

Los Campos de la Memoria:  
The Concentration Camp as a Site of Memory in the Narrative of Max Aub

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## **Dedication**

To my Grandma,

There is not a day that goes by that I do not think about you. Your memory continues to live on and has given me the strength and inspiration to finish this long journey, which began in your absence. I dedicate this dissertation and much more to you, and, although you cannot be here to share this moment with me, I know that you would be very proud.

## Abstract

This dissertation explores constructions of memory and testimony in the concentration-camp narrative of Spanish author Max Aub. One of the most forgotten chapters of all Spanish Civil War and exile history is that pertaining to the Spanish Republicans who were interned in French concentration camps after the end of the Civil War. The concentration camp occupies a central place of memory and becomes a recurrent symbol and leitmotif that reappears in various manifestations throughout much of Aub's narrative work. In this dissertation, I investigate the symbolic value of the concentration camp as a discursive vehicle, a *lieux de mémoire*, that allows Aub to reconstruct his traumatic memories of the camp and convert them into narrative memory through writing. I examine the fictionalization of testimony in various literary genres and media, and analyze the use of different narrative strategies of remembrance and memory work to convey the experience of internment. My analysis of the camps goes beyond the traditional psychoanalytical conception of trauma as an individual phenomenon by exploring the collective dimension of trauma and memory. Aub's recounting of his own personal experiences exceeds a mere autobiographical portrait as it speaks in a collective voice that seeks to share the suffering of fellow exiles and camp survivors in order to form a new collective or group consciousness. Writing about the camps represents Aub's way of bearing witness to his trauma at the same time as it is his way of fighting the silence that has surrounded this experience shared by so many fellow Republican exiles. Through his testimonial writing, in both its individual and collective dimensions, Aub

succeeds in a long-cherished goal, that of reinserting the memory traces of the Civil War, exile, and the camps back into Spain's historical and literary discourse.

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## Introduction

### Digging up the Buried Remnants of the Past

#### *Historical Trauma and the Search for Truth: the Creation of the TRC*

The memory of traumatic historical experiences is often accompanied by an endeavor to remember and commemorate the victims through the creation of institutions (legal, social and political) that seek to restore historical justice and reexamine the past in light of new evidence. The State's role in this process has often been one of either usurping or silencing the pain stemming from historical traumas. The search for "truth" is an epistemological struggle that faces a daunting task by placing at the forefront the debate between history, memory and the institutions that oversee their recovery. This opens up a discussion on the issue of human rights, which involves not only an ethical, but also a judicial component that endeavors to punish the perpetrators and bring justice to the victims. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) has outlined a series of universal or global declarations of human rights to which all human beings are entitled. However, the implementation of these rights has recently been questioned as numerous violations worldwide have surfaced, generating wide discussion and debate. The illegality of a State withholding information regarding the injustices or crimes committed by dictatorships or totalitarian regimes has been a subject of discussion among international organizations which assert that the right to truth in itself is a right. As Juan

Méndez affirms, states have an affirmative obligation to investigate, prosecute, and punish genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity; to discover and reveal the truth about such violations; to offer reparations to victims and their families; and to disqualify the perpetrators by removing them from positions of authority (qtd. in Montes, forthcoming).

One such institution that has begun to oversee the recovery process following traumatic events is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), founded during the 1980s. These commissions are bodies established and funded by both governments and international organizations to research and report on human rights abuses. As Peter Kellermann argues, “The TRC aims to facilitate a truth recovery process through public hearings that give voice to the experiences of victims, witnesses, and perpetrators, attempting to uncover the causes, nature and extent of past human rights violations and to search for ways to rehabilitate and to compensate the victims for their suffering” (154).<sup>1</sup> While it would have been unthinkable to implement a policy of forgetting the Holocaust or the horrors committed during the military dictatorships in Argentina or Chile, the TRC provides a sense of justice and reconciliation to those victims. However, one of the fundamental problems that has arisen deals precisely with the notion of truth, which has become a problematic issue stirring much debate. When dealing with historical traumatic memory, one is ultimately dealing with testimonies that attempt to recount those painful events that occurred. This is where the epistemological uncertainty enters, as testimonies have often been relegated as historically inaccurate and akin to fictional constructions. Nevertheless, even a fictionalization of testimony carries with it an historical and ethical responsibility. Testifying to the past has been an urgent task for many fiction writers as

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<sup>1</sup> In this context, I am referring to the overall concept of the TRC rather than one specific TRC.

they attempt to preserve personal and collective memories from assimilation, repression, or misrepresentation (Vickroy 1). According to Derrida, epistemological certainty can never be the aim of testimony, for there is no testimony that does not at least structurally imply in itself the possibility of fiction, simulacra, dissimulation, lie, and perjury—that is to say, the possibility of literature (qtd. in Rostan; 21). This explains why survivor testimony of the Holocaust in the court of law was often dismissed or ignored at the hearings and trials of perpetrators. Given that its objective was not to produce or reaffirm knowledge or facts, it was not considered a reliable account. As Primo Levi states: “Testimonial memory is at the same time, a ‘source essential to the reconstruction’ and an insecure tool” (qtd. in Forcinito 79). Bearing witness and giving testimony are not rooted in truth claims, but rather encompass a more complex set of emotional and ethical values.<sup>2</sup> Memory, both individual and collective, is a set of narratives that does not strive for precision, but rather is a form of interpretation from the individual or community narrating it. In other words, memory is socially constructed in dialectical terms as an oral, written, or even audio-visual narrative that often includes fiction. As Salvador Cardús I Ros declares: “One cannot speak of mere truth and untruth, but rather of a battle between the various truths or untruths that each political project invents in order to justify itself and to justify its past, present, and future” (24). Therefore, by fictionalizing testimony, one can go beyond the concept of truth claims and delve into other underlying issues such as justice, reconciliation, or reprisals. The transformation of the oral testimony to the written text gives rise to the formation of a new corporeality of literary

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<sup>2</sup> Ana Forcinito explains that Dori Laub’s approach to testimonial literature “is about having an understanding of testimony more concerned with the survivor than with the expectation of narrative authority” (91).

form that manifests itself through different genres and allows for the creation of other truths or *mundos posibles*.

In recent decades, numerous fictional works on traumatic experience and its representations have appeared in large part due to the surge of Holocaust testimonies. This has given rise to the creation of what Laurie Vickroy terms “traumatic narratives,” which are fictional narratives that help readers to access traumatic experience and to better understand the more complex and painful implications of trauma. This includes the tensions and conflicts inherent in the retelling and reexperiencing of tragic events in addition to the obstacles in communicating such experience. These obstacles (silence, denial, dissociation, resistance, repression, forgetting) form the basis of the traumatic narrative. According to Vickroy, such narratives illuminate the personal and public aspects of trauma in order to elucidate our relationship to memory and forgetting within the complex interweaving of social and psychological relationships (1). These narratives also deal with the sociopolitical issues that ultimately influence and impact society’s response, receptiveness, and level of support toward one’s individual or collective trauma. It is this response—whether one of acceptance or denial—that determines not only a community’s willingness to confront these traumatic issues (or perpetuate them), but also the victim’s ability to recover from the trauma. This recovery process is determined by multiple factors, such as the social environment, the severity of the traumatic event, and ultimately each individual’s personal experience in dealing with tragic situations. The most favorable conditions for healing exist when a “society...organizes the process of suffering, rendering it a meaningful mode of action and identity within a larger social framework” (Vickroy 14).

Another objective of trauma narratives according to Vickroy is to reshape cultural memory through personal contexts, adopting testimonial traits to prevent and bear witness against such horrors. For traumatic memory to lose its power and for it to be integrated into narrative memory, a form of narrative reconstruction or reexternalization has to occur (Vickroy 3). As Kimberly Rostan states, in order for the traumatic event to lose its power as a fragment and symptom, and for it to be integrated into memory, a form of narrative reconstruction has to occur (36). For most survivors of collective trauma, the terrible events will not be incorporated and stored as a regular part of their memories or remain a part of their ordinary personal histories to be told by subsequent generations. The tragedy will remain as a fragmented part of their lives and as something that has interrupted the normal flow of their histories (Kellermann 50). What is most applicable to this dissertation is that the concept of trauma narratives does not just concern individual trauma, but also focuses on the relationship between the individual and a social class or group and the responsibility that the group, or the institutions that govern the group, share with the individual. As with testimony, trauma narratives appeal to a group or community of readers. The ramifications of the trauma narrative go beyond the mere accessing of the survivor's voice by also placing an important emphasis on the emotional impact felt by the reader as witness. Part of the healing process of the survivor resides in receiving some kind of social acknowledgment and acceptance. The reader of a trauma narrative therefore is transformed into an agent of social recognition. Given that trauma cannot be faced alone, the fictionalization of testimony enables the survivor to form "relationships" with his/her readers. The readers of trauma literature can participate in the process of reevaluating the experience.

At its heart, testimony does not merely concern issues dealing with the past, but also places an emphasis on improving the future. According to the website of the United States Institute of Peace, there exist today twenty four recognized Truth and Reconciliation Commissions throughout the world, although many other countries have recently called for the establishment of new truth commissions.<sup>3</sup> One of the countries not mentioned in the list is Spain, whose fate throughout the second half of the twentieth century has been marked precisely by an inability and refusal to deal properly with the traumatic memory of the Civil War, exile and the repressive Franco regime. The nearly forty-year Franco dictatorship was characterized by silence and fear, and even the arrival of democracy in Spain sought to avoid any thorough discussion of the Civil War or the regime. It is surprising that thirty years of democracy in Spain has resulted in very little progress toward any form of reconciling the open wounds of the past that continue to fester. As Ofelia Ferrán asserts, until very recently “Spain has not undertaken any official institutional reappraisal of its past nor produced an official report documenting past repression...Spain has undergone no judicial process bringing responsible parties from the Franco dictatorship to justice” (2007; 14). In order for justice and reconciliation to occur, there must be recognition of accountability, responsibility and some sort of public commemoration, little of which has occurred in Spain. The dawn of the twenty-first century has seen a shift in this trend as the government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero has made efforts to confront Spain’s past, especially with the proclamation of the Law of Historical Memory in December 2007. What is even more remarkable is the fact that the Spanish government is currently financing the recovery of the Nationalist

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<sup>3</sup> For more information on the different TRCs that exist, visit <http://www.usip.org/library/truth.html#tc>.

soldiers that were killed as part of the Blue Division (División Azul) during World War II, while it continues to deny funds for the excavation of the mass graves.

The creation of the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory (ARHM)<sup>4</sup> in December of 2000 sought to bring to light the hidden truth of the Franco regime and to pay homage to the fallen Republicans who were never recognized nor honored by the Franco or post-Franco period. As Hernán Vidal states: “To pacify the population eventually some measure of truth must be briefly exposed as a matter of social catharsis. Truth here must be understood as exposing publicly the logic, strategies, tactics and calendars used by the State to illegally destroy the opposition” (forthcoming). Although Vidal is referring to the aftermath of the military dictatorships in Latin America (Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, and Peru), his contention that human rights violations must be exposed in order for the memory to heal is applicable to the situation in Post-Franco Spain. The ARHM therefore sets out to accomplish this goal by initiating a series of exhumations of mass graves in order to locate the human remains of assassinated Republicans and to give them proper burial and recognition. To disinter the remains of these victims also signifies the recovery of their silenced stories. Each bone that is retrieved indicates the confirmation of a certain reality that in fact did occur, and it serves as an archive of the repression of the Franco regime. However, the excavation of the

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<sup>4</sup> The ARMH was cofounded by Emilio Silva and Santiago Macías. They were looking for the remains of their lost relatives who were among the thirty thousand victims that disappeared during the Civil War and Franco regime. The creation of this civil organization illustrates citizens’ desire to take the initiative to confront Spain’s traumatic past, something that the Spanish government has been reluctant to do. The ARMH does not receive financial help from any official institution. This is illustrated by the following comments from one of the witnesses interviewed in this study: “Si no fuera por ustedes, que están haciendo todo esto, no se habría removido nada. Hay este silencio, este miedo” (Armengou and Belis 155). This organization has created a greater public awareness of horrors committed by the Franco regime and the imperative need to deal with the past.

mass graves has also resulted in controversy as some families—most notably that of Spanish poet and playwright Federico García Lorca—have opposed the excavations.

The excavation of the mass graves and the recovery of those lost memory traces remind us of another forgotten part of Spain's historical memory: the victims of the French concentration camps as a result of the Republican exile of 1939. These two experiences of exile and the camps share a common subject matter that problematizes many of the same questions, especially those related to the destruction, dispossession and dehumanization of an individual's identity. In other words, when dealing with the Spanish Republican exile of 1939, one cannot separate the concepts of exile from the concentration camp as they form part of the same experience. For many Republicans, internment in the camps only represented one particular stage in the much larger, more complex journey that would constitute their exile. In this dissertation, I look closely at the life and work of one such exile, Spanish writer Max Aub, whose experience of both the French concentration camps and exile form the crux of his literary production. To speak of the life and work of Max Aub is to confront these precise issues and problematize the question surrounding exile identity, as they formed part of his life from an early age and continued to haunt him until his death. From the beginning, Max Aub's life has been characterized by the questioning of his own identity, which Aub reflects upon in the following statement:

Qué daño no me ha hecho, en nuestro mundo cerrado, el no ser de ninguna parte!

El llamarme como me llamo, con nombre y apellido que lo mismo pueden ser de

un país que de otro<sup>5</sup>...En estas horas de nacionalismo cerrado el haber nacido en París, y ser español, tener padre español nacido en Alemania, madre parisina, pero de origen también alemán, pero apellido esclavo (*sic*), y hablar con ese acento francés que desgarrar mi castellano, qué daño no me ha hecho! El agnosticismo de mis padres en un país católico como España, o su prosapia judía, en un país antisemita como Francia, qué disgustos, qué humillaciones no me ha acarreado! Qué vergüenzas! Algo de mi fuerza he sacado para luchar contra tanta ignominia...en España es donde menos florece ese menguado nacionalismo.

(*Diarios* 128)

Exile, for Aub, has become a place of ignominy and humiliation that has torn apart his own identity. He too finds himself searching for truth and trying to find answers that will help him define who he is on his own terms as opposed to allowing exile to define him.

*Exile and the French Concentration Camps as a Source of Collective Trauma*

In order to understand the complexities of Max Aub's trauma, one must also comprehend the various dimensions of exile that were inflicted on the Spanish Republicans upon their mass exodus from Spain in January 1939. It is this long journey into exile, and not merely the internment in the French concentration camps, that constitutes an additional source of trauma and loss of identity that marks Aub's life thereafter.<sup>6</sup> Exile, on the one hand facilitates Aub's accessibility to the writing of testimony by giving him the freedom to deal with certain themes that could not be touched in Spain, while on the other hand it

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<sup>5</sup> Aub's frustration over his name is also reflected in the following statement: "Qué molestias no me han causado mi nombre y apellido! Si me llamara Juan Pérez...Pero no" (*Diarios* 233).

<sup>6</sup> Among some of the prominent scholars that have investigated this problematic are: Francisco Caudet, Sebastiaan Faber, Patricia Fagen, Edward Said, Louis Stein, Michael Ugarte, José Luis Abellán.

represents a barrier that culturally challenges him. This cultural division and separation from the mother country, and especially the cultural institutions of which they formed part, force one to wonder for whom the exiles were writing. This answer is quite complex as Francisco Ayala pointed out in his essay “Para quién escribimos nosotros?” where he declared: “Para todos y para nadie...Nuestras palabras van al viento: confiemos en que algunas de ellas no se pierdan” (213). While the exile’s constant preoccupation with Spain attracted little interest from the Mexicans, their disconnection from the residential exiles in Spain, in addition to the Francoist censure, drastically reduced their audience to a small group of dispersed exiles. Aub himself answers this very question in his *Diarios* when he states: “No siento el placer de escribir, creo que nunca lo sentí, pero sí el placer de intentar ver más claro...por intentar *explicar y explicarme* el tiempo en que vivo...y para explicarme cómo veo las cosas en espera de ver cómo las cosas ven a mí”<sup>7</sup> (*Diarios* 197). Max Aub’s writing of the camps therefore represents his personal and collective need and obligation—as a survivor of trauma—to better explain [to himself] (*explicarme*) this incomprehensible world and to bear witness for others (*explicar*). This quote becomes essential to understanding Aub’s need to write as it reflects the dynamic of trauma and testimony. While the use of the verb *explicar* invokes the notion of testimony, the incorporation of the indirect object pronoun *me* to the verb now places the emphasis directly on the trauma. Also, the historical experiences (las cosas) acquire their own agency as they possess a certain hold on Aub, that is, the trauma is still a present force in his life. Writing about the camps, like the exhumation of the mass graves, thus represents Aub’s way of giving a new meaning to the lives of the concentration-camp

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<sup>7</sup> My emphasis.

victims [and to himself] and rescuing them from the silence and oblivion that has buried them for decades.

