game. She leaves to preserve her own person, which in many ways makes her courageous in her own right. However in the context of the struggle for power and influence through knowledge, her character is not able to overcome the complete authority of el Bajo even with her good intentions, and thus falls short of the presumed heroic role.

In the play *Hamelin*, Mayorga raises the issue of social delinquency as it relates to the abuse of power. He follows a similar model as in his other work in that the supposedly heroic figure has enough fundamental shortcomings that he is unable to compete with the authoritative party. As a result, the power-hungry character benefits from this weakness and eventually overcomes all intrinsic good in order to gain control. Montero, a judge who prosecutes a wealthy socialite named Rivas, a "ciudadano conocido y respetado" (*Hamelin* 1) ["A well-known citizen, a person that is thought highly of" (Johnston 1)], is the supposedly courageous principle character of *Hamelin*. Rivas is accused of pedophilia and child pornography, and it becomes obvious during the investigation that progresses that he uses his social leverage to manipulate members of lower age groups and social classes for personal gain. He capitalizes on the social advantages that he has, including his respected reputation and social status, to assume authority over the boys with whom he has sexual relationships. Montero assumes the role of protector and guardian of his city by devoting all of his time and energy to Rivas' case, and by vowing to take Rivas down legally in order to get justice for his victims. Montero's moral character is introduced in the opening scene when he states,

> **Montero**: Se acercan días difíciles para esta ciudad. Muchos pondrán el grito en el cielo pidiendo que rueden cabezas. Pero nosotros debemos exigirnos sentido de la responsabilidad. Ustedes y nosotros trabajamos con el mismo horizonte: el interés público. Como siempre, nosotros seremos transparentes con ustedes, y ustedes serán, como siempre, responsables con la ciudad. Ésa es mi convicción, y para expresarla personalmente les he llamado (*Hamelin* 2).
>
> [**Montero**: This city is facing difficult times. There will be a public outcry. But we must act responsibly. All of us, we all work to the same purpose: the public interest. And we will be transparent with you, as we always are, and you, as you always do, will exercise your

> responsibility towards the city. I am confident that that is the case, and I have called you here to express that confidence to you (Johnston 2).]

In this statement, he establishes that he is respectful, concerned, and engaged on behalf of the community. He exhibits the characteristics that produce a heroic image, and likewise he consciously aspires to become the hero.

The incongruity in his character is introduced in his relationship with his son Jaime. He fails in the relationship at many of the points of parallel interest and concern that have become so important to him in the Rivas case, including protection and communication. Even though he develops into a positive role model for society at large, he does not produce that kind of stability for his son. Due to his devotion to the Rivas case, he ends up with very little time to spend with Jaime, and therefore is unable to provide parental guidance and influence. Rivas exemplifies the power and knowledge combination that Mayorga deems dangerous, but due to the fact that an extremely important social norm is broken through his manipulation of control, it becomes apparent that he is unable to maintain his power. Both Rivas and Montero effectively abuse their power, for both good and evil purposes, and both end up losing their authority as a result.

Rivas uses the power that he already has as leverage to acquire more, but due to the nature of the crime that he commits, he ends up losing his control and authority. As Montero's prosecution of Rivas progresses throughout the play, it becomes clear that Rivas will not be able to continue living the controlling and powerful lifestyle that he previously did. However, Rivas' character drops out of center stage about halfway through the play, and there is never a clear legal or personal resolution to his case. In this way, Mayorga uses this character as a demonstration of the dangers of

