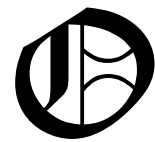


Constructing an Experience of Loss: Memory and Mapping in Juan Mayorga's *El cartógrafo (Varsovia 1:400.000)*

Jerelyn Johnson
Fairfield University

Abstract: Spanish playwright Juan Mayorga constructs an experience of loss by representing historical and personal spaces of memory in his play *El cartógrafo*. The character Blanca tries to confront her own losses as she maps both the disappearing traces of the Warsaw Ghetto and the trauma of her own body. Through an analysis of Mayorga's poetics and Blanca's embodiment of those poetics, this article argues that *El cartógrafo* functions much like a memorial site by eschewing static, monumental representations of history.

Key Words: Juan Mayorga – Memory – *El cartógrafo* – Mapping – Holocaust.



One of the more thought-provoking playwrights working on questions of historical trauma today is Spanish playwright Juan Mayorga (Madrid, 1965). In scores of plays over the last three decades, he has returned to difficult, undigested historical and social subjects like the Spanish Civil War (*El jardín quemado*), the Holocaust (*Himmelweg/Camino del cielo*), the so-called war on terror (*La paz perpetua*), the injustices and concealed societal malice faced by the undocumented (*Animales nocturnos*), and more. He continually wrestles with the weight of the historically unspeakable, and the technical and aesthetic challenge of creating an experience for his audiences that might constitute an authentic confrontation with history, and, in particular, with the traumas around which the narratives of history have been woven at the expense of the nameless.

In his play *El cartógrafo (Varsovia 1:400.000)* Mayorga returns to the Holocaust and, more precisely, the Warsaw Ghetto and its erasure by the Nazis.¹ He provides the audience with a drama of remembrance of what has been erased, and an encounter with what is present but unspoken, both within the characters themselves and the history that they, and we, have inherited. Mayorga wants us to remember history, but it is more than

¹ First published in 2010, the play premiered on November 11, 2016, at the Teatro Calderón de Valladolid, Spain. Mayorga himself directed the production that starred Blanca Portillo and José Luis García-Pérez.

that: He wants us to realize that there is little separation between ourselves and those who lived before us, that we consider ourselves contemporaries, so as to keep us vigilant in order to prepare for and prevent similar injustices. Through an encounter with his plays, he expects to destabilize the easy assumption that we are insulated from the destructive forces that came before us.

At the same time, Mayorga would agree that we cannot learn from the past when it comes to state-sponsored terror, because that notion “has been so violently disproved”, as cultural critic Andreas Huyssen writes (7). Instead, Mayorga posits that we need to recognize the past as a continual, living concern in the present. In order to effectuate this recognition, Mayorga takes an antimemorialist approach to the stories of history. That is, as Huyssen has explained, in order to work against certain politics of forgetting, artists in the public sphere have moved away from remembering the past via a monumental expression that would signify, contain, perhaps glorify, and stand for a moment of historical significance (15). Instead, these memory sites point to what cannot be articulated, what is lost, traumatic, wounded, and unresolved. They are a reminder of a shameful national past, not a mythical glorified foundation. Mayorga’s work and poetics are akin to such memory sites rather than a representational narrative that presumes to represent and speak for the past. As we will see later in this essay, a memory site tends to be preserved in the geography just as it is, with little fanfare or adornment—a kind of noted absence that says, in effect, something is missing, and it used to be here. Mayorga constructs an experience of loss much in the same way that a memory site pays homage by expressing an absence, through suggestion and movement, rather than statement. This essay will show how Mayorga crafts this experience through an analysis of his poetics; the non-linear narrative structure of *El cartógrafo*; and the embodiment of those poetics by Blanca, a character in the play.

Set in Warsaw both in the present-day and in 1943, *El cartógrafo* centers around Blanca, the mournful wife of a Spanish diplomat recently transferred to the city. In her exploration of the city’s streets, Blanca stumbles upon an exhibition of photos from the Warsaw Ghetto in an old synagogue and there she hears the legend of a mapmaker of the Ghetto, who, along with his granddaughter, is said to have created a map meant to preserve the memory of Jewish life in the days and weeks prior to the Ghetto’s liquidation. Intrigued, Blanca investigates further—seeking confirmation of the existence of the map, the mapmaker, and his granddaughter. In the process she finds herself beginning to map her own, personal trauma, the source of which the audience will eventually become aware. The traumatic, now unseen and erased, past of the Ghetto is brought into relation and amplified—rearticulated—in Blanca’s personal traumatic present.