Whereas the bodies in the mass graves in Spain pose the question of the existence of a “Spanish holocaust/genocide,” the French concentration camps also share holocaust/genocidal-like characteristics. The traumatic past of this experience remains buried underneath the remains of the camps, which, like the Franco regime, eliminated the voice of its victims. In the absence of the physical bodies of the camp victims, the narrative texts and the stories/testimonies told by the survivors assume the role of paying homage and granting a proper burial site to those who were denied that opportunity as well as assuring that the memory of the event is not forgotten. As Peter Kellermann states, “The power of the personal story helps to heal deep emotional wounds and also to build bridges between people and cultures within a collective experience of mutual understanding” (146).

This dissertation delves into the issues of testimony, trauma, memory and exile by examining the representation of the concentration camp as a place of collective memory and as the basis of identity formation in the work of Max Aub, one of Spain’s most prominent and prolific, yet often times forgotten, writers who went into exile after the Spanish Civil War. The concentration camp becomes a recurrent symbol and leitmotif that reappears in a variety of different manifestations throughout much of Max Aub’s work.<sup>8</sup> This prompts one to reflect upon the symbolic value of the camp as a vehicle through which Aub produces meaning, and to ask the questions: What makes the

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<sup>8</sup> Among other prominent literary works that have been written about the French concentration camps are: *Saint Cyprien, plage* by Manuel Andújar; *Crist de 200,000 brazos* by Agustí Bartra; *Así cayeron los dados* by Virgilio Botella, *Almohada de arena* by Celso Amieva, and *Los años rojos. Holocausto de los españoles* by Mariano Constante.

concentration camp such an important symbol for Aub in his literary work? and What does this symbol represent? Arguably, the concentration camp represents a critical space in Aub's life where he is ripped away from his Spanish roots and dispossessed of his identity while falling victim to the harsh and inhumane reality of a concentration-camp world. The texts that I examine in this dissertation explore the construction of identity, its fracturing and various attempts at its reconstruction. By turning to the concentration camp, Max Aub endeavors to not only bear witness to his (personal) trauma, but also to reconstruct the dehumanized identity of the Spanish exiles as a collective group. My contention is that Aub's testimonial writing is not only collective, but also his act of bearing witness is also collective. This places the concepts of trauma and testimony for Aub in the collective realm. Aub's work therefore acquires a certain responsibility in that he does not want what the exiles lived and experienced to be forgotten or erased.

It is also the purpose of this dissertation to focus particularly on the largely overlooked and under examined symbols that form part of the exile imaginary stemming from the French concentration camps. This involves an in-depth examination of the concentration-camp world by exploring all of its spatial and temporal dimensions in an attempt to unravel the hidden meaning and value that Aub grants to this symbolic space. To address Max Aub's testimonial narratives about the camps implies entering into the problematic concerning the expression of trauma and pain through literature, something that Holocaust literature has also sought to realize. To analyze Max Aub's testimonial works therefore requires a reflection on writing trauma and the methods used to approach the expression of trauma through literature. Much of the scholarly research that has been conducted on Max Aub's work tends to place more emphasis on Aub's identity as an

exile, overlooking his place as a survivor of the camps. The purpose of this dissertation is to focus more on Aub's works that deal specifically with the concentration camps, but not entirely, and to find thematic issues that ultimately connect the camp to other seemingly disconnected issues. Not all of the texts studied in this dissertation deal specifically with the camps, but my objective is to illustrate that there exist common threads and issues that appear in many of Aub's works, whether about the Civil War, the camps or exile, that carefully tie (thematically) Aub's works together. I reject the division of Aub's work into classifications based on when and where they were written, contending that the presence of the camp finds its own way of appearing in texts that are not about the camps. It is also my intention to demonstrate how Aub poses a new way of looking at trauma that goes beyond the traditional psycho-analytical conception of trauma as an individual experience.

The issue of genre also becomes a central theme in my analysis of Aub's concentration-camp literature. I look at the concept of genre, not as a tool or means of categorizing literary texts, but rather as a subject of analysis that enables one to enter into a discussion of representational modes and strategies of testimony. By examining different genres, the reader can not only see *what* is expressed, but also *how* it [the camp] is expressed. In this study, I examine the narrative strategies that Aub employs to represent the camp in various genres (short story, theater, cinematic script, diary, and essay), and how each genre adds a new dimension to representation of the camp.

Aub's approach to the concentration camps presents a tragic narrative wherein his writing about the trauma is in itself traumatic. His historical narratives about the camps reveal that not only the origin is traumatic, but that trauma is also present in the act of

narration. This can be seen in Aub's continual need to repeat and rewrite the same "stories" over and over again in different forms. The continual reference to the camps allows Aub to transform this traumatic memory into narrative memory as he reconstructs the bits and pieces of this shattered reality. This tendency also parallels the structure of traumatic memory and acting out, which involve the tendency to repeat something compulsively. This obsession for repetition is a prominent theme that I return to later in this dissertation, especially in chapter four, with the constant repetition of the forgotten memory of the exiles in many of Aub's narrative works. What this all points to are the problems involved in the representation and writing of traumatic events. This study looks closely at Aub's need to resort to creative, alternative and experimental means of bearing witness to his experience in the camps, and to project an honest and close representation. The texts examined here will show the difficulties faced in expressing the horror of an unthinkable experience in a coherent manner. This often prompts Aub to combat this deformed and illogical reality with an equally deformed and grotesque narrative structure that ultimately parallels the concentration-camp experience.

The images invoked by Aub in the process of bearing witness emphasize the importance of returning to the site of the original trauma. The impossibility of "undoing" the memory and trauma of the concentration camp and "getting over it" by relegating it to the past obligates Aub to deal with the memory in a systematic manner. Man is naturally fixated by his obsession with memory, which becomes one of the bases of humanity. By re-experiencing the past, Aub is at the same time redeeming the tragedy and taking ownership of his memory. Aub no longer sees the concentration camp as an object, but rather has converted it into the subject of his literary discourse.

*Trauma, Testimony and Memory: The Camps as Lieux de Mémoire*

Upon the conclusion of the Spanish Civil War and until his death, Aub redirects the focus of his literary work to problematize these very issues such as the effect of exile and the internment in concentration camps on one's identity. He turns to the memory of the camp as a discursive vehicle that enables him to assign new meaning to this indescribable and oftentimes forgotten experience.<sup>9</sup> Aub endeavors to place the memory of the Republican exile of 1939 back into the historical discourse of Spain, since the Franco regime relegated exile literature<sup>10</sup> to a marginalized position as "Other," and not Spanish. This task requires more than just a mere reference to the camps, but rather invokes an entire "healing" process and practice of working through the memory of the camps. Suzette Henke has coined the term *scriptotherapy* to refer to the process of writing out and writing through traumatic experience in the mode of therapeutic reenactment (qtd. in Vickroy 19). In order to accomplish this daunting task, Aub is forced to use a variety of discursive elements and literary genres in an effort to bear witness to his own personal experience of being interned in several French concentration camps and jails from 1940–1942, a phenomenon that goes beyond the traditional literary form of expression and comprehension.

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<sup>9</sup> The internment of Spanish exiles in French concentration camps has often been relegated as a forgotten moment in contemporary Spanish discourse; overshadowed to some degree by the Nazi concentration camps of the Holocaust, the subsequent Second World War and the Franco regime. However, in recent decades, scholars have begun to better analyze this phenomenon as an integral component of the Republican exile of 1939.

<sup>10</sup> Aub defines exile literature in the following terms: "Se entiende por 'literatura del exilio' en nuestro caso español del siglo XX, la escrita por españoles fuera de su patria donde permanecen por no estar de acuerdo con el régimen impuesto en España" (Archivo Max Aub Caja 1–19/10).

Max Aub's testimonial literature attempts to exceed the traditional frameworks of testimony by not simply painting a picture of historical, political and social traumas in the past but also by recognizing that the event which surpasses our understanding requires moving beyond our present knowledge as well as beyond ourselves. Aub's recounting of his own personal experiences exceeds a mere autobiographical portrait as it speaks in a collective voice that seeks to share the sufferings of fellow exiles and camp survivors in order to form a new collective identity.<sup>11</sup> As Frances Guerin and Roger Hallas affirm, "The autobiographical account was considered most authentic because it spoke or wrote from an individual and deeply personal experience that did not claim to represent the experience of all those who suffered" (7). I challenge this definition, contending that Aub's testimonial works can be considered a "collective testimony" that gives voice not just to a single individual's experience, but to that of a larger collectivity.<sup>12</sup>

Maurice Halbwachs affirms in his work *On Collective Memory*, that all memory in the end is collective, for individual memories are ultimately located in a specific group context, and therefore each individual must draw on that context to remember or recreate the past (22). Individual memories are deposited into social institutions, and require their

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<sup>11</sup> Aub stated that what he was searching for was to "dejar constancia de nuestro tiempo" (*Diarios* 207).

<sup>12</sup> The notion of collective testimony is not a new concept that only applies to the experience of the Spanish exiles, but rather the *testimonio* is a genre that has been well studied in Latin America by scholars such as René Jara, Hernán Vidal, and John Beverley. According to Beverley, the *testimonio* is a narrative told in the first-person by a subaltern narrator who is a witness of the events he recounts. In most cases, the narrator is illiterate, uneducated, or not a professional writer, who tells his story to a transcriber, writer, or journalist, who documents the testimony. The *testimonio* is defined as collective, for the narrator in *testimonio* speaks in the name of a community or group. Susan Suleiman also comments on the collective nature of testimony: "The single witness, even while recounting his or her own experiences, represents all those who were in a similar position in the same time and place" (134). This definition of *testimonio* is slightly different from the approach that I am using to analyze Max Aub's work. Firstly, in Aub's testimonial literature, the narrative voice is not in the first-person "I," but usually in the third-person singular or plural. Secondly, the narrators, while subaltern figures, do not depend on a second person to document and transcribe their text (The only exception is *Manuscrito Cuervo*). While the *testimonio* in Latin America focuses on something urgent, the case of Spain is very different as it focuses on a more distant past.

support for both recall and preservation. Therefore, as Halbwachs asserts: “No memory is possible outside frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections” (43).<sup>13</sup> The structure of memories centers on their changing nature as malleable and unstable entities that do not remain in a fixed location over time, but rather are subject to social and political manipulations. One such manipulation stems from social or political interests that a particular group has in the present, influencing the way they remember the past. Halbwachs distinguishes between two types of memory: autobiographical and historical memory. Autobiographical memory refers to memories of events that we have personally experienced in the past and that are shared by a reduced group of people. This type of memory tends to disappear when contact or access has been lost with that group of people unless “it is periodically reinforced through contact with persons with whom one shared the experience in the past...Autobiographical memory is always rooted in other people” (Halbwachs 23). On the other hand, historical memory is that which individuals have not directly experienced, but rather know through historical registers. It is this combination of autobiographical memory and historical memory that forms one of the central tenants of collective identity. As Shoshana Felman states, “Testimonial literature thus provides a cultural space in which individual processes of working through historical trauma are mediated into collective ones” (25).

In light of this notion, the traditional autobiographical voice in Max Aub’s texts is transformed into a plural collective voice through the incorporation of various fictitious narrators. This is illustrated perfectly in *The Magical Labyrinth* as no individual heroes

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<sup>13</sup> Halbwachs bases his theory on Emile Durkheim’s conception of memory as a social construction. According to Durkheim’s theory, individual memories are deposited into social institutions, in which remembering involves being linked to a collective framework of institutions. These institutions ultimately control and regulate the dissemination of those memories.

exist. The narrative voice is paradoxical in that on the one hand Aub's first-person voice disappears in most cases, but on the other hand, his personal experiences and individual memories are always present behind each word and each description of the camps. As José María Naharro-Calderón contends, it is difficult for Aub to distance himself from his moral, personal and historical compromise that comes from the concentration camps and exile, to find other themes that could interest others (121). In a letter to Ignacio Soldevila Durante, Aub reiterates this precise notion when he states: "Claro que no podemos despojarnos de nuestra carne, y con ella escribimos" (*Epistolario Max Aub/Ignacio Soldevila Durante* 101).

The Oxford English Dictionary defines testimony as "personal or documentary evidence or attestation in support of a fact or statement; hence, any form of evidence or proof." The word testimony comes from the Latin word *testimonium* or *testis*, which means witness, spectator or bystander. According to Giorgio Agamben, a second Latin word for witness is *superstes*, which also means spectator or bystander but primarily means survivor (qtd. in Suleiman, 133). This interdependence between testimony and witness has resulted in the two terms becoming frequently interchangeable. By definition, testimony is a collective phenomenon as testifying contains an impulse to connect with a larger community and listening to testimony signifies an attempt to understand others (Rostan 22). As Cathy Caruth states, it takes two people to witness the unconscious, or a second person to claim the unprocessed, unclaimed experience, that is inaccessible to trauma victims (qtd in Rostan 22).<sup>14</sup> This other person becomes the

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<sup>14</sup> A holocaust or concentration-camp experience is often depicted, in psychoanalytical terms, as an "impossible history" or as an event that is unable to fully be understood or registered in human consciousness. Cathy Caruth has coined the term "unclaimed experience" to refer to "unprocessed traumatic experiences that elude understanding" (qtd. in Rostan; 35).

secondhand or secondary witness who enables the firsthand or primary witness to tell his/her story. Although in many cases the transmission of the testimony to the secondhand witness may come in a direct, personal form, the transposing of testimony into literature opens up to a wider audience and thus to a larger social group.

The second-hand witness (or listener), not only becomes a witness to the original witness, but also becomes what one might call the epitome of witnessing in that he/she makes possible the very process of testimony. According to Dori Laub, a psychoanalyst and a survivor of the Holocaust, who has interviewed many Holocaust survivors in a study undertaken by the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimony at Yale University, massive trauma always precludes its initial psychic registration. This means that the victim's realization and comprehension of the trauma does not concur with the actual traumatic event (Laub 57). The mind functions as a defense mechanism that literally blocks the traumatized victim from experiencing the event as it occurs. The listener/reader therefore makes possible the survivor's "bearing witness" to his/her own traumatic event in the form of the blank pages that convert themselves into a complex, yet inviting oral/written narrative. The emergence of the narrative which is being listened to is the process and place wherein the cognizance, the "knowing" of the event is metaphorically "given birth to" for the first time. The loss of language that resulted due to the traumatic experience is regained through the act of retelling the story. The listener, therefore, is a party to the creation of knowledge *de novo* (Guerin and Hallas 11). This explains why when dealing with trauma, memory is always secondary memory. Although it may come from a primary witness or participant, the memory act itself is not immediately integrated into the witness's experience, but rather, as Laub suggests,

reconstructed after a period of latency.<sup>15</sup> Once the latency period (or period of belatedness as Freud describes it) has ended, the act of bearing witness allows the witness to bring into presence, and externalize, the event that has persistently haunted him/her.<sup>16</sup>

Scholars have questioned the degree to which the listener, or non-survivor, is able to understand the victim's trauma. While some experts assert that the "outsider" will never be able to comprehend the trauma at the same level as the survivor, others, including Laub, proclaim that the listener actively participates in the telling of the event and even becomes a partial owner of the experience. Laub claims that the listener experiences the same feelings possessed by the narrator and even feels the pain and suffering experienced by the survivor to such an extent that the listener becomes a witness to the trauma, although he never actually becomes the victim (58). When discussing and writing about a traumatizing subject matter, such as the Holocaust or other concentration-camp experiences, it does make a difference whether or not the historian is a survivor, the child of survivors, a Jew, a Palestinian, a German or an Austrian, a child of perpetrators, someone born later (LaCapra 2001; 40), for depending on their particular point of view, their story will have distinctions and variations. The participation of the "other" is thus central to any conception of bearing witness since the testimony is in itself an event and not merely the reflection or the reconstruction of one. As a result, the event and the testimony of the event are not and never will be the same.

The constant tension between myth and trauma that has plagued Spain's history during the twentieth century explains the trauma's presence as a bloody, wounded

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<sup>15</sup> Exile provides one with a latency period, for as Ugarte asserts, "exile creates the distance one needs to objectify the self, to look back at it from a different situation, a different land" (1989; 20).

<sup>16</sup> According to Freud, one must liberate the repressed in order to cure the trauma. This liberation, as Freud claims, stems from a period of belatedness wherein a structural delay constitutes the link between meaning and experience (Mowitt 373).

memory that still infects the collective and historical memory of Spain. Primo Levi distinguishes between two types of survivors: those that remain silent and those that speak. According to Levi, those that remain silent are those that continue to feel the presence of the bloody, “uncured” wound, while those that speak or tell their story recognize the power of bearing witness to the painful event that marks the center of their life (qtd. In Moreno-Nuño 323). As Francisco Fernández Santos once told Max Aub: “necesitamos hablar, decir lo que nos duele” (Archivo Max Aub Caja 5–56/2). When the survivor knows that someone is listening to him, he can begin to listen to his own story as it unfolds through discourse. Javier Cerca’s novel *Soldados de Salamina* responds to this very question by emphasizing the notion that one is truly not dead if others remember him.