power abuse once they are applied to a situation that is as socially abhorrent as the sexual abuse of children. There is still a sense of irresolution because Rivas represents the malicious abuse of power for personal gain that Mayorga considers dangerous. As Rivas' character develops, he becomes progressively more extreme in both his self-defense mechanisms and his fantasies about his young conquest. Rivas is a complicated character because he has the added element of delusion along with his manipulative tendencies, and therefore is not entirely conscious of how he is being abusive. This complication is expressed during the preliminary investigation with Montero when Rivas says, "Tengo en marcha un proyecto de reinserción. Chavales que no encuentran su sitio. Hay que darles una oportunidad" (*Hamelin* 5). ["I've started a remedial project. For kids who've lost their way. They need a chance" (Johnston 5)]. He contextualizes his "project" as a philanthropic mission to help boys from lower income families to find their way in society while avoiding trouble, when in reality he uses this as a guise to remove them from their families for his own personal pleasure. His method includes inviting boys from the low-income neighborhood, *el barrio*, to come with him to mass.[19] By using a socially acceptable excuse such as church, he infiltrates the community without raising any warning signs among parents or other children. As the accusations against him become more blatant, he becomes increasingly more defensive about his relationship with one particular boy, Josemari. He states, "Con Josemari tengo una relación especial…Nadie quiere a Josemari como yo. Jamás abusaría de él, es lo ultimo que haría. Me mataría antes de hacer daño a ese chico" (*Hamelin* 8-9). ["I have a special relationship with

[19] *Hamelin* 3

Josemari… Nobody's got his interests more at heart than I have. I would never abuse him, that's the last thing I would ever do. I'd die before I ever harmed that child" (Johnston 8)]. When presented with the allegation of abuse against the boy that he apparently loves, he wholeheartedly defends the relationship. The abuse of power in his relationship with Josemari becomes evident both through further interrogation of Rivas as well as the examination of Josemari himself. In one of the last lines that Rivas has in scene ten, his self-defense escalates so much that he begins to accuse Montero of fabrication. He exclaims,

> **Rivas**: De pronto, algo a la altura de su talento: ¡Una red de pederastas! Imagino su excitación. Justo lo que la ciudad estaba esperando: un monstruo y un Salvador. Todos queremos sentirnos inocentes. Nos enseñan un monstruo y nos sentimos inocentes como corderitos. Usted da un monstruo a la gente y la prensa les cuenta cómo era el monstruo del niño. 'Lo que busco es el origen del mal'. El origen del mal está en su cabeza. Deje de mirarme así, el monstruo sólo está en su cabeza. Fue usted quien puso esa mierda en la boca de Josemari. Jamás entenderá lo que hay entre ese niño y yo (*Hamelin* 28).
>
> [**Rivas**: Suddenly, something worthy of your talent: A network of pederasts! I can imagine your excitement. Just what the city was waiting for: a monster and a saviour. We all want to feel innocent. They show us a monster and we feel like little lambs. You give the people a monster and the press tells them what the monster was like as a child. 'The origin of the evil, that's my concern'. The origin of the evil is inside your mind. Don't look at me, the monster only exists in your mind. It was you put that shit into Josemari's mouth. You'll never understand what there is between that boy and me. (Johnston 24-25).]

Rivas clearly understands the dichotomy between good and evil, as he utilizes it to prove a point to Montero. His point is moot however because he does in fact fit the description of a monster, as both he and Montero define it. His role in the actual dialogue from this point onward becomes less important, although the impact of his actions continues to define the drama. In this way, his abuse of power is successful

because his authority and control endure even after he is removed from the situation. He does not, however, receive the same treatment as other Mayorga characters that have also been successful in maintaining power over a powerless subject due to his involvement in an act of social delinquency that is more concretely unfathomable.

Montero epitomizes a prototypical "good" character, which can be attributed mostly to his profession as a judge and his assumed role as the hero. He takes on the responsibility of being the protector of the city due to his crucial function in the Rivas case. He exhibits extreme determination within this position and it becomes a very important case to him, specifically due to the involvement of the children of the community. While questioning Josemari, his ethical motivation is once again made evident to the spectator when he says, "Entonces, nadie te va a castigar [Josemari]. Hay que castigar a los que se portan mal. Si alguien se ha portado mal contigo, a ése habrá que castigarlo" (*Hamelin* 18). ["Then nobody's going to punish you. The people who do bad things, they're the ones who have to be punished. If anybody had done anything bad to you, he'd have to be punished" (Johnston 15)]. He believes in the principles of justice, and thus responds personally to a case like this one. His idyllic character however is flawed because he cannot provide this same kind of protection to his son Jaime. Throughout the play, his son becomes increasingly more troubled and rebellious, and despite pleas from his wife Julia, Montero does not respond with the same empathy as he does in the case of Josemari. The warning signs that his son is slipping through the cracks, both at home and at school, start in the fourth scene. They continue to escalate throughout the play, as do Jaime's actions that

range from minor fights in school to violently hitting his mother.[20] Montero lacks the ability to apply his extensive theoretical knowledge about justice and the sensitivity of children to the practical situation of his own family. He devotes so much of his energy to helping the community by apprehending Rivas that he is left with nothing to devote to his wife and son. He is completely cognizant of this hypocrisy within his own life, which makes his "good" even harder to justify. He demonstrates this understanding in scene nine when he states,