Two other parallel storylines continue along with Blanca’s exploration: In one, set during the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, an elderly mapmaker (referred to simply as “Anciano” within the play) and his granddaughter (“Niña”) struggle to finish a map of the life of the Ghetto in its final days as he gives her lessons on cartography, specifically on the critical importance of knowing what to include and what to exclude in the making

of a map. In the other storyline, Deborah, a mapmaker who lived in the Ghetto as a child, navigates through the complicated history of Poland at various moments in time: 1968, 1981, and 1992, as she is repeatedly persecuted by the Polish communist regime that controls her work. Deborah's scenes arise in a seemingly unrelated sequence, punctuating the other two storylines, although belonging to neither time period. The play alternates scenes between Blanca in the present, Deborah in post-war Warsaw, and the mapmakers of the Ghetto, and each of these different storylines progress chronologically within their own historical time frame but interrupt and overlap each other in the progression of the play. Ultimately, these multiple storylines and time periods culminate at the end of the play in a present-day conversation between Blanca and Deborah, now an elderly woman who resides in Warsaw and continues to make maps. Blanca has tracked down Deborah, hoping she is the same granddaughter of the legend who might have knowledge of the map. Frustratingly, Deborah denies both, and the play ends without a clear indication of whether the map, the mapmaker, or the granddaughter ever existed.² The play itself then, is a kind of map: It maps experiences of loss by showing the audience certain points of significance within the three overlapping narratives, making the vital connection between the historical and the personal through the depicted suffering of Mayorga's characters.

The role and centrality of maps in this play is significant in terms of Mayorga's poetics. He has often commented on the debt to cartography in his work in general, as seen here in an interview about his production of *El cartógrafo*:

La cartografía es una ciencia que me permite establecer una correspondencia con el teatro y plantear algo que ya he dicho muchas veces: que, como los mapas, ninguna obra es neutral, está hecha a base de datos seleccionados en función de una idea y, por tanto, está constituida por preguntas morales y políticas (Romo).

Like a map, Mayorga's plays are constructed through a process that selects points of significance, weighted and chosen, that constellate to create a matrix of meaning. Privileging particular moments over others, the play works toward an idea, and as such is rife with moral and political questions, just as is a map. Furthermore, Mayorga utilizes the metaphor of the map more specifically to articulate his use of history. In his essay "Mi teatro histórico" he considers his treatment of the past to be a map for the audience:

El pasado se me aparece como un espacio imprevisible del que quisiera hacer . . . no calcos sino mapas. No pretendo reconstruir el pasado *tal como fue*—objetivo, a mi juicio, ilusorio, y que en todo

² This essay's focus is primarily on the character of Blanca as conduit to the audience's experience. The mapping scenes between the Anciano and the Niña present another rich area of analysis that is beyond the scope of this essay. For more on the old mapmaker's meditations on cartography, see Martin Lugo among others.

caso desborda mi capacidad—, sino hacer de él mapas que destaquen puntos, líneas, accidentes relevantes para el hombre contemporáneo y quizás para el hombre futuro (317, my emphasis).

So Mayorga does not strive to make plays that are realistic presentations of the past or carbon copies of that space. Instead, his plays are maps for the spectator to interpret. He underscores the opacity inherent in maps and all attempts to mimetically represent a certain historical space and time.

We can further distinguish what it is about maps that illustrate Mayorga's poetics if we consider maps as a form of non-linear communication. The cultural cartographer Denis Cosgrove argues that maps free "the reader from both the controlling linearity of narrative description and the confining perspective of photographic or painted images" (2). Where Cosgrove places in opposition the poetics of a map and those of linear narrative and realist images, Mayorga does the same between his poetics of historical theater and those of naturalist, linear representations of history in theater. There is a liberating experience being a reader of a map or a spectator of Mayorga's plays: in both their spaces of representation are mere "mapas que destaquen puntos, líneas, accidentes relevantes", that the spectator must interpret to come to some understanding of the work before them. This is particularly true when the subject matter revolves around a traumatic past such as the Holocaust, as in *El cartógrafo*. That is, Mayorga does not opt for a replica of the past, or an exact naturalist representation of events of the Holocaust, that "linearity of narrative description", nor does he believe that his theater should speak for the victims of the Holocaust or present some photographic realist representation of what happened. While arguing that theater about the memory of the Holocaust is necessary because it strengthens our vigilance of and resistance to "la barbarie contemporánea", he recognizes that it needs to be handled with care (Aznar Solar 46). As he asks, "¿cómo representar aquello que parece tener una opacidad insuperable? ¿Cómo comunicar aquello que parece incomprendible? ¿Cómo recuperar aquello que debería ser irrepetible?" ("La representación" 170). Mayorga's answer is that the theater about the Holocaust needs to "construir una experiencia de la pérdida; no saldar simbólicamente la deuda, sino recordar que la deuda nunca será saldada; no hablar por la víctima, sino hacer que resuene su silencio" (171). We are not the witnesses to the past event, we should not pretend that it happened to *us*, nor can the theater simply update the past event given only that which is recognizable about it today. The theater should not succumb to these facile temptations. Instead, Mayorga posits a third relationship between the present and the past in his theater, seen here clarified and quoted by Cristina Oñoro Otero:

aquella que niega tanto la imposible objetividad del testigo como la mirada colonial actualizadora. Ésta consistiría en 'construir una cita entre el presente y el pasado en que ambos mutuamente se desestabilicen,

haciendo que el presente vea el pasado como no lo había visto y se vea a sí mismo como no se había visto' (*Elipses*, 104) (82).

This destabilizing appointment between the present and the past within the play mirrors the destabilization between the play and the spectator.

Mayorga's aim for a destabilizing experience is heavily influenced by Walter Benjamin, whose theories of historical construction and progress are reflected in Mayorga's conception of historical reconstruction and repetition; as well as his choices regarding plot, structure, and time frame in many of his plays.³ In "Theses on the Philosophy of History" Benjamin claims: "[t]o articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was' (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger" (263, my emphasis). As is the case for Mayorga, it is not a question of reconstructing the past "tal como fue" but, instead, one of holding on to these flashes of memory, or these "puntos, líneas, accidentes" during your present. That is, "[h]istory is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now [*Jetztzeit*]" (Benjamin, 263). One cannot experience history without also including the now. In Mayorga's plays, we see these flashes of the past through these confrontations with something in the present.

Alberto Sucasas in "Cartografía teatral," his companion essay to the 2017 publication of *El cartógrafo*, speaks of this reciprocal contamination between the past and the present that Blanca and the spectator both experience: "la pretensión última de este teatro no es otra que permitir a la historia morder sobre el presente movilizándolo la conciencia del espectador. Así, pasado y presente, en su desasosiego dialéctico, franquean el acceso a una dimensión de futuro" (126–127). Mayorga has often admitted that his intention for his historical plays is to serve as the catalyst for our vigilance against current and future injustices: "Sucede que – y aquí estoy hablando como discípulo de Walter Benjamin y de Reyes Mate— cada hora puede ser aquella que, como un relámpago, dé a ver algo que hasta entonces – cuando todavía no podíamos situarnos en esa posición – era invisible. El teatro debería parecerse a ese relámpago" ("Cartografía" 334). By bringing the past in to the now by creating a lightning bolt of awareness, Mayorga would argue, we are working against current and future forms of subjugation and oppression.

In *El cartógrafo*, Mayorga presents a story of an event in the past having a flash of its trauma in the present through the character of Blanca. The play opens with Blanca disclosing her sudden realization that nothing remains of the Ghetto in present-day Warsaw, save for a couple of monuments and a museum on Jewish history. The places

³ Mayorga received a PhD in Philosophy in 1997, having written his dissertation on the historical philosophy of Walter Benjamin. He then published his dissertation in 2003 with the Editorial Antropos: *Revolución conservadora y conservación revolucionaria: Política y memoria en Walter Benjamin*. An in-depth analysis of Benjamin's influence in Mayorga's drama exceeds the scope of this article. For more on Benjamin's influence, see Peral Vega, Molanes Rial, and Martín Lago, among others.

represented in the photos of that exhibition no longer exist, no traces remain. She is sympathetic to this erasure because she herself is recovering from an erasure of a different sort. As she walks around the city pursuing evidence of the historical trauma that is all but hidden, Blanca begins to more deeply confront the personal trauma of her daughter's recent suicide, a traumatic wound that she experiences somatically – it is something she feels, not something she speaks of directly initially, and so it is a trauma for which she is unknowingly seeking a non-verbal marker or representation. Blanca is moving within her own personal moment of danger, or trauma, when “experimenta ahora el efecto traumático de un shock temporal, histórico” (Sucasas 126). It is the shock of the Warsaw Ghetto's apparent erasure after Blanca's interest had been piqued by the photographs of the Ghetto she witnessed at the exhibition. Subsequently, she is disturbed when she suddenly becomes aware that there are few visible demarcations left of the Ghetto in Warsaw itself. As she reveals to her husband Raúl: “No queda nada de lo que salía en la foto. Luego fui aquí. Nada” (14); and then “No es sólo la gente lo que falta” (16).⁴ Likewise, Benjamin was concerned with the disappearance of the past: “[f]or every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably” (“Theses” 257).

Determined to redress the threat of that irretrievable disappearance, Blanca decides to create a new map of current-day Warsaw, on which she would draw the outline of the Ghetto, along with its successive reductions through the time of its existence. She also wants to paint the boundaries of the Ghetto on to the actual streets of Warsaw. Blanca attempts to explain to Raúl:

Blanca: Una idea que he tenido. Mira.