When responding to traumatic experiences, one is also responding to a variety of social issues that are often shared in some way by a broader collective group whether directly or indirectly. This gives rise to the creation of what David Denborough terms collective narrative documents, which constitute a response to collective trauma. The collective narrative documents provide a model for dealing with collective trauma by connecting people’s traumatic experiences in ways that offer healing for those who continue to live in the shadows of the disaster. Denborough’s collective narrative documentation methodology assists practitioners in moving from an individual to a collective approach to trauma. The first task in the process of collective narrative documentation entails creating enough material to make a document. Once the document is read or performed, the next goal is to create a context in which the information acquired can be used to help others who are dealing with a similar situation. Max Aub’s

extensive literary production therefore becomes a model of a collective narrative practice that serves not only to restore the historical memory of the exile community, but also serves as a therapeutic practice that seeks to provide guidance to those who suffer from similar social issues. The personal healing of Max Aub's traumatic experience through writing also enabled him to make an even larger contribution to humanity and to broader social issues.

The nature of traumatic experiences, as defying easy representation, has necessitated new historiographic, testimonial, and representational approaches to help interpret and reconfigure the enigmatic traces of evidence and memory (Vickroy 1). For Max Aub, literature becomes the base for the collective narrative document. Literature is arguably better equipped than history to address and deal with the incomprehensibility of traumatic events, for it enters into the personal testimony of the survivors and witnesses. As the witnesses and survivors pass on, literature becomes a witness and perhaps the only witness that will endure the passage of time as it seeks to work through trauma rather than mimetically reproduce it. In this respect, fiction is transformed into a social vehicle that enables the witness to construct symbolic places of memory through a literary discourse that challenges the mythic rhetoric of the past while reclaiming the traumatic nature of the present upon creating a space that allows its memory to survive in the future. The concept of places of memory or *lieux de mémoire* has been defined by Pierre Nora in terms of an object that incarnates a memory that resists being lost, in an historical period that has abandoned the cultivation of traditional forms of memory (Moreno-Nuño 16). Nora also states that the purpose of the *lieux de mémoire* is to stop time and to block the work of forgetting, while functioning as an enclave that defines in a symbolic manner

the collective identities within a community. Among some of the possible representations of *lieux de mémoire*, according to Nora, are: artifacts, sites, symbols, and rituals. Places of memory allow a group to reconstruct a new national history and shared sense of nationhood.

In Aub's work, the new narrative, fictional space now replaces the physical space of the concentration camp that is no longer there. While the actual, physical traces of the French concentration camps no longer exist, the sites where the camps once stood and where the collective trauma occurred become what Peter Kellermann terms a "contaminated place." This concept is defined as a place that "has left visible or invisible scars not only on the geography of the earth but also on the collective consciousness of the communities affected that hold meaning for survivors" (34). Paradoxically, these contaminated places or sites of memory are also cultural artifacts, or, as Jeffrey Alexander terms, "sacred places." According to Alexander, the construction of the new collective identity will be rooted in sacred places or "cultural artifacts." For the Spanish Republican exiles of 1939, these sacred places are the French concentration camps, which symbolize and define the painful injury to their collectivity.<sup>17</sup> Although it may seem paradoxical to refer to the concentration camp as a "sacred place," it ultimately embodies the site of rebirth for the survivor. Unlike the Nazi death camps, which still remain intact as "live" trauma sites in Poland and Germany, the trauma sites of the French concentration camps have been relegated to the space of literature. Therefore, as Dominick LaCapra contends: "A specific reading of an artifact, such as a film or novel, is itself an attempt to remember the artifact in a certain way" (1996; 180).

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<sup>17</sup> This idea remits to Cate-Aries' conception of the French concentration camps as symbolic places of memory.

The act of writing about the French concentration camps, therefore, represents an artifact of memory or safe-haven that allows the survivor to return to the scene of the trauma or the “sacred place,” and, as José Ángel Sáinz contends, to overcome what was lost, organize one’s memories and construct a new space to store those memories (317). The fact that this event has produced such a wide range of literature about this particular experience not only reinforces its need to be remembered and kept in the public consciousness, but also underlines the indelibility of the trauma. The meaning assigned to the concentration camp as a symbolic place of memory will only be present so long as it continues to be a topic of discussion and debate. The moment that the exiles, and even the contemporary generation of Spaniards, stop talking about the memory of the past, the meaning will disappear. Since memory is stored in groups, memory will essentially become extinct if the group does not unite and talk. Therefore, the sustenance of this collective/historical memory relies and depends on the continual dialogue among Spaniards about these historical events. This explains why even at the dawn of the twenty-first century, these issues continue to be an important topic of discussion in the political and social discourse of Spain, which continues to grapple with the memory of the Civil War and Franco period.

While Halbwachs roots all human experience and memory in a social context and structure, he declares that there exists one area that is not rooted in this structure: the sphere of dreams. The dream, according to Halbwachs, “differs fundamentally from all other human memories because it lacks organization. This is the result of the absence of other human actors. Dreams show unstable fragments and images that cannot provide the group support that makes waking life and memory cohesive and structured” (23).

Halbwachs links the retrieval of memories to a state of consciousness and reason that can only occur in a waking existence that is anchored in the collaboration of other human beings. One could disagree here with Halbwachs and say that even dreams may be understood to function within social patterns. However, it is the conception of dreams and their location outside of “normal” memory and conscious recall that interests me in this study. If dreams do not constitute a normal state of memory due to one’s lack of consciousness, then what about traumatic memory? Halbwachs’s conception of memory overlooks the condition of traumatic memory suffered by victims of severe trauma. If memory can only occur under coherent consciousness, then traumatic memory, according to Halbwachs’s definition, would also lie outside of the categorization of collective memory. Given that traumatic memory is not subject to conscious or direct recall, then is it also not collective? Victims of trauma are, like any other person, living, breathing, conscious people; however, what distinguishes them is their inability to coherently recall their memories even in a waking state, although, the person himself may be clearly conscious. Like dreams, traumatic memory is composed of disjointed fragments that never appear as a real, complete memory. In dreams, as with traumatic memory, one is incapable of recalling a series of events or “full-scale pictures that reproduce what we have seen and experienced when awake” (Halbwachs 172). However, unlike dreams, the bearer of traumatic memory possesses the cognitive and social facilities that permit him to transform that memory into narrative memory. In fact, traumatic memory can only be overcome through its connection with groups or institutions that enable the victim to recover his/her lost identity and reconstruct his/her memory.

Major traumatic events transcend the realm of individual suffering and enter the universal and collective sphere (Kellermann 9). In order for complete healing to take place, there needs to exist some sort of group setting. Peter Kellermann refers to this process as sociodrama, which “deals with problems in which the collective aspect of the problem is put in the foreground and the individual’s private relation is put in the background” (15). Along sociological lines, sociodrama functions as a group method of socio-therapy in which common experiences are shared as a means to better understand human social behavior. While individual traumatization has been well studied and documented, collective trauma with its psychological effects on an entire group has been less researched. One may think of a sociodramatic session as a type of role play in which the participants of the group share their stories of a collective past history. Max Aub’s writing about the trauma of the camps constitutes in itself a form of sociodramatic session in which Aub is writing for the group and sharing group sentiments and feelings.

In spite of the numerous individual testimonies that have been written about the Republican exile of 1939, including Max Aub’s wide range of testimonial works, one must conceptualize this experience in terms of a more collective and cultural trauma shared by this group of exiles. As trauma theory began to develop in the 1980s and 1990s, there appeared a tendency to define trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder along the lines of individual experiences. This placed the individual at the center of the traumatic experience with a focus on a more psychoanalytically-oriented approach to its study. However, recently this conception of trauma has been challenged by new theoretical suppositions that reject the “old” way of thinking about trauma by placing their emphasis on the collectivity rather than the individual, although the individual

approach to trauma still has a place and is still relevant and useful as a means of trauma theory. The individual trauma is not completely superseded by this collective approach as there are some cases in which the individual approach to trauma is appropriate, and others where the collective is appropriate.

When dealing with such extraordinary events such as the Holocaust, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, or the Republican exile of 1939 that create such an enormous disruption and change, it traumatizes more than mere individuals, and therefore must be conceived in a more collective framework. As Jeffrey Alexander asserts, “Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity” (1). This dramatic loss of identity and meaning breaks down the already established cohesion of the group and forces the group to reconfigure its identity by turning to memory. As the bonds attaching the community together are severed due to the event, the victims feel a moral responsibility to share the sufferings of others and to restore the sense of community by “narrating new foundations” (Alexander 63). In order for trauma to be classified as a collective experience, it does not need to be experienced directly by everyone in a particular community. Case in point is the collective trauma often associated with slavery. Regardless of whether or not one was directly a victim of slavery, blacks tend to identify themselves with slavery. This identification became a prominent point of departure for the Civil Rights movements of the 1960s and the blacks’ endeavor to receive equal rights.

What is at stake is the collectivity's identity, not merely the identity of each individual that experienced the trauma. This remits to the notion that individual identity cannot exist outside of collective identity and that memory is always group memory. As Ofelia Ferrán affirms: "Even before those personal memories are shared, and thus made collective, they are always already social, since the individuals are never free from the pressures and constraints of the various collectivities to which they belong" (2007; 60). In addition, as Dominick LaCapra argues, there is nothing intrinsically "individual" about such concepts as repression and working-through, for these concepts refer to processes that always involve modes of interaction and mutual reinforcement (LaCapra 1996; 43). Therefore, the new social identity is created with the collective, rather than the individual, as its basis. It is this collective identity that Max Aub and many other Spanish Republicans looked to restore in their testimonial writing about the concentration camps. The injury suffered by the Republicans during the Civil War and their internment in the French concentration camps merits the telling of this collective trauma through a new narrative that seeks to work through the trauma and restore the exiles' collective identity.

Since cultural traumas are defined by their enduring and prolonged effects over several generations, this further supports the classification of the Republican exile of 1939 as a cultural trauma. The collective memory of the Republicans seeks to redefine how the Spanish Civil War, the French concentration-camp experience and exile are recollected. The Spanish exiles endeavor to revive a memory that was for the most part not recollected during the Franco regime and even during the early years of the democratic period. What therefore distinguishes Max Aub's testimonial work as collective trauma is his continual need to represent the trauma of the concentration

camps, not as his own, but rather as one belonging to an entire group of exiles. This is illustrated by Aub's continual usage of victimized and marginalized narrators in the third person. Aub's testimonial work responds to the trauma of the concentration camps by portraying the life and experiences of the émigrés through fictitious narrators that represent their collective voice. Each protagonist, even those that are non-human, succeeds in delineating different dimensions of the trauma that Aub and his fellow concentration-camp victims experienced. It is this collection of voices, observations and sensations that ultimately paints a more complex picture of the concentration-camp experience.

The urgent need for representation of traumatic historical events often produces an overflow of images and symbols by artists, filmmakers and writers that endeavor to bear witness to the historical trauma by capturing the "true reality" of the event. The value of the image/symbol has nonetheless raised many questions and resulted in certain skepticism toward their capacity to remember and redeem the experience of the traumatic victim. However, the image/symbol continues to be a primary medium of disseminating trauma, especially in our multimedia and technologically advanced world that is constantly inundated with images of tragic disasters, which seem to integrate traumatic events into the collective imaginary. The September 11 attacks are a prime example of a traumatic historical event that was and continues to be witnessed through the image in all its many forms (Guerin and Hallas 5). Although images make us think that we are seeing the traumatic event, there may be many dimensions of the event that pictures do not capture. This forces one to ask the question: What does testimonial literature have to do with showing images? Since the end of World War II, the narrativization of the

survivor's testimony has taken precedence over the image as writing came to incarnate a more active element of bearing witness. As Frances Guerin and Roger Hallas affirm, "Words are more frequently considered closer to the communication of feelings and experience. Words, particularly those of oral testimony, are still connected to the body of the sufferer while the material image implies a separation from that which it captures" (7). In spite of the absence of actual images, the narrating of traumatic events and the telling of stories through realist descriptions carries with it a mnemonic function that allows the reader to mentally construct images in his/her mind of the horrors that were committed. Written testimony therefore represents a device that aids memory by etching the image into one's consciousness.

Jeffrey Alexander, who discusses the genre of the tragic narrative, places the central focus of the tragic narrative on "the nature of the crime, its immediate aftermath, and on the motives and relationships that led up to it" (226). Aub's testimonial work of the concentration camps problematizes precisely these issues. His collection of short stories in *Enero Sin Nombre* dedicates an entire section to each category defined by Alexander: *la guerra* (what led up to the trauma); *los campos de concentración* (nature of the crime); and *el exilio* (the aftermath). Aub's protagonists are tragic, for they fail to overcome or take control of the (traumatic) events that they face. They are so overwhelmed and engulfed by their situation that they lose their agency to deal directly with the events and become victims of the concentration camps, a phenomenon beyond their comprehension. As a result, each one of Aub's protagonists embodies a victim that provides a link with the tragic event. Their only means of survival is to tell their personal stories of the war or the camps whereby they recover a sense of self and agency in the

face of disaster and loss. Although they may never find their way out of the labyrinth, it is ultimately in the journey through it that they endeavor to recover their voice and provide hope for future generations.

### *Status of Knowledge*

The study of the life and work of Max Aub has become an increasingly important topic of discussion among scholars and academics of Spanish literary and cultural studies. Arguably, the most prominent and well-known intellectual on this subject matter is Ignacio Soldevila Durante, who has written extensively on Max Aub. Soldevila Durante's most renowned contributions to the study of Max Aub are his books: *El compromiso de la imaginación: vida y obra de Max Aub* and *La obra narrativa de Max Aub (1929–1969)*. Both of these works explore in-depth Aub's narrative work and examine each of Aub's literary genres. Soldevila also includes a final chapter in *El compromiso de la imaginación* that deals with the reception and resurgence of scholarship on Max Aub in Spain during the past decade. This chapter looks at the apparent absence and inaccessibility of Max Aub and his texts from both a historiographic and literary perspective throughout much of the second half of the twentieth century in Spain, while recognizing his increased popularity after the 1990s and into the twenty-first century due in large part to the creation of the Max Aub Foundation in Segorbe, Spain in 1991. This notion is further corroborated by María Paz Sanz Álvarez who states that: "La historia de la literatura no ha sido precisamente justa con

Max Aub, aún después de veinticinco años de su desaparición, queda mucho por andar” (1999; 159).

Among other prominent Max Aub scholars are Sebastiaan Faber, whose book *Exile and Cultural Hegemony: Spanish Intellectuals in Mexico, 1939-1975*, in addition to dealing with the problematic surrounding the exile of the Spanish Republicans, dedicates an entire chapter to analyzing Max Aub’s work and his conception of exile as aporia. Faber examines Aub’s utter frustration with exile, which he conceives as a “dead end,” as the Franco regime ultimately succeeded in limiting his access to a Spanish audience. His book also looks at the role of Spanish intellectuals in exile. Faber places emphasis on the contributions of the Republican intellectuals in Mexico and their endeavors to prove their legitimacy as the true representatives of “Spanish culture” in Mexico in spite of the Franco regime’s claim to this patrimony.<sup>18</sup> This explains the Republicans’ perseverance in continuing to maintain their government in exile, which officially did not end until 1976. Other prominent figures that have researched and published works on Aub that will be included in this study are: José Antonio Pérez Bowie, Manuel Asnar Soler, José María Naharro-Calderón, Francisco Caudet and Michael Ugarte.