> **Montero**: Me preocupa el mundo que estamos construyendo para nuestros chicos. Hoy los niños están expuestos a cualquier cosa. Por mi trabajo, me ilusiono pensando que puedo hacer algo, pero cada noche me acuesto con la sensación de que sólo doy palos de ciego (…) Cuando este caso cayó en mis manos, sentí que, por primera vez, podía hacer algo por la gente. En mi carrera he tenido que tomar decisiones difíciles, mil veces he dudado de mi vocación. De pronto, tenía ante mí algo que justificaba mi vida como juez (*Hamelin* 22-23).
>
> [**Montero**: The world we're building for our children, it frightens me. Children today, anything can happen. When I'm working, I convince myself I can do something, but I go to bed every night with the feeling I'm just flailing round in the dark (…) When I started this case I thought - for the first time - I could do something. All through my career I've had to take tough decisions, I've thought this isn't for me a thousand times. And suddenly here was something that made sense of my life as a judge. (Johnson 19-20).]

The weight of the Rivas case bears down on him in a profound and important way due to the subject matter and because he views it as his opportunity to confirm his own moral substance. He believes that this case it the validation of his career, and even though he cannot provide for his family while he is providing for the city, he sees it as a duty that he cannot neglect. In many smaller sections of dialogue between Montero and Rivas as well as between Montero and Paco, Josemari's father, Montero

[20] *Hamelin* 6, 7, 23

clearly prevails as the moral and honorable character in the pairings. However, when contextualized within the issues that his family is suffering from as well, he falls short. In the very last scene of the play after Julia has instructed Montero to speak with Jamie immediately, the narrator describes Montero's role in their interaction when he says,

> **Acotador**: [Montero] no quiere decir lo primero que se le pase por la cabeza. Sabe que es muy importante escoger las primeras palabras. No consigue encontrarlas: las primeras palabras. Al salir de la habitación de Jaime, ve a Julia en el pasillo, sentada en el suelo, con la cabeza entre las manos. Sale de la casa, llama al ascensor, pero se arrepiente, va al otro ascensor, el que lleva al garaje. Nunca le ha gustado conducir, pero esta noche no hace otra cosa (*Hamelin* 55-56).
>
> [**Acotador**: He doesn't want to say the first thing that comes in to his head. He knows how important it is to choose his first words carefully. He can't find them: those first words. As he's leaving Jaime's bedroom, he sees Julia on the landing, sitting on the floor, resting her head in her hands. He leaves the apartment and calls the lift, but then changes his mind and calls the other one, the one that goes down to the garage. He's never liked driving, but tonight that's exactly what he does. (Johnston 45).]

Montero epically fails at communicating with his son, leaving his wife in despair. He assumes two very different roles in the parallel situations in his life, acting as a protector and advocate for Josemari whilst not being able intervene in the slightest with regards to the troubles of his own son. His inability to provide reasonable stability for his family in the midst of doing so for the rest of his community renders him powerless. He confirms this personal weakness while speaking to Paco in scene sixteen when he says, "Es muy sencillo: cuando la familia fracasa en su misión protectora, el Estado debe intervenir" (*Hamelin* 53). ["It's very simple: if the family fails to protect, then the State has to intervene" (Johnston 43)]. In Montero's case, he

fails his family in the "protectoral mission", but he also plays the role of the state. He thus loses credibility and authority in the progression of the play.