Raúl: ¿Por qué dos colores? Esa mancha blanca.

Blanca: La sombra del gueto.

Raúl: ¿?

Blanca: El espacio que ocupó. Las líneas de puntos son las sucesivas reducciones.

Raúl: ¿Un mapa para turistas tristes? “Visite Varsovia. Un viaje a la depresión”.

Blanca: Un mapa para los que viven aquí. Es parte de la ciudad.

Raúl: ¿Qué ha dicho el concejal?

Blanca: Me ha hablado de ese museo sobre la historia de los judíos polacos, y de los monumentos. Pero no se trata de museos ni de monumentos. Le he contado una idea que he tenido esta mañana, caminando por allí.

⁴ I will cite the most recently published version, from *La uña RoTa*, published in 2017, even though Juan Mayorga has revised the play both after staging it in Barcelona in July 2019, and then again in June 2021. He is notorious for the constant revision of his plays; he does not regard them as fixed monuments.

Raúl: ¿Otra?

Blanca: Marcar en el suelo el gueto (32–3).

In this scene, by being compelled to both make her own map and draw the outline of the Ghetto on to the streets, making it unavoidable to passers-by, Blanca embodies something that Mayorga claims about his theater: that, just like a map, he puts “ante la ciudad lo que la ciudad no quiere ver... aquello que la ciudad quiere expulsar del territorio y el mapa” (“Cartografía” 327). His historical theater in general, and Blanca’s map or outline of the Ghetto on to the streets of Warsaw in particular, places the previously ignored or forgotten before the eyes of the spectator/citizen. Mayorga and Blanca’s cartography are a “cartografía crítica que reivindica la mirada del vencido” (Sucasas 117). Moreover, in contrast to static museums and monuments (“no se trata de museos ni de monumentos”), Blanca seems to privilege the interactive, immediate experience of the Ghetto outline to be painted onto the streets of Warsaw. Such an outline or map would bring the past in to the present through a type of bodily experience rather than a simple detached viewing. In this way, Blanca’s outline will serve as an interactive commemorative site that forces the spectator to engage with it as thought-provoking bodily encounters.

Returning now to Andreas Huyssen and his book *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*, we can see that his differentiation between engaging commemorative sites and stagnant monuments can also be seen in terms of their effect on traumatic memory: “the power of a commemorative site to keep the story alive as opposed to entombing it in the realm of the unspoken, of a past that is made to disappear once again” (101). The past is made to disappear once again with static monuments because they are set apart from urban experiences and tend to become invisible to the residents of the city: “the more monuments there are, the more the past becomes invisible, and the easier it is to forget: redemption, thus, through forgetting” (32). By contrast, in commemorative sites such as Blanca’s maps of the ghetto, the spectator is not passive, observing from a distance, or viewing a museum exhibit carefully laid out, everything preserved. Instead, the spectator must physically interact with the memory site to understand its significance. Among several of Huyssen’s examples, Buenos Aires’ Parque de la Memoria and its Monument to the Victims of State Terror is a useful commemorative site to consider here. To honor the victims of Argentina’s Dirty War, the Monument to the Victims of State Terror’s design is “like a wound or scar that runs the full diameter of the half circle in zigzag formation from the straight line of one walkway toward another...” (103). Visitors are made to walk through the monument, along the walls that contain thirty-thousand name plaques, some empty to represent the nameless, and they finish this walk at the banks of La Plata River, which served as the graveyard for thousands of the *desaparecidos*. In a similar way, Blanca’s paper map showing the successive reductions of the Ghetto, as well as her map painted on to the streets of Warsaw will serve as memory sites precisely because they involve a bodily, walking, interaction.

These specific examples of memory sites, in Buenos Aires and in Blanca's Warsaw, are reflections of Mayorga's poetics. Just as Blanca rejects the museum and the monument, Mayorga likewise expressed his dissatisfaction for a type of historical theater "museístico que muestra el pasado en vitrinas; enjaulado, incapaz de saltar sobre nosotros, definitivamente conquistador y clausurado" ("El dramaturgo" 182). Instead, as mentioned briefly at the beginning of this essay, he opts for another type of theater, one that shows the past as a time that threatens the security of our present (182). Moreover, Mayorga even rejects the concept of his own plays as being fixed monuments; they are evolving structures that he alters after performances and input from audiences, actors, directors, and readers. Huyssen further argues that many of these memory sites, such as Blanca's outline, are

interventions in urban space. This is only natural because cities remain the main battleground on which societies articulate their sense of time past and time present Cities, after all, are palimpsests of history, incarnations of time in stone, sites of memory extending both in time and space. (101)

These commemorative sites are not an exaltation of the past but instead function as "a residue and reminder of a shameful and violent national past" (101). It is this residue that works to destabilize the viewer.