The notion of exile, especially the exile of the Spanish Republicans in 1939, has become a widely investigated topic, which has generated numerous studies that have attempted to explain and give new meaning to the generation of Spaniards that were forced to leave Spain at the end of the Civil War and whose literary works had been silenced for a long time. One of the more prominent studies of the Republican exile is that of Michael Ugarte, whose book *Shifting Ground: Spanish Civil War Exile Literature* explores many theoretical questions surrounding exile and exile literature and testimony,

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<sup>18</sup> Faber refers to this idea as the “cultural hegemony” of the Republicans.

and presents an in-depth analysis of many of the issues and vicissitudes faced by the Republican exiles. These issues will be thoroughly discussed in chapter two as I attempt to outline a general theory of exile and connect its relation to trauma and testimony theory. Ugarte also devotes three chapters to Max Aub, where he traces Aub's exilic journeys and probes Aub's literary production in exile, with special emphasis placed on the works of *The Magical Labyrinth* and *La gallina ciega*. Louis Stein's book *Beyond Death and Exile: the Spanish Republicans in France, 1939–1955* and Patricia Fagan's *Exiles and Citizens: Spanish Republicans in Mexico* provide more historical overviews of the Republican exile out of Spain into France and from France to Mexico. These books look at the historical implications of the Republican exile and the various stages of their journey. Francisco Caudet's work *Hipótesis sobre el Exilio Republicano de 1939*, much like Ugarte's book, examines the condition and sociology of the Republican exile as it pertains to writing. Caudet looks at many of the different facets that affected the Republican exile, including an analysis of the concentration camps as well as the exiles' place within Mexico and the creation of a new diaspora of exiled Spanish intellectuals. Caudet studies both the historical and cultural implications of exile for the Republicans, including a detailed study of Max Aub's role as a prominent exile writer. José María Balcells and José Antonio Pérez Bowie have co-edited a book titled *El exilio cultural de la Guerra Civil (1936–1939)*, which examines an extensive range of cultural works produced by many forgotten and unrecognized Republican exiles, whose contributions in exile deserve attention and acknowledgment. Finally, perhaps the most elaborate and wide-spread study of Spanish exile was conducted by José Luis Abellán in his seven-volume work titled *El Exilio Español de 1939*. This comprehensive corpus of works

covers the many dimensions and facets of the Republican exile, beginning with their exodus and migration out of Spain; their participation with the French Resistance during World War II and their subsequent internment in Nazi concentration camps; the philosophy of the exiles and their contribution to academic, scholarly, and cultural journals in exile; the literary contribution of the exiles, their various artistic and scientific contributions, and finally an analysis of the place and status of the Catalán, Basque, and Galician Nationalisms in exile.

At a more general level, the abundance of literary theory, especially the advent of trauma theory and the concept of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), that has emerged as a result of World War II and the Holocaust have become important theoretical tools that have enabled and facilitated a more extensive and analytical dialogue among scholars regarding the immeasurable dimensions of the concentration-camp world. As Ruth Leys states: “There is the absolutely indispensability of the concept of psychic trauma for understanding the psychic harms associated with certain central experiences of the twentieth century, crucially the Holocaust” (2). My analysis will use both trauma theory and theoretical premises of the *camps*<sup>19</sup> as points of departure in analyzing Aub’s work and as a means of entering what many psychoanalysts have termed an “inaccessible” world. The emergence of Trauma Studies in the 1980s and 1990s is in large part due to the work of Cathy Caruth, Dori Laub, Shoshana Felman, Dominick LaCapra, Paul de Man and the rise of Holocaust Studies. During this period numerous critical texts appeared that have shaped the current discourse about witnessing

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<sup>19</sup> The theoretical premises of the camps that will be discussed in this dissertation refer primarily to the German camps, which have generated a vast amount of theoretical discussions.

and testimony.<sup>20</sup> These texts in large part deal with the experiencing, remembering and representation of atrocity. Such texts deal more specifically with the burden of bearing witness and testifying to unclaimed experiences and how language, or its inadequacy, is used to testify to this unspeakable atrocity. In addition to the increased academic and public awareness of trauma and trauma theory, a number of narratives about trauma also appeared during this period. Trauma theory is particularly appropriate for the study of Spain's traumatic past, for as Ofelia Ferrán states: "Trauma theory explores such questions of memory in a manner particularly appropriate for understanding the difficulties in recovering, at both a personal and collective level, a past of violence and repression such as that of contemporary Spain" (2007; 16).

Within the context of Max Aub studies, despite valuable research that has recently emerged, there have been very few studies that have delved systematically into the body of Aub's literature dealing with the concentration camps. Although many scholars have alluded to Aub's concentration-camp experience, there have been few attempts to investigate this problematic as a whole, that is, to provide an encompassing study of the symbolic role of the concentration camp throughout Aub's literary work. Most of the scholarly criticism tends to analyze Aub's work from the perspective of the "exile experience" or the "problem of exile," as they consider Aub's work from the vantage point of an exiled writer. It is undoubtedly true that Max Aub is defined as an exile; however, we must not overlook the fact that Aub is also a survivor of the French concentration camps. There has been ample research conducted on the historical implications and ramifications of the Republican exiles in the French concentration

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<sup>20</sup> Among the most notable texts are: *Testimony. Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*; *Unclaimed Experience: trauma, narrative, and history*; *Trauma. Explorations in Memory*; *Representing the Holocaust history, theory, trauma*; and *Writing History, Writing Trauma*.

camps, but what is lacking is an in-depth study of the representation of this experience via literary means by survivors of the camps. This requires the use of additional theoretical tools such as trauma and memory theory, which are absent from most analyses of Aub's work. A recent study that engages these issues is Francie Cate-Arries' book *Spanish Culture behind Barbed Wire: memory and representation of the French Concentration Camps, 1939–1945*, one of the first in-depth studies that explores the world of the French concentration camp through the lens of fiction. Cate-Arries conceptualizes the concentration camp as a symbolic place where the survivors of the French concentration camps “[S]pawn a rich legacy of cultural works,” (2004; 15). These cultural works illustrate that although the camp survivors may have lost their homeland and identity, they did not lose their memory. As Cate-Arries also affirms, “The camps are configured as a kind of construction site for the nation in exile, a place where the survivors of the Civil War begin to inscribe a new national history...and cultural identity in exile” (2004; 16). Based on this definition, the French concentration camps become landmarks where the collective memories and recollections of the survivors are located. This is certainly the case for Max Aub, as I will attempt to illustrate in this dissertation. Aub turns to writing about the concentration camp in order to retell and reconstruct his lost/erased identity and history as a Spanish Republican exile and as a survivor of the French concentration-camps. I take as my point of departure Cate-Arries' theory of the camps as I attempt to apply it to Aub's work in an effort to further unravel the crisis of representing the camps in his narrative. Her chapter dedicated to Aub analyzes his theatrical play *Morir por cerrar los ojos*, although her analysis focuses more on Aub's denunciation of the French for “turning a blind eye” to

the injustices committed by the French government, ultimately denouncing the inaction of the French and their tolerance and support of the internment of the Spanish exiles. My analysis of this play will examine this work from a different perspective, looking more closely at the actual internal parameters of the concentration camp represented as a world outside of human law. My analysis will also compare this play with *Campo francés*, which is an Avant-guard, cinematic version of *Morir por cerrar los ojos*, where Aub incorporates many of his vanguard tendencies to create a new work. I thus go beyond Cate-Arries' work in addressing the dialectic and diachronic relationship between the two texts and trying to understand what prompted Aub to feel the necessity to write *Campo francés* in a more Avant-garde form.

The only comprehensive study to date that has been done specifically on Max Aub's concentration-camp literature is Eloisa Nos Aldás' dissertation titled *El testimonio literario de Max Aub sobre los campos de concentración en Francia (1940–1942)*. In this dissertation, Eloisa Nos Aldás examines Aub's testimonial literature regarding his internment in the French concentration camps of Le Vernet and Djelfa between 1940 and 1942. This dissertation embarks upon a study of the testimonial literature that Aub produces either inside the concentration camp or outside the camp whose theme is about the camp. My study will examine this problematic from a much different perspective than that utilized by Nos Aldás, especially as my analysis places an emphasis on trauma theory. The word trauma or any conception of trauma theory does not appear in Nos Aldás' study as it focuses more on a philological and comparative study of Aub's concentration-camp works. Although Nos Aldás uses memory theory in her analysis, she orients her study towards an examination and comparison of the evolution of Aub's

writing at various stages of his exile and to those texts of fellow camp inmates that reflect a similar experience as Aub's. This especially pertains to the constant revision of notes that Aub takes in the camps during different phases of his internment, which reflect changing nuances in Aub's memory and in the tone of his narration at different junctures of his life depending on where he was writing from. Nos Aldás examines the different discursive strategies employed by Aub to present his concentration-camp experience according to the moment in which he writes the text and the distance between the experience and the writing about the experience. Her study looks closely at three particular aspects of testimony literature from the concentration camps: the exile experience, the concentration-camp world during the 1930s and 1940s in France and the need to express this experience through testimonial literature. Although she classifies this genre of works under the category of testimonial literature, she does not enter into a theoretical discussion of trauma as a means of explaining the *need* to give testimony. My objective is to not only look at Max Aub as an exile, but also to look at him as a survivor of a concentration-camp experience and from that perspective use trauma and memory theory not only to examine how Max Aub deals with and approaches his trauma through literature, but also to show how Max Aub presents a new, different way of looking at trauma. It is my contention that Aub's work can be seen as going beyond the traditional postmodernist or poststructuralist approach to trauma as an individual phenomenon by representing trauma as a collective experience. All of Aub's concentration-camp narratives reflect this notion in their elimination of the first person voice ("Yo") and the incorporation of multiple narrative voices. As Laurie Vickroy affirms:

The use of multiple narrators who give first-person testimony, bear witness for characters silenced by trauma, provoke the protagonist's resistant memory, or suggest collective suffering. The complexities of traumatic memory and a subject's difficult relation to the past are suggested by the use of multiple voices and positioning within characters or narrators as well as between them. (27)

While psychoanalysis disarticulates the boundary between the individual and the collective by focusing more on the individual, Aub's narrative of the camps reconstructs this boundary, placing the collective back into the equation. This is often illustrated by the insertion of lists, wherein Aub returns to other camp victims their proper names and identities.

Unlike Nos Aldás' dissertation, which lacks an in-depth analysis of the historical context that provides an essential framework for the Republican exile of 1939, my study will look at both the historical situation in Spain that ultimately led up to the mass exodus of 1939 and the Franco regime's position and policies toward the Spanish exiles. It is this position that greatly impacted and complicated the exiles' ability to bear witness to their trauma in spite of their location outside of Francoist Spain. The decision to embark upon the road to exile and to abandon one's motherland is not one that is made overnight, but rather is the consequence and product of a long series of actions that ultimately results in this need. Therefore, to understand the Republican exile of 1939 one must understand the conditions that gave rise to this phenomenon, which remits us to Spain's historical context before and during the Civil War, as well as under Franco.

This historical context is crucial to understanding the various manifestations and experimentations that Aub undertakes in his writing and also sets the stage for his ultimate reencounter with Spain in 1969, which he documents in his work *La gallina ciega*. I will also examine the historical context of France during these crucial years (1939–1942) and its subsequent change of attitude and defense of the Republican exiles after World War II. An examination of this historical information gives further light to the trauma suffered by the Spanish exiles in France and in the concentration camps. It is also imperative to look at the exiles' process of leaving the camps and explore the different paths that they would take: many of them going to Mexico or the USSR, others returning to Spain, while others were taken to Nazi concentration camps as they were captured by Nazi soldiers during World War II due to their participation in the Foreign Legion.<sup>21</sup> While other European countries actively engaged in commissions and activities seeking to bring justice to their fallen countrymen that succumbed to the Nazi camps, the Spanish government never made any attempt nor undertook the least effort to locate those Spaniards that died in the Nazi camps. As Javier Alfaya states: “Nadie se ocupó ni oficial ni privadamente de reconstruir la historia de los republicanos españoles en los campos de concentración alemanes. Tuvieron que ser los testimonios personales

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<sup>21</sup> Once the Nazis had occupied France, those who still remained in the French concentration camps were turned over to the Germans. The armistice signed by France included a clause that mandated the handing over of any opposition to the Third Reich. The situation of the Spanish exiles worsened under the German occupation. While the Nazi authorities turned some of those prisoners over to the Francoist police, others were taken to German concentration camps. Francisco Caudet estimates that approximately 8,000 Spanish exiles ended up in Nazi concentration camps, and of those 8,000, roughly 5,000 were assassinated at Mauthausen, Dachau, Oranienburg and Buchenwald. In addition to these figures, around 40,000 Spanish exiles succeeded in escaping to the Americas (1999; 198). Those refugees that remained in France were subject to strict police control and vigilance. Mariano Constante, a Spanish exile and survivor of both the French and German concentration camps, recounts in his book *Los años rojos. Holocausto de los Españoles*, his experiences of life and survival as a soldier in the Spanish Civil War, internment in the French camp Septfonds and the Nazi camp Mauthausen.

de algunos supervivientes, recogidos aquí y allá, los que permitieron iniciar una reconstrucción del episodio” (104).

### *Structure of Dissertation*

Each chapter of this dissertation analyzes one or more texts and examines the different discursive/literary strategies and genres employed by Aub in his representation and remembrance of the camps. These texts are also grouped together thematically based on various recurrent issues that reappear throughout Aub’s concentration-camp narrative. In each of the works analyzed here, the concentration camp, whether directly or indirectly, emerges as the central place of memory. The particular texts examined constitute only a selection of Aub’s texts that deal with the concentration camps. I selected these texts, as opposed to others, due to the genres that they represent in addition to the thematic issues that they address.

The chapter one examines the effects of exile and internment in the camps on the life and work of Max Aub. In order to better understand Aub’s need to write about the camps, one must first understand the trajectory of his life, which has been wrought by numerous exiles and internments in French and African concentration camps and jails. These events, along with the outbreak of the Civil War, changed the direction of Aub’s life and literary production. This chapter provides the necessary historical and biographical background to understand how Aub’s work and life are ultimately shaped in large measure by the experience of the camps.

Chapter two sets out to explain the historical roots of the Republican exile and to establish the theoretical framework for analyzing the concepts of exile and the concentration camp. I examine the historical contexts of Spain and France during the Spanish Civil War and the post-war period that ultimately gave rise to the Republicans' need to seek refuge in France. I also provide a historical overview of the French concentration camps and present many of the important theoretical premises regarding memory, trauma and exile theory that will form the foundation of my analysis of Aub's literary production.

The next chapter explores Aub's need to go outside the traditional bounds of narrative structure as he incorporates Avant-garde techniques in an attempt to present an estranged view of the concentration camp through the use of unusual narrators. This chapter also examines the use of humor as a narrative strategy that enables Aub to enter into a discussion of the concentration-camp experience. I use Holocaust theory as a point of departure by looking at traditional representations of the Holocaust and concentration-camp experience to explore alternative methods for representing such a reality. Holocaust writing has not only become the major paradigm for writing about atrocity, but has also generated much valuable new critical theory about witnessing.

The fourth chapter examines a recurring theme present in many of Max Aub's texts: the erasure and oblivion of the memory of both the Spanish exiles and of the French concentration camps in contemporary Spanish discourse as a result of the Franco regime and its politics against memory. I examine two texts from the book *Enero Sin Nombre* (*El remate* and *El cementerio de Djelfa*), as well as his diary *La gallina ciega*, that comment precisely on this issue and endeavor to vindicate this lost/forgotten

memory. In each one of these texts, many of the same issues and ideas are continuously repeated. This technique exemplifies Aub's endeavor to work through his traumatic memory of the camps (and exile) via representational and literary modes that help him better understand that reality. I also examine Aub's use of displacement and the relationship between absence/presence, as narrative strategies that comment on the absence of memory to invoke it back into contemporary discourse.

Chapter five delves further into the theoretical realm surrounding the concentration-camp world in two of Aub's plays: *Morir por cerrar los ojos* and *Campo francés*. Both of these works deconstruct and problematize the concentration-camp world, presenting it as a world existing outside the normal realm of natural law. I compare and contrast these very similar works and explore the underlying reason behind Aub's need to experiment with the traditional theatrical genre in order to create an alternative, Avant-garde version of *Morir por cerrar los ojos*, which becomes *Campo francés*. My point of departure for analyzing these two works comes from Giorgio Agamben's theory of *The Camp*, with his text *Means without End: Notes on Politics*. Agamben's theory maintains that the concentration camp is a place that exists outside of ordinary law, embodying a state of exception.

I then go on to explore, in chapter six, the presence/representation of the camps in non-literary texts. I examine two strategies: texts that do not specifically address the camp, but in which, I believe, one can trace a meta-discourse wherein Aub's memory of the trauma of the camps is present, and texts that mention the camps, but use a "special" language to talk about them. These texts do not conform to the traditional conception of bearing witness and therefore ultimately propose an alternative way of looking at trauma

through literature. The objective of this chapter is twofold: to illustrate how Max Aub offers a new way of looking at trauma and to examine how Aub represents the camps in non-literary texts. The primary texts that will be examined here are *Hablo Como Hombre* and *Diarios (1939–1972)*.

In conclusion, this dissertation reexamines Aub's apparent obsession and need to write about his experience in the camps in order to answer the following questions: Why is the concentration camp such an important symbol for Aub in his literary work?; What different narrative techniques does Aub devise in order to present this symbol?; Does the concentration camp reflect one symbol in Aub's work, or many, interrelated ones?; and What is the meaning (or meanings) of this symbol?