La tortuga de Darwin is a play that focuses on the abuse of power within specifically historical and scientific contexts. Mayorga utilizes these two separate but related frameworks to demonstrate yet another danger of power abuse within our society, while also including a thread of satire that maintains the play's wit and power to captivate. Instead of creating one character that epitomizes the exploitation of authority, Mayorga bestows the spectator with a trinity of abusive characters that represents three separate ways of taking advantage of one vulnerable target. This trifecta is composed of el Profesor, El Doctor, and Beti, the professor's wife. Each character embarks on an individual quest for knowledge, specifically motivated by a personal agenda, but all three are linked because they share the same target. The subject of their coercion is Harriet Robinson, a turtle once belonging to Charles Darwin, who represents the irreplaceable key to success for each of the other characters. The trinity of power-hungry players end up exerting power over Harriet all the way through the play, denying her of the small favor that she requests in return for granting them knowledge on their quests for success in each respective field. They control her time and agency through to the very last scene of the play, and even though she takes active revenge upon them all in the closing scene, she is still not granted her sole wish of returning home. El Profesor, the first to happen upon the Harriet and to render her as a valuable asset to his personal success, wants to use her as a historical reference by recording accounts of her involvement in many historically formative events, at the cost of forcing her to relive memories that are

extremely painful. El Doctor views Harriet as an opportunity to explore evolution and the possibility of creating an elixir for longevity, at the expense of harming her physically. Beti, who arrives late in the exploitation of Harriet, decides to mold her into a profit-making movie star, in an act that she describes as "Teatro científico musical" (*Tortuga* 32). ["Scientific musical theater"]. Harriet initially assumes the role of the virtuous character but eventually shifts into a more ambiguous moral space because her capacity for adaptation cannot overcome the abusive tendencies of the other characters. She resorts to murder, and attributes her actions to her "survival of the fittest" mentality. Although this is a function of her "adaptability", she still represents a defeated subject of power abuse because she does not reach her goal.

El Profesor, el Doctor, and Beti all separately devise schemes with Harriet at the crux, and they only unite over her importance in their times of weakness. Each of the three character uses the leverage of their specific careers or specialties to manipulate Harriet into producing results. El Doctor and el Profesor are the first to dispute her relevance to their respective fields, and although Beti enters the dynamic late, she catches up through the creative blackmailing of her husband. El Profesor, an arrogant and self-righteous academic, is lucky to be approached by Harriet for his historiographical skills, yet does not appreciate her significance immediately. El doctor, who appreciates her importance almost instantaneously, begins to fight for accessibility to her when she is carted to the hospital under Beti's watch. The dispute between these two characters over the use of Harriet's body and mind is outlined in the following segment of dialogue when they both bear their egotistical claws:

> **Profesor**: Usted no sabe con quién está hablando. Soy catedrático de la Facultad de Historia, miembro de la Academia de Historia y

> profesor invitado en la Universidad de Pittsburg. Harriet es mi colaboradora en un proyecto de enorme trascendencia. Le ruego que la haga volver a mi casa.
> **Doctor**: Es usted el que no sabe con quién habla. Además de director de este hospital, soy catedrático de Medicina Interna, miembro de la Academia de Ciencias y profesor invitado en la universidad de Michigan. La paciente se quedará aquí el tiempo que yo considere necesario.
> **Profesor**: Usted ignora el valor que tiene Harriet para la Historia. La memoria de Harriet es un tesoro. Harriet es… Harriet es la tortuga de Darwin. …
> **Doctor**: Una tortuga que ha adquirido la posición eréctil, el lenguaje ¡y el pensamiento! ¿Entregarle semejante archivo biológico? ¡Jamás!
> **Profesor**: Un archivo biológico, ¿eso es Harriet para usted? ¡Harriet es un archivo histórico! ¡Y es mío! ¡Mio!
> **Doctor**: ¡El secreto de la voz humana! ¡El misterio de la razón! ¡Un animal con libre albedrío! (*Tortuga* 20).
>
> [**Professor**: You don't know who you are speaking with. I am the head of the history department, a member of the Academy of History, and an honorary professor at the University of Pittsburg. Harriet is my collaborator in an enormously transcendental project. I beg of you, let her return to my house.
> **Doctor**: It is *you* who must not know with whom he speaks. Besides being the chief of this hospital, I am the head of the internal medicine department, a member of the Academy of Sciences, and an honorary professor at the University of Michigan. The patient will stay here as long as I consider it to be necessary.
> **Professor**: You are ignoring the value that Harriet has for History. Her memory is a treasure. Harriet is… Harriet is Darwin's turtle…
> **Doctor**: A turtle who has achieved the upright position, language, and thought! Turn over a biological archive to you? Never!
> **Professor**: A biological archive, that is all she is to you? She is a historical archive! And she is mine! Mine!
> **Doctor**: The secret of the human voice! The mystery of reason! An animal with free will!]