The way to experience the residue of that shameful past is via the physical interaction with the site, and it is the positioning of ourselves within the site that forces the confrontation between the past and the now. Because we need to actively walk through these sites, our bodies serve as the conduit to this awareness of past trauma. In this way, Blanca is now experiencing an emplacement of self within the traumatic history of the Ghetto, which then triggers her own reminders and residues of a traumatic past. That is, parallel to her mindfulness of the paucity of material traces of the trauma of the Ghetto, Blanca is coming to terms with a past trauma of her own. As she starts to plot the outline of the Ghetto on to a map of Warsaw and then even on to its streets, Blanca finds a way to map her own past trauma on to her body by tracing her silhouette on to the floor and recognizing places on her body that correspond to her memories:

Blanca: ¿Me ayudas?

Raúl: ¿Qué quieres que haga?

Blanca: Voy a tenderme ahí. Desnuda. Quiero que dibujes mi silueta. Sin tocarme. No me toques, por favor.

Raúl: ... ¿Qué vas a hacer con eso?

Blanca: Un mapa (88).

The two antimonumentalist projects – mapping the ghetto and mapping her body – are not as disconnected as they may seem. One way to connect the two is to remember that mapping has a direct relationship with the bodily experience of walking, which also has a connection to memory. On a most literal level within the play, we see the Niña using her steps to measure distances for her map, when Anciano tells her: “Coge el metro... Ponte ahí y da un paso... Un paso normal... Mide de pie a pie... Anótalo... Lo primero que vamos a dibujar es el perímetro. Vas a caminar por calles paralelas al muro contando tus pasos” (29). What follows in the next scene is one of the few, simple stage directions in the play: “*Blanca camina siguiendo el mapa. La Niña camina contando sus pasos*” (30). Seeing both characters walking on stage, using their bodies to navigate the city either with a map or in the process of mapping, links them both to this bodily experience, and to each other. Mayorga has stressed the importance of the physical presence of an actor on the stage inhabiting a character from the past because this corporeal representation of history makes it so we are no longer tangibly separated from those of the past: “Todos los seres humanos – también los Muertos – son contemporáneos. Así nos lo hace ver el actor cuando da su cuerpo a un hombre del pasado. El teatro nos reúne más allá de las horas del mundo” (“Razón del teatro” 104). Blanca is an embodiment of Mayorga’s poetics regarding this antimonumentalist approach to remembrance.

Furthermore, as Rebecca Solnit reminds us, walking is a corporeal experience which encourages “unstructured, associative thinking” (29). As Blanca walks around Warsaw, she cannot avoid associating her own body to that of the Niña’s, and in turn, to traumatic memory. We as readers, and particularly as spectators who have the visual advantage, similarly cannot disassociate Blanca from the Niña having seen them together, both walking through Warsaw, mapping the trauma. That is, “[w]alking shares with making and working that crucial element of engagement with the body and the mind with the world, of knowing the world through the body and the body through the world” (Solnit 29).

Another explanation for the transition to Blanca’s body mapping from her other mapping projects is that there exists a correspondence between the map of the city and her own body because we experience an emplacement of the self when we use a map, or a locating of ourselves within a particular place, spatial or temporal. When we engage with a map, a two-dimensional representation of a three-dimensional space, it invites us to move our three-dimensional bodies through the space represented on the map such that our corporeality is existing in a correlative state with the city. In Blanca’s case, while in the midst of her own grief, she started a quest to learn more about the legend of the old mapmaker and the map, that frantic work of futile anchoring of a place soon to disappear. As she roams around Warsaw, she imagines her daughter Alba’s last walk through the streets of London on the morning of her suicide. Blanca as *flâneuse*, while walking and discerning, is making the connection between observing the world around her and observing her own history and body. While marking sites of trauma on to the city of Warsaw, she marks her own trauma on her body:

Blanca: ... Tengo que hacer el mapa. Miras tu cuerpo y aparecen cosas. Personas, animales, palabras. Colores, sonidos, fechas. Lugares. Madrid. Varsovia. Londres. Cosas separadas aparecen juntas. Cosas olvidadas vuelven. Tú cuando te conocí. Alba el día que nació. Alba el primer día de colegio.

Raúl: Blanca...

Blanca: Alba caminando sola por Londres.

Raúl: Blanca...

Blanca: ¿Por qué nunca hablamos de ella?

Raúl: Porque nos hace daño hablar de ella (88–89).