## Working Through the Labyrinth of Exile and the Camps:

### The Life and Work of Max Aub

Born in Paris in 1903, with a Parisian mother and a German father, although always identifying himself with Spain (in spite of possessing a Mexican passport upon his death), Max Aub exemplifies the problematic surrounding identity politics and the quest for self-realization.<sup>22</sup> Struggling to define his own identity, much of Max Aub's work reflects upon the Spanish Civil War and his detainment in French concentration camps in an effort to come to terms with his identity as a Spanish exile and to reclaim the lost voice of the exiles and concentration-camp survivors as they have been systematically excluded from Spanish history. To address the subject of exile for Max Aub is to talk of *exiles* in the plural, as his life has been characterized by numerous different exiles all of which have impacted his life and work in various ways.<sup>23</sup> However, what ultimately connects each one of Aub's exilic pilgrimages is his avid devotion to writing about Spain, especially the Civil War, which becomes the common thread and subject matter of the

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<sup>22</sup> Aub was born on June 2, 1903, on Cité Trévise Street in Paris, France at his parent's home. His father, Frédéric Guillaume Aub Marx, was a traveling salesman, while his mother, Suzanne Mohrenwitz, was an antique dealer.

<sup>23</sup> As Michael Ugarte asserts: "In many ways, Aub is the embodiment of the Spanish Civil War exile writer, for his life and literary corpus were determined by some sort of banishment at nearly every stage" (113).

majority of Aub's literary work.<sup>24</sup> Just as the Generation of 1898 wrote extensively on the "problema de España," the exiles obsessively turned their attention back to Spain in an effort to nostalgically recreate and reinvent their lost homeland. Their writings primarily focused on the pre-war, the Civil War and exile periods. This illustrates that in reality Aub never really abandoned Spain at least from an emotional standpoint. Even while in Mexico, Spain remained a constant preoccupation in Aub's mind, as he sought to deal with the anguish of his physical separation from Spain by expressing his love and dedication to his country through writing. Exile supposed a continual desire to connect with the past in order remember the exile's cultural roots.<sup>25</sup> Writing therefore becomes the only avenue through which the exile could remain close to this "forbidden" Spain. From this interminable connection with Spain arose Aub's fervent desire to publish his works, both his novels and short stories, in scholarly and intellectual journals during the Franco regime, although this was often met with much difficulty and frustration. In a letter that Aub wrote to Antonio Caamaño on October 15, 1959, Aub tells his friend: "Acabé una novela que quisiera ver publicada en España, aunque tengo muchas dudas de lograrlo" (Archivo Max Aub Caja 3 – 17/16).

Aub's first exile occurred in September 1914, when at the age of eleven he and his family were forced to flee France for a more neutral Spain in order to escape the war and the persecution of the French as a result of Aub's German/Jewish heritage.<sup>26</sup> Each

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<sup>24</sup> Aub and his generation referred to the Civil War as the "Gran Cosa."

<sup>25</sup> In the words of Miguel González Sanchis, the director of the Max Aub Foundation in Segorbe, Spain: "Todo su peregrinaje tuvo como finalidad justificar ante sí mismo, y especialmente hacia todos, su identificación con España. Su vida fue España. Su convencimiento de que había nacido para escribir, y principalmente de y para España" (269).

<sup>26</sup> Aub's family had connections to Spain, as his father (Friedrich W. Aub Marx), a trader and merchant, traveled frequently to Spain for business purposes, spending up to six months a year there. In addition, in spite of living in France since 1898, Aub's father never renounced his German citizenship, refusing to become a French citizen. As the Germans invaded France during World War I, Aub's father was traveling

year, the Aub family would leave Paris to spend the summer at their home in Montcornet, a small town located near the municipality of La Bosse. It was precisely in Montcornet, during the summer of 1914, while Friedrich Aub was in Cádiz, where the war surprised the Aub family. The Aubs immediately became the target of retaliations by the French, prompting the family to flee to Spain in September,<sup>27</sup> leaving all of their belongings behind. As Aub describes: “De la noche a la mañana nos convertimos de amigos en enemigos” (*Epistolario Soldevila/Aub* 52). The trip to Barcelona lasted eight days due to several complications and the lack of organization with the railways. Upon arriving in Valencia, Aub and his family settled in a house on Reina Street in Cabañal.

Open agnostics, Aub’s parents enrolled Aub in a lay school, the Escuela Moderna and the Alliance Française, from 1914–1915, and later completed his secondary education at the Instituto de Segunda Enseñanza Media Luís Vives.<sup>28</sup> Upon completing his secondary education in 1920, Aub had to choose between attending the university or working for his father. He opted for the latter, as he was not convinced that the programs in the department of literatures and languages would respond to his needs, and he was also looking for a secure means of economic independence that would allow him to get married. This would lead Aub through a period of fifteen years (1920–1935) to travel through Levante, Aragón, Cataluña and even other parts of Europe selling a variety of different products, working six to eight months every year for his father as a traveling

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in Spain. He saw his return to France virtually impossible and therefore decided to move his family to Spain to escape harm. Aub’s mother left France with her children to join Aub’s father in Barcelona. They eventually settled in Valencia on Reina street.

<sup>27</sup> Ironically Aub’s paternal uncles were fighting with the German army, while his maternal uncles were fighting with the French army.

<sup>28</sup> Until he was ten years old, Aub attended a classic French school in Paris at the Colegio Rollin, a lay institution. Aub openly admitted that he was a mediocre student, lazy in some subjects, while strong in others. However, ever since he could remember, Aub was always an avid reader, acquiring a large library of books that he kept in the basement of their home in París.

salesman. This experience enabled Aub to acquire a new sense and perspective of the world that the majority of his contemporaries did not possess.<sup>29</sup> Aub used his earnings to foster his literary vocation—buying books, subscribing to journals and writing—and also frequenting cultural activities in Madrid and Barcelona. Thanks to his friendship with Enrique Díez Canedo—the most respected critic in Madrid at that time—Aub was able to read some of his poetry at the Ateneo.<sup>30</sup> Valencia also became the site of perhaps one of Aub’s most important and significant decisions: upon turning twenty-one in 1924, Aub decided to become naturalized as a Spanish citizen by joining the military; however, he was saved from military duty due to his myopia as he was declared “useless” by the military. This action would solidify Aub’s place as a Spanish citizen whose *patria* was now Spain.<sup>31</sup>

It was also in Valencia where Aub began to formulate an interest in literature, frequenting the tertulias<sup>32</sup> and subscribing to various literary journals in numerous languages,<sup>33</sup> with a particular interest in the Vanguard and in the Generation of 1927. The Vanguard’s preoccupation with the notion of dehumanization and its emphasis on breaking away from tradition, while granting preference to new, experimental forms of art, would become a recurring theme in his work. This resulted in Aub’s adoption of a more Cervantine approach towards literature as he advocates for a certain break with the traditional literary authority and problematizes the notion of writing fiction. Aub

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<sup>29</sup> As Gérard Malgat asserts: “Ese largo viaje de negocios a través de la sociedad española contribuye a la elaboración de la visión caleidoscópica que caracteriza la construcción de sus obras” (2007; 44).

<sup>30</sup> After arriving in Spain, Aub learned Spanish quickly and wrote his first poems in Spanish at the age of 12.

<sup>31</sup> Aub could have chosen between three different nationalities: German, French or Spanish, but he never doubted his choice of becoming a Spanish citizen.

<sup>32</sup> Aub gathered with many of his contemporary writers at the Café Regina in Valencia.

<sup>33</sup> Aub subscribed to French, Belgian and Italian literary journals of the Vanguard. The journals *España* and *Revista de Occidente* also constituted important sources of information for Aub. Aub credits Crommelynck, Romain, and Cocteau for their influence on his use of the French Vanguard in his theater.

questions the concept of the authority of the text by transgressing the limits between fiction and reality. Therefore, as José Antonio Pérez Bowie contends, Max Aub's work represents an example of writing that remains in a permanent state of subversion, which drives Aub to search for a new direction of literary expression and to denounce the insufficiency of the accepted and available means of communication (1997; 210).

Aub's erasure of the boundary between fiction/fantasy and reality results in the formation of an interdependence between his testimonial and fantastical/playful narratives whose subversion of traditional norms becomes the only way in which Aub can continue to bear witness and maintain his ethical/moral commitment to literature.<sup>34</sup> In order to write about a reality that goes beyond normal comprehension, Aub must also extend himself and go beyond conventional literary norms. Relating a limit-experience event requires going to the limit of one's literary capacity, and this is exactly what Aub accomplishes with the incorporation of the Vanguard into his narrative. However, Aub, as opposed to the majority of the Vanguard writers of the time, did not abandon his Vanguard tendencies after the Civil War, but rather continued to use them as a means of complementing his narrative work. This resulted in the creation of several experimental works, such as *Manuscrito Cuervo*, *Enero Sin Nombre*, *Campo francés*, *La gallina ciega*, *Jusep Torres Campalans* and *Luis Álvarez Petreña* among other works that explore the concentration camp from varying unique angles.

Aub's literary work would first begin to appear in the early 1920s with the publication of his first anthology of poems in 1925 titled *Los poemas cotidianos*, written between 1921 and 1922, before the writing of his first play in 1923. He would also

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<sup>34</sup> Aub stated that an intellectual is one for whom political problems are also moral problems.

publish his work *Geografía*<sup>35</sup> in 1925 followed by *Fabula Verde* in 1932 and *Luis Álvarez Petreña* in 1934.<sup>36</sup> In spite of the early appearance of his Vanguard poetry, Aub never truly credited himself as being a genuine poet or as bearing the gift of poetry, but rather always considered himself first and foremost a playwright. He declared on several occasions that if the Civil War had never occurred, then he probably would never have written novels and would have focused exclusively on theater.<sup>37</sup> This statement clearly illustrates the impact that the Civil War and his experience in exile had on the direction of his literary production, which took a drastic turn after the end of the war. In a poignant letter that Aub wrote to Charles Rudolf Hoelzle<sup>38</sup> he states: “El cambio evidente de mi obra desde 1936 se debe pura y exclusivamente a la guerra civil. Hecho bastante importante para todos los españoles de mi época” (Archivo Max Aub Caja 7 – 32/20). In a letter to another student studying his work, Aub restates this notion:

Desde luego, entre lo publicado antes y después de la guerra hay una diferencia total, no solamente a mí sino a cualquier escritor que haya pasado por los mismos trances. Una guerra en sí tal vez se pueda olvidar pero una guerra más un exilio, no. Y basta el exilio sólo si esforzoso o demuestra una toma de posición perfectamente clara. (Archivo Max Aub Caja 4–25/2)

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<sup>35</sup> *Geografía* was published in *Cuadernos Literarios* and is considered to represent the starting point to Aub’s vanguard narrative.

<sup>36</sup> With the exception of *Luis Álvarez Petreña*, many critics tend to forget about Aub’s prewar narrative, focusing more attention on Aub’s theater.

<sup>37</sup> Max Aub said that he always found it easier to say what he wanted to say through many characters rather than through his own voice. This is the main reason why Aub preferred to write theater.

<sup>38</sup> Charles Rudolf Hoelzle was a student who was writing his doctoral thesis on Max Aub and maintained contact with Max Aub through a collection of letters in which Max clarified many of the uncertain biographical details of his life.

The Spanish Civil War, not only for Aub's generation, but also for those before and after his, was transformed into the "Gran Cosa," the determining factor in their way of life and their way of understanding the world. Although Aub has traditionally been labeled as belonging to the Generation of 1927, the thematic content of his works better resembles that of generations that came after the Civil War.<sup>39</sup> Unlike in the works of the Generation of 1927, Aub's novels tend to focus on representing the difficult and painful aspects of the Civil War and the subsequent Republican exile.<sup>40</sup>

By July 1936, Aub was already on the path toward a career in the literary field when the Francoist uprising occurred on July 18, marking the beginning of the Civil War. At the onset of the war, Aub found himself in Madrid, but quickly returned to Valencia by the end of July. Aub remained in Valencia during the Civil War where he dedicated himself to the defense of the Second Republic and to directing the Teatro de la Universidad de Valencia. He also co directed the socialist newspaper *Verdad* with Josep Renau until November 1936. Aub's commitment to Republican Spain accounts for the recurring presence of Spain as a principle background in his works of *The Magical Labyrinth*.<sup>41</sup> On November 22, 1936, Aub accepted a position as the Assistant Head of the Department of Culture of the Spanish Embassy in Paris. He remained there for six months collaborating with the Spanish ambassador, Luis Araquistáin, and working as the Assistant Director of the Paris Exposition. Among the many cultural projects in which Aub participated was the recruitment of Pablo Picasso to paint a mural-size painting that

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<sup>39</sup>The beginning of Aub's (literary) generation was between 1925 and 1930.

<sup>40</sup> Max Aub defined the novel as: "Imagen justa y viva de la naturaleza humana, representando sus pasiones, humores y cambios de fortuna, para placer y enseñanza de la humanidad" (quoted in Soldevila Durante 1973; 329).

<sup>41</sup> All of Aub's novels of *The Magical Labyrinth* were banned in Spain until 1978 with the exception of *Campo del moro*.

would be placed in the entrance of the newly constructed Spanish Pavilion in Paris. The painting that Picasso eventually chose for the exhibition was his famous work *Guernica*.<sup>42</sup>

Aub returned to Spain around the middle of 1937 where he was later nominated, on August 22, 1937 by the Ministerio de Instrucción Pública, as the general secretary of the Consejo Central de Teatro, in addition to serving as the Secretary of the National Board of Theater. That same year Aub also participated in the *X Congreso Internacional de Teatro* in Paris. Aub's life would take a new direction when, in 1938, he and André Malraux began to work on the production of the film *Sierra de Teruel* that was based on Malraux's novel *L'Espoir*.<sup>43</sup> The filming began on July 20, 1938, and lasted six months during which Malraux and Aub confronted many difficulties trying to film a movie about the Civil War during the war. During the last days of January 1939, the advance of Francoist troops toward Barcelona forced Malraux, Aub and their entire movie crew to flee Barcelona and take refuge in France. Aub finally left Spain on February 1, 1939, as he crossed the border at Cerbère with André Malraux and the film crew for *Sierra de Teruel*, and later entered Paris, where his wife and daughters had been residing since March 1937. However, Aub would soon return to Spain, through Bourg Madame, within two or three days to get the remaining movie equipment that had been left behind.

Upon returning to the country from which he had been forced to flee twenty-five years prior, the same ghosts that forced him to leave France the first time had now intensified, ultimately resulting in an internal exile inside his own country of origin. However, unlike many of the other Spanish exiles that crossed the French border in

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<sup>42</sup> Max Aub was the person who actually gave Picasso the check from the Spanish government for his painting *Guernica*.

<sup>43</sup> Aub translated *L'Espoir* into Spanish and converted the novel into a cinematic script.

January and February 1939, and who were almost immediately interned in the concentration camps, Max Aub's fate and his route to the concentration camps took an alternative path. Aub originally had no intentions of leaving Paris, or Europe for that matter, as he was focused on promoting his literary and cinematic productions. This is illustrated in his *Diarios*, where Aub wrote "¿Irse a América? ¿Para qué? Uno es de Europa, ¿qué se nos ha perdido allá?" (186). During the first year in Paris, Aub dedicated his time to working on the production of *Sierra de Teruel*, which he planned on premiering in France,<sup>44</sup> and on writing his novel *Campo cerrado*.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, due to many factors—the onset of World War II, the banning of the French Communist Party, and the establishment of censorship—the release of Aub's film was banned by the Daladier government. Upon the film's completion in late July, Aub and Malraux talked about the possibility of taking *Sierra de Teruel* to Mexico, whose government was more liberal and accepting toward the Republicans, and therefore more open to receiving the film. Aub even applied for a visa from the Mexican Embassy through Alfonso Reyes with the intention of showing *Sierra de Teruel* in Mexico, but this possibility soon evaporated as a result of Aub's detention on April 5, 1940.

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<sup>44</sup> *Sierra de Teruel*, whose original title was *L'Espoir* (1944), was a project undertaken by Max Aub and André Malraux for the Republican Government between July 1938 and January 1939. This film was first played at the "cine de Las Américas" in Spain on April 24, 1960; although, ironically, it was never played in Mexico. Max Aub classified this film as one of the greatest chapters of Spanish cinema of the time, although he was very reluctant to label the film as a documentary, preferring to look at it in terms of a "document" that pays homage to all of those that defended Spain's freedom against fascism. Aub stated that this film is: "una interpretación humana de nuestra lucha" (*Hablo como Hombre* 87). The filming of *Sierra de Teruel* was never completed due to the destruction of its negatives by the Nazis. The history behind the filming of *Sierra de Teruel* is in itself a series of tragic/traumatic events that were never told, as they, too, succumbed to the silence that reigned during the post-war period. Aub relives the trauma of the filming of *Sierra de Teruel* in one of his essays that appears in *Hablo como Hombre* where he recounts the arrival of Franco and his troops as they destroyed the city. With respect to the filming of the "document," Aub affirmed that: "Ninguno de los acontecimientos de la película son inventados sino traspuestos (*Hablo como Hombre* 94).