They only reach a resolution because they both expose a point of weakness in bickering like children, and thus el Profesor suggests that, "A la Medicina y a la Historia les conviene que usted y yo lleguemos a un acuerdo" (*Tortuga* 21). ["It would be in History and Medicine's best interest for us to reach some kind of agreement"]. They propose a plan to split Harriet's time equally so that they both

benefit from exploiting her. Each of these characters uses the endorsement of his or her profession to justify their behavior, even though in reality she is living in servitude to all of them. After grasping the significance of the situation with Harriet, Beti also decides to take advantage of her by pushing her unique agenda. She entices Harriet through the prospect of education and fame, as well as by reassuring her of personal safety and limited additional responsibility. She says, "…Tú vas a ser una estrella. Estoy dándole vueltas a un show… Tú no vas a tener que ocuparte de nada, yo me encargo de todo, yo soy tu representante. Te he preparado un contrato" (*Tortuga* 31). ["…You are going to be a star. I am thinking about a show…you do not need to worry about a thing, I will take care of everything; I'm your agent. I have prepared a contract for you"]. Harriet in turn becomes contractually indebted to Beti.[21] Harriet processes the true motivation of each of these characters towards the end of the play, and decides to employ some trickery of her own.[22] Harriet feigns de-evolution in order to free herself from the greedy and autocratic hands of the other characters. The trinity of manipulation responds with betrayal, and ultimately discusses killing her in order to continue to profit from her even if she is unable to produce the kind of knowledge and information that they desire. Although Harriet has the final say in this and ends up literally giving them a taste of their own medicine, they do succeed in diverting her from her principle dream of returning home to the Galapagos.

Mayorga chooses Harriet to represent the honorable yet flawed character in this play. Harriet's intentions are ingenuous at the beginning of the play when she

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[21] *Tortuga* 33
[22] *Tortuga* 37

approaches el Profesor, offering her historical services in exchange for "casi nada" (*Tortuga* 6) ["almost nothing"], a ticket home. Harriet has an extensive base of knowledge and an exceedingly practical medical relevance that are exploited for the personal advancement of the other three characters, despite her simple and ethical intentions. Throughout the entire play, she does as she is asked of by el Profesor, el Doctor, and Beti in hopes of eventually being rewarded. She discovers that she has been living with false hope for the entire time at the end of the play when,

> **Profesor**: Admítelo, Harriet: eres más persona que animal. En la isla [Galápagos], te sentirías extranjera. No voy a hacer algo que sólo podría perjudicarte.
> **Harriet**: ¿Ha sido todo un engaño? ¿Desde el principio? (*Tortuga* 37).
>
> [**Professor**: Admit it, Harriet. You are more of a person than an animal. If you go back to the Island, you will feel out of place. I am not going to do something that might only be detrimental to you.
> **Harriet**: Has this all been a trick? Since the very beginning?]

When el Profesor contradicts himself by stating that Harriet is more human than animal and subsequently takes away her personal agency, a basic human right, Harriet begins to understand the motivation behind each of her three relationships. Her response comes in the form of a complete role reversal at the very end of the play when she says,

> **Harriet**: Os habéis aprovechado de mí, queríais devorarme. Pero para comer una tortuga hay que darle la vuelta. Y la vuelta os he dado yo…
> *El Profesor, Beti, y el Doctor se retuercen hasta Morir* (*Tortuga* 40).
>
> [**Harriet**: You have all taken advantage of me, you wanted to devour me. But in order to eat a turtle you have to turn it around. But I have taken you all and spun you around…
> *The Professor, Beti, and the Doctor contort and twist until they die.*]

Ultimately, Harriet is pushed to commit murder in order to survive, thus revealing the flaw in her morality. Harriet, despite having upheld her promise to each of the three

other characters throughout the production, is forced to "adapt" in order to survive. Even though she does survive, she does not succeed because she does not receive a ticket home, and she resorts to murder as a final solution.