It is through the mapping of her body that she is able to speak of her daughter again. Together with Blanca's fixation on locating the mapmaker's map and her parallel desire to recreate the map of the Warsaw Ghetto on to the physical streets of current-day Warsaw, Blanca's past will be written on her body, her silhouette on the floor of the house, the points and references of her past and her trauma, recorded, mapped, as it were, on the city, town, community that is her body, which exists in this current place, time, and space. As Rebecca Solnit claims, "[m]emory, like the mind and time, is unimaginable without physical dimensions" (77). Blanca is acknowledging the trauma of Alba's death on her body. She is reliving it, remembering – that is, bringing the memory of the past event around again and transcribing it to the space of her body. Alba's suicide did not occur on or even near Blanca's body, but the trauma of it, the memory of it, is permanently fixed on to this other physical space, her body. The past traumatic event has been recorded somatically. Just as the city is its history, so is her body her memory. The map, her body, this play: they are all representations and incarnations, as it were, of past events. As the ghetto existed, so did Alba; as the lingering memory of the ghetto persists in Warsaw, so does the memory of Alba in the relationship between Blanca and Raúl. No matter where he takes Blanca, she will not forget, it still haunts her, still connected to her body and she cannot separate from her body: she literally embodies her memory.⁵

The ability to express or communicate a trauma through the body or physical symptoms has been widely studied within psychotherapy. Mainly due to the nature of traumatic memory and the inability in some cases for individuals to recollect the traumatic event in a temporal sequence, these memories often present themselves as fragments, manifesting their trace memories somatically, especially within Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): "although memory is ordinarily an active and constructive process, in

⁵ Mayorga says that he was inspired by his work with Sarah Kane in London, whereby she insisted that her students trace their silhouettes on to the stage and then map their experiences on to them because "Viajar por el propio cuerpo—por su memoria, por sus deseos, por sus miedos...; ése es el primer trabajo de documentación que el escritor de teatro debe hacer. Todo lo demás vendrá por sí solo, necesariamente. El cuerpo convocará imágenes, objetos, acciones..." ("Mi recuerdo" 292).

PTSD failure of declarative memory may lead to organization of the trauma on a somatosensory level” (Crawford 707). That is, above and beyond the inability to remember in a linear sequence of events, “[t]he event is then recollected in a fragmented way as predominantly bodily or sensory ‘memory’” (Crawford 707). Additionally, as Bessel van der Kolk in *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* reminds us: “trauma is not just an event that took place sometime in the past; it is also the imprint left by that experience on the mind, brain, and body” (21).

One therapeutic technique specifically aimed at focusing on the body, memories, and narrative is body mapping. According to therapist Allison Crawford, body mapping is when psychotherapists engage in an experience with their patients that starts with the tracing of the outline of the patient’s body (711). The patient then responds to certain prompts with words, symbols, or any other markings on the outline, much like the things, people, animals, words, colors, sounds, and dates to which Blanca refers. Those, in turn, create “a ‘map’ of experience within the body” (711). Patients are then given the opportunity “to narrate their body maps to the therapist, translating the maps into words, and into the process of guiding others to navigate their maps and sharing the experiences of the body” (711). Again, trauma is not recollected in a clear narrative linearity, but scrambled much as the past, in a Benjaminian sense, is not a simple progression toward a today, but consists of unavoidable irruptions in to the now, or disruptions in to our present. A way to bring past trauma into the present is to remember it, to bring forth, which allows you to realize that it still concerns you in the here/now, it still exists. Throughout this process, “body mapping results in a narrative account of experience, in this case of traumatic experience” (Crawford 714). This does not go far enough in some cases, because the telling of the story does not necessarily alter the automatic physical responses of the body (van der Kolk 21). But what it does do is begin the awareness of the traumatic memory. Similarly, Blanca’s body mapping helps her to provide some form of narrative account of the trauma of Alba’s suicide.

Blanca’s body mapping project and its relationship to her ghetto map project are illustrated quite clearly on the cover to the 2017 edition of the play. The artist Daniel Montero Galán, Mayorga’s collaborator on all cover illustrations of his editions with the publishing house La uÑa RoTa, visually embodies, as it were, the intersection of Blanca’s mapping projects:

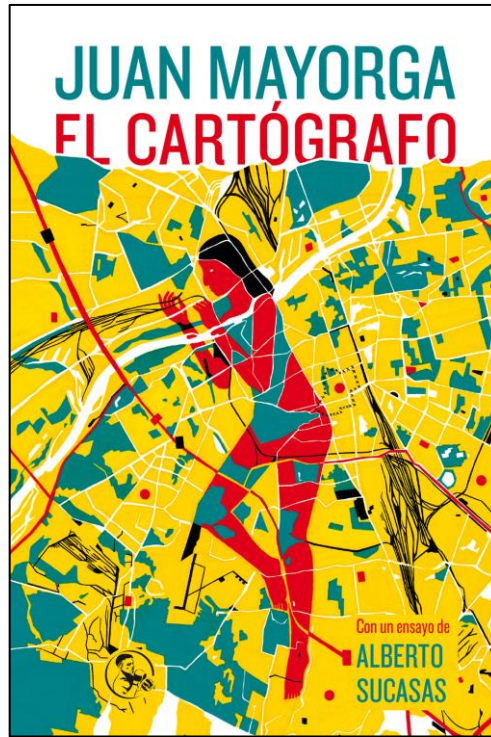


Fig. 1. Daniel Montero Galán, *El cartógrafo*, 2017.

Here we see the silhouette of a woman superimposed on to a map of Warsaw, echoing Blanca's project to draw the outline of the Ghetto on to the city. This visual connection between Blanca and the Ghetto is a pictorial emplacement of self. Just as seeing the material traces or residue of the Ghetto on the streets of present-day Warsaw would destabilize the pedestrian and encourage discussion, memory, and concern about what happened there, tracing Blanca's body enables her and Raúl to talk about their trauma, about Alba, and about her suicide.

Early in the play Raúl observes that Blanca does not seem herself, that he thought leaving London—where they resided prior to Warsaw—would help her, suggesting she go back to Madrid where there are people who care for her. But Blanca insists she needs to stay and finish the map because doing so allows her to then narrate what she imagined happened on the morning of Alba's death. Raúl asks: “¿Me dejas ver cómo lo haces? Deja que me quede, por favor” (89). Blanca then proceeds to narrate Alba's movements that morning, starting with “[s]u habitación vacía. A las cinco todavía está aquí, yo entro en su cuarto a las cinco, tiene los ojos cerrados pero no duerme, ahora sé que no duerme...” (89). She imagines how the rest unfurled, where she went, how she chose her path, and how Alba's journey ends: “aquí nadie va a molestarla, entre los columpios, no hay nadie en el parque, tiene frío, ese perro no va a molestarla, perro sin dueño entre los columpios, lo último que ve es ese perro sin dueño, cierra los ojos, por fin está en paz, por fin sonrío”

(90–91). This tracing is a form of therapy that at first Raúl fails to understand. Nonetheless, he listens to her, learns from her, and then requests, at the end of the play, to join her by making a body map of his own:

Blanca: ¿No vas a la embajada?

Raúl: ¿Me ayudas?

Blanca: ¿En qué puedo ayudarte yo?

Raúl: Voy a tenderme ahí. Desnudo. Quiero que dibujes mi silueta (103).

The mapping of Blanca's body enables them to discuss Alba, a project that Raúl now embraces. They have brought their past in to the now, the "body into the therapeutic arena" (Crawford 715). We are left with the hope that they can begin to heal together.

The past inhabits the present to varying degrees in our memories, bodies, and cities. In the case of Mayorga's Warsaw, the three different collections of historical moments that appear on the stage at various scenes in the play coalesce and seem to somehow unknowingly engage with each other in the same scene through the following stage direction: "*Blanca, la Niña y Deborah caminando*" (45). Similar to the earlier mentioned stage direction, these women are all walking together in the space that is Warsaw, even though they exist in different historical periods, thus representing kinetically and visually the interconnectedness between the past and the present. Like Huyssen's urban palimpsests, the temporal and spatial strata of Warsaw here in the play function just as "mapping digs through the various layers of the city's memory and puts them in dialogue with each other" (Molinescu 249).

El cartógrafo represents both the historical and the personal spaces of memory through Blanca's quest to come to terms with her trauma, and the trauma of the Ghetto. This space of memory, this play, this body, this city, this map, all coexist together in a certain cartography of loss. During the conversation between Blanca and Deborah in the penultimate scene of the play, Blanca tells her: "He visto tu libro, *Cartografía de la ausencia: mapa del exilio republicano español, mapa de la limpieza étnica en Yugoslavia... Una cartografía de la desaparición*" (96). Likewise, Mayorga's theater is a cartography of absence; in this case it is the disappearing memory of the nameless. When Mayorga claims his plays are more maps than carbon copies of the past, he means they are maps of a particular memory, open for the reader and spectator to use, to place themselves in the space and use the map to find their way to that memory. His is a cartography that represents the constant, repetitive vigilance needed to defend against the multiple disappearing spaces of history and memory: geographical, political, social, cultural, and personal. Deborah channels Mayorga's poetics when she maintains that the legend of the mapmaker should not be made into a film, but that it would be better as a play, because "en el teatro todo responde a una pregunta que alguien se ha hecho, como los mapas. El

mapa no debe aparecer, siempre resultaría decepcionante, la obra debería ser el mapa” (97).