<sup>45</sup> Aub wrote *Campo cerrado* in Paris between May and August 1939 and for the first time turns to the subject matter of the Spanish Civil War as the base of his novel and of *The Magical Labyrinth*.

Upon his release from his first stay at the concentration camp of Le Vernet, Aub was on the verge of going to the United States to show *Sierra de Teruel* when he was detained a second time. Nevertheless, before his first internment in Le Vernet, Aub also spent much of his time during the first few months of his exile tirelessly devoted to writing, using his pen to document and bear witness to the three years of war that he had just witnessed. The events of the Spanish Civil War were still a fresh and open wound in the minds and hearts of the defeated Republicans, many of whom, like Aub, turned to writing as a remedy and a means of coping with their trauma.<sup>46</sup> What came out of this initial phase of writing was the first novel of Aub's novelistic series *The Magical Labyrinth: Campo cerrado* (1943) as well as his theatrical play *San Juan* (1943). Aub gave the manuscript of this novel to his friend Ignacio Mantecón, who had also spent time with Aub in the concentration camp of Le Vernet, and who, in 1940, took the manuscript to Mexico, holding on to it until Max Aub finally arrived in October of 1942. Upon finishing *Campo cerrado*, Aub immediately began to write *Campo abierto* while still in Paris, but was unable to complete the novel, for as he states: "vino la mala en las cárceles y los campos." As a result of his imprisonment in jails and concentration camps, in addition to his exile in Mexico, Aub was forced to postpone the completion of *Campo abierto* until 1948.<sup>47</sup> As Ignacio Soldevila Durante points out, *Campo abierto*, from the point of view of its creation, comes out a few years after *Campo de sangre*, although with respect to the chronology of the historical events that take place in the novel, it comes

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<sup>46</sup> Aub expresses the continual impact and presence of the Spanish Civil War in the following quote: "Para el mundo nuestra guerra tiende a borrarse, tiende a borrarse por el tiempo; pero no se borra, todavía es una feroz herida sin cicatrizar, con los labios abiertos..." (*Hablo como Hombre* 103).

<sup>47</sup> At the end of *Campo abierto* Aub writes: México 1948–50, which indicates that at the moment in which Aub recovered the manuscript, which was kept in the attic of his house in Paris, he then spent two years editing the novel before its publication in 1951. This presupposes the existence of a first-version of *Campo abierto* before Aub reedited it.

before *Campo de sangre* (1973; 69). Aub began to write *Campo de sangre* in Paris and finished it in Marseilles between 1940 and 1942 although the novel did not first appear until 1945 in Mexico.

The joint recognition of the Franco regime by the British and French governments on February 27, 1939, also proved to be a devastating blow to the exiled Republicans in France. This action ultimately reinforced the French government's indifference towards the Republican cause, illustrated by choosing to side with fascist Spain, and demonstrated its fear of Spanish Communism and of its presence on French soil. It is that fear that would ultimately lead to Max Aub's internment in the French concentration camps. Aub soon realized that his popularity in France was waning and that suspicion was constantly following him, which prompted him to seek refuge in Mexico. Aub therefore began to consult with Gilberto Bosques<sup>48</sup> in order to begin the immigration procedures to go to Mexico and, with Bosques' aid, Aub's application for a visa was approved on March 5, 1940. Nevertheless, the French government refused to grant Aub the visa, claiming that it was already too late and that his name had already been crossed off the SERE's list. The SERE (Servicio de Emigración para Republicanos Españoles) served as the primary organization that oversaw the exiles' transportation to Mexico. Exactly one month later,

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<sup>48</sup> As Mexico assumed its role as the primary "savior" that offered hope and refuge to the thousands of Spanish exiles that were so desperately waiting to embark upon new lands, President Lázaro Cárdenas named Gilberto Bosques general consul in France. His primary responsibility consisted in facilitating the immigration process for the Spanish exiles. Bosques proposed the idea of offering asylum in Mexico to all Spanish refugees and extending all of the Mexican government's services to expediting the immigration of the refugees to Mexico, offering them protection and even citizenship. Many credit Gilberto Bosques as the man responsible for saving the lives of the exiles due to his personal efforts and dedication. In his essay titled "Anna Seghers y Max Aub: dos destinos unidos por Giberto Bosques," José Luis Morro Casas praises the work of Bosques and illustrates Bosques's influence in the lives of two prominent exiles, whose arrival in Mexico was due to Bosques. As a result of Bosques's personal relationship with Max Aub, Aub benefited from special treatment, to which the majority of the exiles did not have access, such as special reports or "secret" information.

Aub's concentration-camp life and suffering in France would officially begin, on April 5, 1940, after receiving a false denunciation of being a dangerous Communist.

Aub, who had joined the Socialist Party (PSOE) in 1929, and who was an active member of that Party up until his exile, professed that he was not, nor ever had been a communist, although he also declared in *La gallina ciega* that he would never be anticommunist nor communist.<sup>49</sup> What did perpetuate Aub's reputation as a Communist was his close relationship and high esteem for Juan Negrín, the Prime Minister of the Spanish Republican Government in exile from 1939–1945, and a Socialist with noted Communist connections and influences. Aub openly expressed his admiration for Negrín, even calling him an “illustrious Spanish warrior,” who was neither looking for power nor willing to yield to the adversity that defeated him. A second factor that would be used against Aub four years later while jailed in Nice was his participation on June 10, 1937, in a meeting organized by a Popular Front faction of French intellectuals called “Savoires.” French Police witnessed the event wherein a report was filed to the Police Prefecture in which Aub's name was mentioned as a participant. As Gérard Malgat points out, the Police Prefecture completed its investigation on October 11, 1939, and concluded: “M. Aub ha llamado la atención de mis servicios en una reunión comunista llevada a cabo en la Casa de la Mutualidad bajo la presidencia de André VIOLLIS, en la que tomó la palabra. Considero que, en vista de las actuales circunstancias, no se recomienda que se autorice a este extranjero a residir en el departamento del Sena” (2007; 86). From that moment on, Aub was labeled as “suspicious,” and carefully observed, which did not bode well in a country noted for its hostility toward foreigners.

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<sup>49</sup> Aub also became an active member of the PSOE in Mexico, attending many of the PSOE activities and giving speeches commemorating certain anniversaries.

This explains why a false denunciation of being a militant communist made by the Francoist José Félix de Lequerica to the Francoist Embassy in Paris in March 1940 put in motion Aub's traumatic journey through exile and imprisonment. As Gérard Malgat has learned, the denunciation was made in the following terms: "Max Aub. Nacionalidad alemana. Nacionalizado español durante la guerra civil. Actividades: comunista y revolucionario de acción. Se cuenta su presencia en Francia. Llamar la atención de nuestro embajador sobre el mismo como sujeto peligroso. Decir a los consuls que no le den visado y le recojan el pasaporte si se presenta..." (2007; 89). Two days after the false denunciation, Lequerica wrote two letters to the French and Spanish Ministry of External Affairs requesting that they adopt whatever measures necessary against: "este comunista notorio de actividades peligrosas" (Malgat 2007; 90).

The French authorities communicated the accusation against Aub to the National Security and Criminal Justice branches, which put out an order for Aub's detention on March 27, 1940. Aub was finally detained on April 5, 1940. Aub's detention was not an isolated incident as the spring of 1940 was marked by massive arrests in France as protective measures were intensified and increased by the Vichy government targeted towards communist threats, "suspects" or "enemies" of the State. This is clearly illustrated in *Morir por cerrar los ojos* as the Police Inspector remarks: "Doscientos al día no son grano de anís para la brigada" (106). This led to the creation of a world of fear and angst in which everyone was considered a suspect and susceptible of being detained for no just reason. By the end of November 1939, approximately 20,000 foreigners were interned in France as a result of the Decree of September 1, 1939, which mandated the regrouping in "special centers" of all foreigners coming from "enemy" territories

(Venegas Grau 46). Consequently, concentration camps were constructed in a variety of different places: old factories, barns, schools, gymnasiums, auditoriums and sports stadiums, all of which lacked good living conditions.

It was these first few years of exile, years which ultimately proved to be the most confusing and trying period of Aub's life that would dramatically change the direction of his literary production. He expressed this sentiment in his *Diario* on October 1, 1952, when he wrote: "Qué infinitamente más largos, más llenos, fueron para mí los años de 1936 a 1942, que de 1942 hasta hoy" (217). During these first few years of exile and internment in French and North African concentration camps, Aub put aside for the moment the production of his novels of *The Magical Labyrinth* to dedicate his energy to writing about his experiences in the camps. The backdrop of these texts centers on the France of the early 1940s and Algeria, especially the concentration camp of Djelfa. Many of the texts that deal specifically with the concentration camp were actually written or conceptualized by Aub while he was imprisoned in the camps and later reedited and rewritten into the final versions that exist today. The majority of these texts were written between 1940 and 1948 although many were not actually published until later.<sup>50</sup> This period in Aub's life constitutes one of the greatest chapters of his literary production, considering the difficult and traumatic circumstances that Aub faced both in the camps and outside of the camps.

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<sup>50</sup> In some cases the actual time period in which the stories were written is unknown, although many were published for the first time in the second series of *No son cuentos* that was published in 1948 in number 11 of *Sala de espera*. A subsequent volume of *Ciertos cuentos* was published in 1955, in which many of these texts also appeared. Only a few of the stories that deal with the camps were published after 1948 such as: *Ese Olor* (1954); *El limpiabotas del Padre Eterno* (1954); *El cementerio de Djelfa* (1961) and *Campo francés* (1965). Arguably *Campo francés* marks Aub's final text that specifically deals with the camps, although later works, such as *Campo de los almendros* (1968) and *La gallina ciega* (1971) either directly or indirectly remit to this topic.

What is most ironic and puzzling about this turn of events is that Max Aub's position as a Spanish ambassador in France and his diplomatic connections to France, not to mention his French citizenship, were not enough to free him from internment in the camps. Just two days after his detainment, on April 7, 1940, Aub entered the stadium of Roland Garros,<sup>51</sup> which had been transformed into a detention center. There, Aub was reunited with two of his fellow exile friends José María Rancaño and José Ignacio Mantecón. Aub recounts that the French often exploited the interned in the concentration camps using them as cheap labor and forcing them to work long hours. As Ignacio Soldevila Durante indicates, between April and November 1940, more than seventy people died throughout many French concentration camps as a result of starvation and the brutal conditions endured by the detainees (2003; 35). Many historians oppose the classification of the French concentration camps as "concentration camps," since they were not extermination camps, like those constructed by the Nazis. Also, if the severity of an event is assessed by the number of deaths caused by the disaster, of course the French camps do not compare with other natural or man-made disasters. However, despite the numbers, one can argue that with the exception of the gas chambers, these camps did contain the ingredients and seeds of extermination as the conditions of the French camps were tragic in their own right. In the face of traumatic disasters, as Kellermann argues, extreme forms of suffering are not comparable, and one should never say that one form of mass murder is "less terrible" or even "better" than another (44).

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<sup>51</sup> The stadium of Roland Garros becomes the focal point and the central place around which the plot revolves in Aub's two plays *Morir por cerrar los ojos* and *Campo francés*. In both of these plays, Aub describes the plight of the Spanish exiles that were detained in the famous stadium.

On May 2, 1940, the French Police Department sent a letter to the Ministry of Interior in which they refer to 28 “undesirable foreigners,” including Aub. As the Germans approached Spain, Aub was transferred on May 30, 1940, to the first of his two internments in the concentration camp of Le Vernet d’Ariège. This camp would become the central place of enunciation and, indeed, the protagonist of many of Aub’s works.<sup>52</sup> Aub was granted a provisional release from Le Vernet on November 30, 1940, thanks to Gilberto Bosques, and from there settled in Marseille where he remained under house arrest, while also collaborating with the local Mexican officials in charge of the protection and evacuation of the Spanish exiles. While residing in Marseille, Aub began to write *Campo de sangre* which became the second novel in *The Magical Labyrinth* series. On January 31, 1941, Aub finally received the authorization from the Mexican government in Vichy to immigrate to Mexico. On April 10, 1941, Aub would also receive an affidavit from the United States Consulate in Marseilles authorizing him immigrate to that country. However, neither one of these possibilities would take place due to a series of events and circumstances that would continue to keep Aub captive inside this world and web of concentration camps and jails.

Aub could have embarked to Mexico on March 23, 1941, but the Vichy regime prevented his departure, citing new legislation that prohibited the departure from France of all Spanish male refugees between the ages of 18 and 48. Aub then travelled to Nice to meet with Malraux, where he was once again detained on June 2, 1941, as a result of the same pending denunciation that led to his first detention. Aub was unaware that the French Police continued to closely watch him upon his release from Le Vernet. When Aub petitioned for a safe-conduct to travel to Cabris, he was once again detained by

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<sup>52</sup> While Aub was interned in Vernet, his family returned to Spain.

police in Nice and transported to the Hotel Alhambra of Nice and then to the jail in what became an abusive detention. After spending twenty days in a jail in Nice, Aub was released on June 22, thanks to the intervention of the Mexican Embassy and Gilberto Bosques.<sup>53</sup> He then returned to Marseille, where, two months later, he was taken to a jail on September 3 due to another denunciation, and then transferred back to Le Vernet on September 5, 1941, for the second time.<sup>54</sup>

During this chaotic time of detentions, the French authorities continuously investigated Aub's past involvement in communist activities. Their investigation led them to produce the following report on June 28, 1941, that specified the charges against Aub in 1937:

Aub ha sido denunciado como comunista por un informe con fecha del 6 de agosto de 1937, establecido tras una reunión celebrada por el grupo "Savoir" el 11 de junio de 1937 en la casa de la Mutualité en la calle Saint-Victor, bajo la presencia de André Viollis, y en la cual él habría tomado la palabra...En 1930 y 1931, Aub era miembro de la sección en Valencia del partido socialista español. En septiembre de 1936, formó parte de la Unión General de los Trabajadores y de la sección de la Federación de los agentes de comercio y de la industria de España. (Malgat 2007; 101)

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<sup>53</sup> Aub spent much of his time in jail writing texts which he would later lose.

<sup>54</sup> This new denunciation came from one of Aub's acquaintances, whom Aub had once publicly criticized for his betrayal to the cause of the Second Republic.

On November 27, 1941, Aub was transferred to Port Vendr s, after a stop in Toulouse, and while chained in the cellar of the ship *Sidi Aicha*<sup>55</sup> was taken to the concentration camp of Djelfa in Algeria, North Africa, located in the Sahara desert.<sup>56</sup> This trip became the inspiration behind Aub’s writing of his play *San Juan*, his book of poetry *Diario de Djelfa* and his story *Yo no invento nada!*, where he describes Djelfa as an *infierno*.<sup>57</sup> The concentration camp of Djelfa was opened in the spring of 1940 and reserved for the internment of politically active and dangerous prisoners. Djelfa was especially designated for the imprisonment of those who fought in the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War. As Aub describes in his accounts of Djelfa, the conditions in the camp were extremely difficult: extreme temperatures (50C during the summer to -14C during the winter), lack of food and poor hygiene which gave rise to numerous diseases and epidemics. Antonio Vilanova describes these harsh conditions: “Inmediatamente que llegaban los espa oles eran sometidos a desinfecci n en tiendas establecidas en los muelles y, a continuaci n, trasladados en trenes y vagones de ganado, hacinados, en pie, como fardos humanos a los campos de concentraci n” (qtd. in Mancebo 143).

On May 18, 1942, Aub was released from Djelfa with the help of Gilberto Bosques and the Mexican consulate in conjunction with a Djelfa police officer. Aub escaped to Casablanca where he was waiting to embark on the ship “Guinea” to New

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<sup>55</sup> The Sidi Aichi was a ship that transported livestock. This notion becomes a prominent theme in Aub’s play *San Juan* where the transportation of Jews in the ship San Juan becomes a metaphor for the value of the Jew, which is compared to that of livestock.

<sup>56</sup> Among other concentration camps that were built in North Africa and used to intern political prisoners were: Bizerta, Camp Morand, Boghari-Boghar, Camp Suzoni, Relizane, Bou-Afra, Colomb’bechar y Setat, Hadjerat-M’Guil, Aun-el-Ourak, and Meridje.

<sup>57</sup> While interned in Djelfa, Aub was forced to work on the construction of railroads in the Sahara.