Mayorga illustrates the importance of the personal quest for knowledge through character development within his work as it exists within the power and knowledge relationship. This quest takes form in a variety of ways and occupies social, historical, and political spaces. The personal quest is ultimately crucial in an individual character's growth in knowledge and power. Through the different quests for knowledge, Mayorga deconstructs the social conception of intrinsic good versus evil by complicating the definitions of each as demonstrated by individuals. By using the spheres of space and history, Mayorga's characters establish and reinforce the connection between knowledge and power. Each personal quest for success, knowledge, or authority strengthens this link and reveals the applicability of such quests to the general understanding of societal function.

Conclusion: The Complexity of Knowledge as it relates to power

Mayorga develops an elaborate web of interconnected levels of interaction in his work that demonstrates the risks involved with knowledge and its possession. As the levels progress, he specifies distinct interpersonal relationships as the most specific site from which to observe the dynamics involved in power abuse. These dynamics evolve from historical knowledge as it influences the particular use of space. Such historical influences derive from the principles of general knowledge that Mayorga deems necessary in the relationship between knowledge and power, thus acting as a tool that is used to understand authority and control in his work. By examining the interactions that take place within this network, we as spectators are able to comprehend the potential for negative consequences as a result of the knowledge and power relationship. Once this relationship enters the negative end of the spectrum through the manipulation of an individual or group, it remains detrimental until a party with greater authority intervenes. This becomes problematic in Mayorga's model because he does not explicitly present an example of a higher or more knowledgeable authority intervening in order to check the power of one of the more tyrannical characters in his work. In fact, Mayorga's model defines only half of the spectrum of power and knowledge relationships. He employs the predominantly negative portion of the relationship between power and knowledge and by doing so demonstrates the threat of potential despotism involved.

Mayorga asks an important question through the representation of character development throughout his work. His power-abusing characters, although represented with fates of seemingly varying achievement, do in fact succeed over

their subjects, despite the malicious intent that is usually involved in the process. The characters that represent the subject side of the relationship, those whom also frequently represent the moral decision making skills and positive actions, are repeatedly left alone or stripped of their agency. In this dynamic, Mayorga poses an important question: If society exists in such a way that those who do *not* abuse power in turn also do not succeed, how does one overcome the tendency to control and rule in order to both succeed *and* be good? Mayorga believes that through the inoculation of society with contextual and historical knowledge, cross-cultural populations can learn from the mishaps and mistakes of the past for the benefit of the future. This simultaneously provides a poignant justice to victims of power abuse in the past.[23]

The important downfall of Mayorga's characters that assume power through the abuse of knowledge is that such knowledge is extremely limited. These characters, even though they have demonstrated relative success through their manipulative methodologies, ultimately still exhibit constraints in the scope of their knowledge as well as in the scope of their power. By creating a system where, successful or not, each character becomes a victim of these extensive limitations on knowledge, Mayorga demonstrates that the only way to productively engage in knowledge is to understand its potential for power and to use it for constructive action, or in other words to understand the full spectrum of the power and knowledge relationship.

Within the dichotomy that divides positive and negative knowledge consumption is the issue of identity formation that occurs under the pressure of an

[23] "Historiador" 141-149

authority or control. Identity formation for an individual, which is intrinsically connected to memory formation, can be affected by the way one is subjected to someone else's abuse of power. This is demonstrated through Mayorga's character development and his deliberate use of identity as an element of a person that can be taken away once control is exerted upon them. The most basic elements of identity that are affected by power dynamics are logically the two characteristics that define the power relationship: power and weakness. Typically in Mayorga's work, when one character is identified as the powerful one, his or her counterpart is assigned the identifying characteristic of weakness. Even if their roles switch, it seems as if only one character at a time can occupy the space of being either powerful or weak in any given direct relationship. The next element of identity that this relationship of control and dominion affects is the level of characteristic hypocrisy within a person. In many of Mayorga's plays, the character that is defined as weak in the power dynamic ultimately ends the play by acting upon emotions or standards that are hypocritical to those which with they began the play.[24] This character is typically worn down upon by continuous despotism in many different forms throughout the play. Weakness therefore is not typically a chosen quality by Mayorga's characters; it is predominantly designated after the other party in the power relationship has assumed the dominant role. The issue of hypocrisy also helps to define a character's identity in the struggle to understand his or her personal ethos, in that many characters are faced with cognitive dissonance when they are obliged to make an insincere decision in