As we enter into dialogue with a commemorative site, it enables us to interact with it and experience a journey that leads to an awareness, and so does this play. The Anciano’s and the Niña’s map, Blanca’s maps, and Mayorga’s play all represent the bringing in to the now of this moment in the past. The audience observes these moments in our present, perhaps during our own moment of danger, but it is not a seamless process: we need to actively engage with the play in order to elucidate the meaning. It would seem that Mayorga expects an active spectator, who, as with a commemorative site, interprets the play, destabilized and making their own connections and disconnections. We are reminded of Jacques Rancière’s emancipated spectator, for whom the act of being a spectator

is not some passive condition that we should transform into activity. It is our normal situation. We also learn and teach, act and know, as spectators who all the time link what we see to what we have seen and said, done and dreamed... We do not have to transform spectators in to actors, and ignoramuses into scholars. We have to recognize the knowledge at work in the ignoramus and the activity peculiar to the spectator. (17)

We are all equal in the community that is a theater, we are all equal in our roles as interpreter and translator: “it requires spectators who play the role of active interpreters, who develop their own translation in order to appropriate the ‘story’ and make it their own story. An emancipated community is a community of narrators and translators” (22).⁶ *El cartógrafo* is not a static monument, is not set back in a monolithic, homogeneous space of the past, it is not contained beneath a glass case in a museum: it is here, now in the present. This coalescence is represented structurally when the three historically separate storylines combine in that last scene between Deborah and Blanca.

Thinking of Blanca’s interactive memory sites, Huyssen’s observations, Mayorga’s poetics, and Benjamin’s theories of history led me to remember an interactive memorial to Walter Benjamin on a cliff overlooking the Mediterranean Sea in Portbou, Spain, near the cemetery where he is buried.⁷ Similar to Blanca’s insistence on the need for a certain

⁶ For a more detailed, nuanced take on Rancière’s theory of the spectator and how it relates to Mayorga’s theatre in general, and *El cartógrafo* in particular, refer to Crisitina Oñoro Otero’s recent study “El espectador como cartógrafo: reflexiones sobre el teatro de Juan Mayorga.”

⁷ In 1940, after crossing the Pyrenees mountains into Spain in order to flee the Nazi occupation of France, Walter Benjamin either committed suicide or accidentally overdosed on his morphine pills while staying in a motel in Portbou, Spain. Earlier, Spanish authorities had warned him that he would be sent back to France due to a lack of the specific exit visa he needed for passage to Portugal and, eventually, to the United States. In 1990, Portbou officials dedicated an interactive memorial to him to commemorate the 50th anniversary of his death.

type of commemorative site layered upon Warsaw, Benjamin's memorial forces us to experience our own emplacement of self within it. To experience the memorial, one needs to descend a staircase within a metal tunnel, where, looking out to the Mediterranean Sea, you come to a piece of transparent plexiglass blocking your precipitous fall off the cliffs and into the sea:

The passageway makes no concessions to the visitor, and can only be traversed with attention. The narrow metal stairway is flanked by plates of rusted steel 2.35m high in a corridor dug into the slope like a tunnel. When we have come three quarters of its course, a sheet of glass closes off the way and stops us from going further. The whirlpool in the sea at the end of the tunnel looks close, but is inaccessible. And etched into the glass are words that invoke the weight of the past and of memory. (Fundació)

Those words are a quote attributed to Benjamin: "It is more arduous to honor the memory of the nameless than that of the renowned. Historical construction is devoted to the memory of the nameless" (Fundació).⁸ To honor this memory of the nameless, one needs to base any historical reconstruction not only on the victors, not on the few heroes or villains of history, but on those countless anonymous others affected by the event. To that end, *El cartógrafo* represents Warsaw at a scale of 1:400,000: this one experience on the stage stands in for that of the 400,000 Jewish residents of the Ghetto. The Anciano and the Niña, living in the Ghetto, could be anyone, and in fact, as Deborah denies any connection to the two, they are not only literally nameless, but ephemeral as well.⁹ We have an interactive product, the play, representing a disappearance, which is similar to projects like the Parque de la Memoria in Buenos Aires. Moreover, just as Blanca's interaction with the photographs of the nameless that she witnesses in the synagogue is the moment in the historical past that transforms her present, so is our interaction with this play, the setting and facts that should transform *our* present via this mutually destabilizing experience between the past and the present. In other words, the past does not reside in another space, it is here.

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⁸ The source of this quote, etched on the plexiglass, is taken from his Selected Writings, or *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1-3, p. 1241.

⁹ This is particularly resonant because all the other characters, who reside in the "present day", do in fact have distinct names.

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