York with an affidavit given to him by John Dos Passos.<sup>58</sup> However, a detention by gendarmes in Uxda—at the border of Algeria and Morocco—caused Aub to arrive late and miss his ship. Fearing another detention, Aub, with the help of the HICEM (Hebrew Immigration Committee), decided to remain hidden in a Jewish maternity hospital until September 10, 1942, when he embarked on the Portuguese ship *Serpa Pinto* towards Mexico. After two brief stops in Bermuda and La Habana, Aub arrived at the port of Veracruz—admitted as a political refugee who was granted asylum—on October 1, 1942, where two of his good friends, José María Rancaño (a fellow concentration-camp survivor) and Carlos Gaos, were waiting for him.

It was ultimately in Mexico where Aub began to advance and promote his literary career and to continue the task and duty of writing about his experiences in the French concentration camps, and the difficult years that he was forced to live during the Civil War. As Gérard Malgat states: “La primera preocupación de Aub después de su llegada a México es dar a conocer la situación en los campos de internamiento” (2007; 113). Aub began his exile in Mexico by writing primarily theater. This began in September 1942, while aboard the *Serpa Pinto* en route to Veracruz, where Aub wrote what would later become *Campo francés*. During the next several years, Aub would write a total of five plays from his *Teatro Mayor*: *La vida conyugal* (1942), *San Juan* (1942), *El rapto de Europa o siempre se puede hacer algo* (1943), *Morir por cerrar los ojos* (1944) and *Cara y cruz* (1944), in addition to twenty three plays in one act. These works would constitute

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<sup>58</sup> In a letter that Alfredo Mendizbal wrote to Aub on April 19, 1943, he expresses the urgent need to free the thousands of Spaniards that continued to remain captive in North African concentration camps. Mendizbal even wrote a letter to the State Department in the United States describing the horrible conditions in the camps and pleading the United States government to intervene, even mentioning Aub’s own personal experiences.

what Gérard Malgat calls Aub's endeavor to present a "breve escala teatral para comprender mejor nuestro tiempo" (2007; 117). During this period, Aub also continued to write *Campo abierto* and *Campo de sangre*, which he had already begun to write before his detainment, as well as several essays, articles and reviews.

The first several years of Aub's Mexican exile were by far the most difficult, especially from an economic and cultural standpoint. Adapting to their new environment took time for most Spanish exiles. This was due to many factors such as the Mexican's rancor toward the Spanish, whom they still blamed for the conquest and colonization of their territory five hundred years earlier; the fear that the émigrés would steal jobs away from the Mexicans; and partially because the exile's roots were still cemented in Spanish soil. In spite of the Cárdenas regime's acceptance of the Republican refugees into Mexican society, one of the restrictions of the regime was that the Spanish exiles were legally forbidden to participate in domestic politics. This opened the door to the exiles' participation in other cultural and educational institutions where many of them occupied important posts and exerted their positive influence on the academic life in Mexico. The Colegio de México is a good example of the tremendous impact that the Spanish Republicans have had on the cultural and academic life of Mexico, for it fostered an academic environment that enabled the exiles to integrate themselves into the academic and intellectual arena that continues to prosper today. Aub himself even states with regard to the exiles that settled in the Americas: "...la mayoría de los llegados aquí hace más de diez años han hecho una gran labor, pero no española, sino americana. Y el buen resultado se verá el día que reconquistemos España" (Archivo Max Aub Caja 5-53/2).

Max Aub played an integral role in this process as he participated in many cultural activities in roles such as: editor, translator, reviewer, prologue writer, scriptwriter, and movie producer. Shortly after his arrival in Mexico, Aub joined the Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Industria Cinematográfica and was also named the secretary of the Comisión Nacional de Cinematografía. These positions allowed him to produce several documentaries such as *México es así*, *La tierra es la patria* and *México hacia el futuro*. Aub then became a professor in filmography and taught courses on the History of Theater at the Cinematographic Institute and the National University of Mexico where he would remain until 1951, and also held a job with the Mexican Institute of Social Security. In January 1947, Aub was named an adviser to the Comisión de Repertorio del Departamento de Teatro del Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes. He was also a theater critic for the Mexican newspaper *El Nacional* from 1947–1949 where he published a weekly article titled “El teatro en México.” From 1959 on he worked for the UNAM’s radio and TV services, where he soon became director of the Servicio Coordinado de Radio Televisión y Grabación de la UNAM from June 1961 until June 1966. These positions are what enabled Aub to make a living as he was unable to make enough money exclusively from his literary production.<sup>59</sup> As a result, Aub’s excessive work load became so absorbing that it often impeded his desire to write and publish more

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<sup>59</sup> The *Epistolario* between Max Aub and Manuel Tuñón de Lara illustrates the economic difficulties and adversities that many exiles faced as they were unable to financially survive solely on their writing. This forced them to compromise the output of their literary production with other menial jobs that provided them with a more stable income. Aub confirms this notion when he states: “Yo no soy novelista. Si viviera de mis rentas—o de mis libros—llegaría a serlo. Pero no tengo *tiempo*. Hay que ganarse la vida, para morir burguesamente y no que murmuren los nietos” (*Diarios* 252). Aub also states: Nací para ser escritor y no me dejaron, siempre me faltó sosiego para serlo...Me hubiese gustado poder estudiar plácidamente, leer mucho más de lo que he leído, saber mucho más de lo que sé. He tenido que ganarme la vida desde los dieciocho años...” (*Diarios* 218).

during those years.<sup>60</sup> As Francisco Caudet says, the years that Aub worked for the Radio Televisión de la UNAM were the few years in which he received a fixed income (2005; 222). Ironically, in spite of his talent as a playwright and his experience teaching and producing cinematography, Aub's plays were not represented in professional theaters, but rather by university students.

In addition to the constant remembrance of Spain, another prominent characteristic of exile writing was the desire to narrate aspects of the exile's adopted country. For example, Aub also showed interest in Mexican literature and even wrote several poems and short stories, such as those in the book *Cuentos mexicanos* that describe and pay homage to Mexico. Aub makes clear his gratitude to Mexico in a speech where he states: "Albergue honrado es lo que nos ofreció México a nosotros los españoles honrados y no el deshonorado que a la España del fango..." (*Hablo como Hombre* 79). Although Aub recognized the fact that living in Mexico added a special overtone to the creation of new works, he did indicate that living in Mexico did not impact his novels that were about Spain. Several of Aub's friends (Rodolfo Usigli, Xavier Villaurrutia, Salvador Novo, Benito Coquet, José Luis Martínez, Jorge González Durán and Héctor Azar) even ran their own professional theaters, but ironically refused to show Aub's plays, claiming that he was not Mexican, or in other words, that he was too Spanish. Aub reacts with dismay at their lack of interest stating: "habiendo tenido en sus manos tantos teatros oficiales, jamás se les ocurrió estrenar una obra mía (lo que nada les hubiera costado)" (*Diarios* 328). Only one of Aub's plays, *La vida conyugal*, was ever

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<sup>60</sup> Aub once told Francisco Ayala that: "La Radio Universidad me da mucho trabajo y bastantes disgustos." Aub had also received an offer to teach a semester course at Queens College during the spring of 1964, but the rector of the UNAM would not allow Aub to leave his position as Director of Radio Sevices (*Epistolario Aub/Ayala* 69, 109).

represented, debuting on September 2, 1944. None of Aub's other plays would ever make it to the stage, which became one of Aub's greatest frustrations.

From this intellectual sphere in which Aub participated arose a substantial literary collection composed of a variety of different genres—poetry (*Diario de Djelfa*); theater (*Morir por cerrar los ojos*, *El rapto de Europa*, *San Juan*); short stories (*Manuscrito Cuervo*, *El limpiabotas del Padre eterno*); novels (*Campo de los almendros*); essays (*Yo no invento nada!*); diaries (*La gallina ciega*, *Diarios*); letters, cinematic scripts (*Campo francés*); and even manuals of the history of literature (*Discurso de la Novela Española Contemporánea*)—that explore and investigate the problematic surrounding the entire concentration camp universe and pose many questions regarding the survivors' need to confront head-on their traumatic experience. As Naharro-Calderón asserts, in order to recount his experience of horror, Aub's work does not limit itself to one particular genre or the most prominent genre (essay-testimony), for the concentration-camp world for Aub goes beyond these limits. Aub even questions these very limits when he states: “Mis *Campos* (que en sus títulos tienen su justificación, si acude usted al diccionario) no son novelas, sino crónicas (vea las palabras finales de mi *Discurso de la novela española*) y no son una trilogía. Y en eso *San Juan*, *No*, *De algún tiempo a esta parte*, el *Diario de Djelfa* y tantas cosas más no son, no quieren ser otra cosa que un testimonio” (*Diarios* 236). Aub's rejection of the term novel for chronicle and testimony not only redefines the limits of genre (within his own work), but also reinforces the importance of bearing witness.

José Ángel Sáinz affirms that in times of spatial limitations, such as confinement in concentration camps, memories that are translated into testimonial writing become

virtually the only weapons available for the displaced individual to “re-humanize” his reality (319). This experience is often conceptualized as a deconstructive process of first forgetting for a period of time and then gradually remembering the trauma. Forgetting and remembering go hand in hand as they reciprocally call on one another in a mutual exchange whereby one cannot exist without the other. Therefore, in order for Aub to reflect this difficult, disjointed, and incoherent world which he experienced and witnessed, he is almost forced to adopt a wide array of narrative strategies and genres that break away from the traditional realist genre of the time in search of new forms of expression. As José Ángel Sáinz states, traumatic events require new models of representation as the traditional categories of representation are insufficient as a means of describing a traumatic reality that goes beyond reason (318).

Beginning in the 1950s, Max Aub’s narrative production of *The Magical Labyrinth* began to diminish in favor of the creation of new and different forms of realism that were absent from his traditional testimonial narrative of the post-war period.<sup>61</sup> Although Aub did not abandon his testimonial will (for example: *Manuscrito Cuervo*) or his emphasis on historical context (for example: *Enero Sin Nombre*), the incorporation of these new Avant-garde techniques enabled Aub to create new models of representation and to continue, albeit in another more diverse form, to express the same social and political concerns that underlie his entire literary work. A work such as *La verdadera historia de la muerte de Francisco Franco* is a perfect example of this new genre that does not fit exactly with the novels of *The Magical Labyrinth* but nevertheless continues to implant a critical message through a fictitious lens. This story combines

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<sup>61</sup> During the 1950s and early portion of the 1960s, Aub wrote four novels that show clear Vanguard and experimental intentions: *Las buenas intenciones* (1954); *La calle de Valverde* (1961); *Jusep Torres Campalans* (1958); and *Juego de cartas* (1964).

humor, fantasy and fiction to recount the historical experience of the Spanish émigrés' in Mexico and their obsession with Spain, which becomes their only subject of conversation. In order to silence the émigrés, a Mexican waiter plots the execution of Franco, travels to Spain and finally executes his plan.

The post-Holocaust period with its many attempts to interview survivors of the Holocaust and of the concentration camps has often been met with silences. These reflected a loss of language due to the limitations of language that were available at that time, or, as Lyotard asserts in his attempt to define the concept of the *differend*, “language’s inability to signify gas chamber.” Lyotard wrote that the silences that surrounded the event of mass death in Auschwitz are signs that represent “the unstable state and instant of language wherein something asks to be put into phrases, and suffers from the wrong of not being able to be put into phrases right away” (Ball 149). This reinforces the failure of linguistic representation in the post-Holocaust period. It also questions Halbwachs’s assertion that there are no recollections to which words cannot be made to correspond. While language is closely tied to systems of social conventions that allow one to reconstruct the past, when those social systems break down or are confronted with aphasic tendencies, the reconstruction of memory becomes more difficult. The Holocaust epitomizes the paradigm of this break-down responsible for having created an epistemological-ontological crisis of witnessing manifested at the level of language itself (Leys 268).

The post-Holocaust period was marked by a coalition of silence wherein a sense of numbness with respect to the horrors caused by the Holocaust prevented people from addressing the subject matter. Most Germans deliberately or inadvertently avoided the

topic as they maintained that they had not known anything about the mass murders. Whether the horrors were concealed or ignored there emerged little conversation and dialogue about the Holocaust. As Carmen Moreno-Nuño asserts, silence was not only a part of the History of the Holocaust, but it also formed one of the most fundamental characteristics of Francoist politics and totalitarian regimes in general (238). As a result, the need of the survivor to tell his story and to bear witness to his trauma becomes essential to his survival and symbolizes a way of giving his life a new meaning, allowing the survivor to reclaim his place as a witness. As Caruth asserts: “Survivors of the Holocaust not only needed to survive so that they could tell their story, but they also needed to tell their story in order to survive” (63). Max Aub reiterates this notion when he states: “Tengo que librarme, de una vez, de este peso” (*Diarios* 185).

The act of writing for Max Aub also represented an act of bearing witness to the trauma of survival, for Aub declared that to bear witness to what happened was what he wished to accomplish in exile. He felt that it was his obligation, and that of his generation, to give testimony to what had happened, not only in Spain during the Civil War, but also in France during exile. This testimonial need and moral obligation is exemplified by Aub himself, who, on January 22, 1945, proclaimed: “Creo que no tengo derecho a callar lo que vi para escribir lo que imagino” (*Diarios* 123).<sup>62</sup> This moral obligation represents an essential element of trauma, for as John Mowitt asserts, trauma might be construed as essential to the emergence of morality, in the same sense that morality is the essential remedy for trauma (374). In a letter written to Anthony G. Lo Ré on February 11, 1960, Aub reiterates once again these same sentiments stating: “No tuve

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<sup>62</sup> Aub also stated in his *Diarios*: “¿Por qué hemos de callar? Yo digo mi verdad y la seguiré diciendo mientras pueda y como pueda” (254).

más propósito, en esta serie de novelas y cuentos, que el de dar fe y testimonio de la verdad” (Archivo Max Aub Caja 8–60/2). Aub refuses to turn to lies and denial in the face of fear, or to buy his peace and tranquility at the expense of remaining silent, but rather seeks to enact justice in a corrupt world by looking back on the past and revealing the hidden truth. This is what prompted him to flee Spain—”por no callar”—which represents his way of combating the silence imposed by the Franco regime. Aub becomes so obsessed with this need to tell the truth that he asserts that he will not remain silent (“no callaré mi verdad”) until he dies. The truth becomes Aub’s most powerful weapon against combating oblivion.

As a result, from the outbreak of the Civil War in 1936 to his death in 1972, Aub shifted the focus of his literary production, dedicating a vast portion of his literary work exclusively to writing texts that directly related to his testimonial will and to his need to bear witness. Writing therefore became a way of safeguarding memory and of protecting the memory traces from being forgotten. Max Aub arguably produced one of the largest collections of literary works of any Spanish author of the twentieth century, writing an average of one book per year for fifty years.<sup>63</sup> Like many other exile writers and intellectuals, Max Aub sought to pay homage to and restore the forgotten and erased historical memory of the many Spanish exiles that found themselves forced to abandon Spain upon the end of the Civil War, many of whom never returned to Spain. José Ángel Sáinz accurately summarizes the essence of this concept:

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<sup>63</sup> Aub never reread what he wrote because he lacked the time needed to fix all of the errors that existed. Also, what mattered most to Aub was occupying his place within the history of Spanish literature, even if it meant, as Aub stated in his *Diarios*, being a “second-rater.”

Para aquellos que sufrieron las consecuencias de los campos de internamiento y del exilio la necesidad de testimoniar fue el catalizador de la articulación de dichas experiencias. La escritura les proporcionó los mecanismos de anclaje necesarios. En el papel trataban de impedir que lo acontecido cayera en el olvido y, a la vez, comprender sus propias supervivencias. Esta actividad escritural constituía un proceso de autoafirmación además del lugar en el que reposar la identidad individual frente a la lenta disolución de la persona. (317)

In this series of novels of *The Magical Labyrinth*, Aub sets out to describe the tragic events of the Civil War and its ultimate aftermath in the exile and imprisonment in French concentration camps of thousands of Spanish Republicans. *The Magical Labyrinth* therefore becomes an allegory that seeks to reflect the (traumatic) condition and the ultimate physical/metaphysical journey undertaken by the Spanish exiles that were uprooted by the violent conflicts of the Civil War. Each one of the six novels included in *The Magical Labyrinth* details the plight of the Spanish Republicans, told from the point of view of the defeated, throughout various critical moments and stages of this ominous labyrinth of Spanish history, beginning with the novel *Campo Cerrado* (1943) and ending with *Campo de los almendros* (1968).<sup>64</sup> The stories told in these novels give voice to a defeated group of Spanish republicans whose history has been silenced by the successive official histories dictated by the Franco regime. As José Antonio Pérez Bowie affirms, Max Aub's work does not possess heroes, but rather is

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<sup>64</sup> Like many of his protagonists, Aub did not know how to escape this labyrinth, which came to define his existence. In a letter to Ignacio Soldevila, Aub clarified his conception of the labyrinth: "El laberinto no es un círculo. El laberinto es el vientre, los intestinos. No hay más salida que el ano: la mierda, la muerte. El círculo, el ruedo, es el sol" (*Epistolario* 343).

composed of disoriented individuals immersed in a collectivity that lacks direction and fails to understand the events that have transpired (*Manuscrito Cuervo* 15). This notion becomes even more evident in Aub's narrative as many of his protagonists never return to bear witness. With respect to the series of *Campo* novels, Serrano Poncela asserts in a letter that he wrote to Aub: "No creo que haya nada sobre nuestra guerra que pueda compararse a esto tuyo: en invención, reproducción de ambiente y verdad, sinceridad" (qtd. in Francisca Montiel Rayo 250).<sup>65</sup> Emir Rodríguez Monegal also reiterates the same sentiments upon stating: "Es el documento literario más vasto e impresionante sobre la guerra civil española que se haya publicado hasta ahora, y al mismo tiempo es el *roman-fleuve* más logrado de la literatura española contemporánea...En *El laberinto mágico* de Max Aub, la guerra civil española ha encontrado tal vez su más verdadero y creador testigo" (qtd. in Soldevila Durante 1973; (101–02).