[24] *El sueño de Ginebra*, *Cartas de amor a Stalin*, *El Gordo y el Flaco*, *Animales Nocturnos*, *La paz perpetua*, and *La tortuga de Darwin*

order to escape from the power dynamic that they are subjected to.[25] In these discussed ways, Mayorga highlights the importance of personal identity as it relates to power and knowledge. He thus stresses the point that the abuse of power pervades the personal sector as much as the general societal sphere, if not more.

The identity of each of his characters is used to demonstrate a manifestation of the impact that the abusive power dynamic between knowledge and control can have on a level of individual freedom. In this discussion of identity, Mayorga outlines a framework with which to observe and understand the past and its current impact in order to redefine the impact that it has on the future. The way that Mayorga envisions doing this is by understanding the problematic aspects of the relationship between knowledge and power and then setting out to change them. Thus by examining only one segment on the scale of the interconnectedness between knowledge and power, he establishes a main focus of his artistic message. The concept that he conveys through this dialogue is that knowledge is innately a very powerful thing, and that a true understanding of this power by spectators and the rest of society alike will aid in the construction of a more progressive and engaged world.

As a playwright, Mayorga accesses a unique population of self-selecting spectators, establishing an even more dimensional sphere of interaction. A theatrical spectator exists with a certain level of inherent willingness to receive information, and thus acts as a particularly productive mode of knowledge reception and transmission. Mayorga's theatrical and personal philosophies therefore have the ability to directly reach a substantial audience, and consequentially his work increases

[25] La mujer in *El sueño de Ginebra*, Bulgákova in *Cartas de amor a Stalin*, La Alta in *Animales Nocturnos*, and Harriet in *La tortuga de Darwin*

in value from the perspective of an educational tool. He is able to demonstrate structures of authority in socially applicable ways to specifically invested individuals.

Juan Mayorga establishes a clear and very commanding tension between knowledge and power in his theater. Mayorga undoubtedly highly values knowledge, as it is a central focus in his work, but he also bases it within a negatively connoted framework. Knowledge, conversely to the way that Juan Mayorga presents it in the eleven plays included in this analysis, can provide a unique kind of liberation in understanding that opens up universal accessibility. The widely accepted social importance of education proves this point, and demonstrates that through a concerted effort towards attaining knowledge, one can succeed and prosper in most facets of life. Mayorga therefore presents the model of power abuse through the operation of knowledge in order to prepare and fortify his spectators. He reminds them that knowledge can be, and has been, used for large-scale personal gain in the past, and that with the possession of knowledge comes the responsibility to put it into perspective and use it conscientiously. This contextualization consists of being wary of ones own use of power and privilege that comes with it. Mayorga and his theatrical work provide a great example of how to use such powerful knowledge in a productive and positive way by demonstrating great artistic expression. Through his theater, he provides a type of educational warning system that prevents society from repeating grave and egregious offenses of power abuse as a result of the possession of knowledge. Increasing awareness and placing these issues into the consciousness of his spectators will result in a positive increase in society's application of knowledge.

Mayorga presents his spectators with a very complex understanding of what knowledge is and how one attains it, especially within the context of theater. Recipients of theatrical knowledge range from the performing participants to the observing spectators, and thus the kind of knowledge produced through theater must be able to traverse and access a wide spectrum of individuals. As Mayorga demonstrates, it is through this variety of interaction and the interpretation involved that theatrical knowledge gains its importance and potential. Mayorga understands theater to be a unique forum that handles the dissemination of knowledge in a comprehensive way, thus electing it as his chosen form of expression. It is the exceptional combination of the particularities of theater and the importance of the past that defines Mayorga's work and allows it to be such a successful vehicle for the transmission of his message.

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