Aub's collection of short stories, which has been grouped together under the title *Enero Sin Nombre*, also details this world of loss (of freedom), defeat (personal and collective), death, absence, ambivalence, up rootedness, solitude and oblivion that pervades and permeates the Civil War, the concentration camps, and exile.<sup>66</sup> Possessing certain autobiographical traces, the events that are narrated in the works of *The Magical Labyrinth* represent phenomena that Aub lived through and experienced first-hand: the Civil War, the concentration camps, and exile in Mexico. Aub acts as a witness, a critic and ultimately as a reporter of the horror, injustice, violence and absurdity of the

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<sup>65</sup> Upon referring to his series of *Campo* novels, Aub speaks of the need to "acabar de retratar, a mi modo, lo que fue y es nuestra guerra" (*Diarios* 204).

<sup>66</sup> All of Max Aub's short stories, with the exception of *El Cojo*, were written after Aub completed the third novel of *The Magical Labyrinth* series (*Campo abierto*). The stories of *Enero Sin Nombre* range in length from brief one or two page stories to more extensive and elaborate stories such as *Enero Sin Nombre*, *Manuscrito cuervo* or *El limpiabotas del Padre Eterno*. Many of these stories were published in journals before being collected in specific books compiled by Aub such as, *No son cuentos* and *Ciertos cuentos*.

concentration camp world and of the status of obscurity into which the exiles had fallen, leading him to record those experiences so that the world would not forget.<sup>67</sup> As Ugarte states: “To forget is to allow exile to become a death” (127). Therefore, for Aub, the act of writing reflects his continual need to preserve and keep alive the existence of his past and his historical memory of the tragic experiences that he endured. As Ofelia Ferrán indicates, one of the primary purposes of writing books is to guarantee the survival of man beyond his own death, that is, granting him a posthumous life (2006; 203). Max Aub addresses this precise issue when he states: “A los cincuenta años escribo para permanecer en los manuales de literatura, para estar ahí, para vivir cuando haya muerto...Lo que me horrorizaba era desaparecer sin rastro; desaparecer dejando marcado un sitio...” (*Diarios* 234). The character Paco Ferrís in *Campo de los almendros* also reiterates this idea stating: “Escribe uno para poder vivir. Si no escribiera no viviera...Escribo. Aun cuando no escribo, escribo. Escribo para acordarme de lo que escribo, necesito escribir para poder vivir” (qtd. in Soldevila Durante 1973; 203). This desire for immortality and posterity explains why in exile Aub felt a certain urgency to write more than before his exile in spite of the difficult conditions that he endured and suffered. Aub resorted to writing as a way of salvation and of reinserting his place back into the history books of Spanish literature.

Aub made every effort possible once in Mexico to make his works known to the public, both in Mexico and especially in Spain, even if it meant financing and printing copies of his own texts as many publishing houses refused to publish his works. Aub evinces this notion in his *Diarios*:

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<sup>67</sup> In his *Diarios*, Aub states: “Escribo para no olvidarme” (196).

Ni Losada, ni Calpe, ni Porrúa, ni nadie ha querido jamás publicar un solo libro mío...Y ahora el Fondo<sup>68</sup> que se niega siquiera a *distribuirlos*. Es decir, para quien no lo sepa, que pagando *yo* la edición se niega a repartirlos en las librerías. La verdad, que no se venden...estos datos están en la base de la desconfianza que siento por mi obra. (*Diarios* 269)

A letter to José Carlos Mainer Baque also illustrates Aub's desire to publish his work in Spain when he states: "Desde luego tengo el mayor interés en seguir publicando en España y en estrenar si fuera posible" (Archivo Max Aub Caja 9-5/4). This ultimately led to the creation of Aub's own journal in 1948 called *Sala de Espera*, which served as a vehicle for publishing and making known his work in Mexico and Spain until its end in 1951.<sup>69</sup> During this three-year period Aub successfully printed thirty numbers of *Sala de Espera*.<sup>70</sup> As María Paz Sanz Álvarez states: "El título de su revista *Sala de espera* dice lo que el transterrado siente al vivir en una tierra que no es la suya, al ser trasplantado a otro lugar sin hacerse del todo, al creerse en una situación de tránsito, en una sala de espera" (1999; 160). Aub also alludes to this notion of *sala de espera* in *Hablo como Hombre*: "los intelectuales del mundo entero están metidos en una enorme sala de espera,

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<sup>68</sup> The Fondo de Cultura Económica agreed to distribute many of Aub's works at no cost provided that Aub himself finance the printing of the works until 1955 when the Fondo stopped distributing them claiming that there were too many books to distribute. As Aub states in his *Diario*: "Viste mucho eso del Fondo de Cultura, lo que no sabe la gente es que los libros los pago yo y que el Fondo de Cultura Económica únicamente los distribuye. Y eso gracias a mi amistad con todos los de la casa" (252). Aub then turned to other publishing houses, but they too rejected him.

<sup>69</sup> *Sala de Espera* appeared throughout a period of 30 months (1948-51). Many of the texts that were included in this publication would later become complete works or at least would serve as a spring board for ideas for future texts. In *Sala de Espera*, Aub introduced to interested readers fragments and pieces of his writings. As Antonio Pérez Bowie asserts in his "Estudio Introductorio" to *Manuscrito Cuervo*, "*Manuscrito Cuervo* fue escrito por Max Aub a la vez que se encontraba inmerso en la redacción del *Laberinto Mágico* y vio por primera vez la luz en el año 1952, en el volumen tercero y último de *Sala de Espera*" (Pérez Bowie 1999; 13)

<sup>70</sup> In addition to publishing works in *Sala de Espera*, Aub also published 28 works in *Cuadernos Americanos* between 1947-1971.

sin saber qué tren tomar, e ignorando la hora de salida” (42). This *sala de espera* became Mexico, especially during the first few years of exile, although it eventually became a permanent place of residence and work. It also represented a new place where the exiles began to interpret reality from another perspective (Caudet 2005; 232). Aub explains the reason why he decided to create this journal when he states: “Las dificultades editoriales y el poco interés que mi obra despierta, me han llevado al presente método de entregas mensuales...Escribir en español nunca ha sido un buen negocio” (qtd. in Sanz Álvarez 2006; 160). Nevertheless, throughout his life, Aub remained disillusioned and saddened due to the lack of recognition that his work received, either by its lack of publication, its lack of circulation or its lack of a readership.<sup>71</sup> Aub illustrates this frustration when he states: “Me roe como nunca la falta de público: al fin y al cabo mi fracaso” and “...es mi falta total de éxito. Mis libros no se venden” (*Diarios* 192, 252). This is what ultimately became Aub’s impossible dream.

Aub’s dedication to publishing his works in Spain only reinforces the notion that Spain continues, even from a geographical distance, to be present in his mind. Francisco Fernández Santos substantiates this idea as he stated to Max Aub in a letter: “Reconforta sentir la amistad y aliento de un español que vive físicamente, lejos, pero que espiritualmente está a nuestro lado” (Archivo Max Aub Caja 5–56/3). In this respect, Mexico never replaced Spain as Aub’s mother country, as Aub continued to dedicate his

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<sup>71</sup> On many occasions, Ignacio Soldevila Durante related to Max Aub that Aub’s books were scarce and difficult to obtain in Spain. On one occasion, Soldevila wrote: “Aquí no hay manera de conseguirlos” (*Epistolario* 53), while on another: “Al final he tenido que poner en la biblioteca mis propios ejemplares [de los libros de Aub] para que los pudieran leer. Porque tampoco en esta biblioteca está toda tu obra” (*Epistolario* 271). Aub himself was also distraught at his lack of importance as a “serious” author, as he once stated that Quiroga, Chabás and Enríque Díez-Canedo were the only ones that truly believed in his importance as an author. Aub’s work remained unfamiliar in Spain for at least a decade after the war, and to some extent continues to remain so. Nevertheless, Aub never doubted his ability stating: “Con seguridad tardarán todavía muchos años en darse cuenta de que soy un gran escritor” (*Diarios* 248).

life and work to Spain. This is even more evident throughout Aub's extensive collection of letters and correspondences whereby Aub continuously sent books to his friends in Spain, not only as a token of appreciation and friendship, but also as another way of propagating and circulating his texts within Spain in an effort to reach a larger audience. One might argue that Aub became obsessed or even a slave to writing (and re-writing), remembering, and archiving, which ultimately became a way of surviving. This notion is expressed by José Ángel Sáinz: "A la desesperación por la pérdida de la identidad, al miedo al fracaso por ser un escritor desconocido en un ambiente extranjero, o a la abrumadora falta de un público de lectores se añade la intención de hacer perdurar una voz viva más allá de una cierta temporalidad" (320).

Although *Campo francés* is the only work in the *Campo* series that specifically deals with the concentration-camp experience of the Spanish exiles, one could argue that all of the novels of *The Magical Labyrinth* series contain a narrative structure that ultimately centers on bearing witness and giving testimony. As José María Naharro-Calderón asserts, in many of the texts that are not strictly about the camps, Aub adopts discursive strategies that show how the everyday, normal universe, which is governed by universal norms, operates under rules that are as random as those of the concentration camps (104). This premise coincides with the ubiquitous nature of the trauma of the camps and its continual presence outside the physical boundaries of the camp. What characterizes the novels of *The Magical Labyrinth* resides in their lack of a clear plot structure and real protagonists, wherein the narrative structure is primarily composed of a myriad of fleeting characters and passing voices. All of these randomly appear and disappear in a disjointed and fragmentary manner much like the structure of memory,

with many different story-lines intermixed, ultimately serving as witnesses that give testimony of their experience during the Civil War.

In spite of Aub's realist intentions, this fragmented structure deviates from the traditional realist novels of the nineteenth century. In his *Discurso de la Novela Contemporánea Española*, Aub proposes a new form of realism, which he calls *realismo trascendente*. This new form of realism seeks to "traspasar y penetrar en un público cada vez más amplio. Realismo en la forma pero sin desear la nulificación del escritor como pudo acontecer en los tiempos del naturalismo" (179). According to Aub, the principle difference between the *realismo trascendente* and the naturalist and realist novels of the nineteenth century is that the writer, while fixated on the description of reality, actually takes part (toma partido) by casting his own judgments in an effort to critique and better understand the reality that he is relating. Therefore, as Ugarte asserts: "In spite of his [Aub's] attempt to re-create the reality of the war, it is not verisimilitude which guides the construction of the texts but ambivalence" (1985; 734). *Campo cerrado* is the only one of the first three novels in which there exists a central protagonist (Rafael Serrador), which is essentially absent from *Campo de sangre* and *Campo abierto*. Although the majority of the characters in Aub's works are fictitious, they are based on real inmates that Aub met in the concentration camps. In many instances, Aub, for fear of incriminating or exposing the identity of other inmates to a hostile Franco regime, preferred to create fictional names.

Based on the importance that Aub places on thematic issues, rather than on the peculiarities of a particular genre, one could argue that a wide variety of Aub's literary production—not merely the novels and short stories—including all of his testimonial

works, are part of *The Magical Labyrinth*. This enters into the question of what defines the concept of *The Magical Labyrinth*, which has stirred much debate among scholars. Whereas Aub conceptualizes *The Magical Labyrinth* as only those works that specifically deal with the Spanish Civil War, Ignacio Soldevila Durante redefines this notion, using the term *The Magical Labyrinth* to denote *all* of Aub's literary work. Soldevila Durante then designates the term *Laberinto español* to refer specifically to Aub's novels of the Civil War, that is, what Aub himself terms *The Magical Labyrinth*. Francisco Caudet also calls for a redefinition of *The Magical Labyrinth* in his essay "El laberinto del exilio/El laberinto de la escritura." Caudet problematizes the make-up of *The Magical Labyrinth* and proposes a redefinition of the composition of the works that constitute this series, advocating for the inclusion of a wider range of Aub's works that also deal with his testimonial experiences. Caudet's premise opens the door to the expansion of *The Magical Labyrinth* to include more than just Aub's collection of novels and short stories about the "Campos," and to encompass the other genres that pertain to his testimonial discourse. Among some of the other works that could therefore be included in *The Magical Labyrinth* series according to Caudet's definition are his works *Jusep Torres Campalans* (1958), *El diario de Djelfa* and his theatrical works *San Juan* (1943), *Morir por cerrar los ojos* (1944), *El rapto de Europa* (1945) and *Yo no invento nada!*

What makes Aub's literary production so dynamic is his versatility and his ability to use a variety of different genres to approach the numerous and difficult issues that he tackles throughout his oeuvre. This oftentimes results in the combination and intertwining of various genres into one work in which Aub goes outside the traditional parameters of the literary genre and constructs a new, *Avant-garde* hybrid text. This idea

will be examined in more detail upon analyzing Aub's work *Campo francés*, which represents a prime example of this notion. As Ignacio Soldevila Durante asserts, Max Aub's narrative is based on the act of constructing a world of fiction out of his own personal and generational experience, and Aub utilizes many literary techniques, such as satire, sarcasm, humor and parody to realize that objective. Aub is therefore able to combine literature and testimony in such a manner that his fictionalization of the concentration-camp world remains within the parameters of testimonial literature. Although at first glance, especially in the case of the short story *Manuscrito Cuervo*, some of Aub's works may give the appearance of creating a comical and overtly imaginative text that ultimately makes fun of the problematic addressed, underneath all of the humorous language and literary games lies a very serious criticism.

From this double-sided literary strategy predominant in Aub's narrative, there emerge texts that are rooted in Aub's own personal experience and observation, as well as other texts based primarily on the fantastic and the imagination. The combination of the imaginary and the fantastic with the real leads to a series of narrative games and linguistic distortions that produce a decisive criticism and a serious message. However, the distinction between the real and the fantastic or the lived and the imagined is oftentimes impossible to discern in Aub's work. As Eugenia Meyer asserts, Max Aub's work consists of a mixture of History and fiction, reality and imagination, in which the characters, some invented and some real, mix together to bear witness to History from a more personal perspective (51). However, in spite of Aub's use of fiction and fantasy, he always endeavors to reproduce any historical information as accurate and faithfully as possible, granting a richer value to his testimonial discourse. As Ignacio Soldevila

Durante indicates, in one of Aub's letters, he stated: "Como siempre, procuré atenerme, para el back ground de los *Campos* a la verdad de los hechos..." (qtd. by Soldevila 1973; 256).

Among the narrative strategies employed by Aub are the uses of distancing and estranging mechanisms that enable him to create the distance necessary in order to approach this difficult and problematic subject matter through a more accessible lens. Looking directly into the eyes of the trauma and trying to make sense of the disjointed memories associated with this event is a difficult task for any victim. Aub attempts to resolve this dilemma by distracting and alleviating the tension, by depersonalizing the narration with the incorporation of an unusual narrator and elements of humor. Also, Aub's continual playing with language, breaking and distorting traditional grammatical conventions, enables him to express what was previously "inexpressible" through normal linguistic conventions. All of these literary and narrative strategies will be further examined in the subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

## From the Civil War to the Concentration Camps:

### The Republican Exile of 1939

#### *Exile as the “second” war*

Franco officially declared the end of the Civil War on April 1, 1939, and with that proclaimed the beginning of peace in Spain. This declaration of false positivism overlooked one key aspect of the most violent period of Spanish history: the fate of those that lost the war. The Civil War not only gave rise to a period of violence and repression under the auspices of an illegal regime, but it also produced a much more profound and sinister reality.<sup>72</sup> Hidden behind both a metaphorical and literal “barbed wire” fence, a new reality emerged which produced its own war. I term this a “second war,” whose manifestations exceeded any temporal or spatial restrictions and continued beyond that symbolic date (April 1, 1939) into the world of exile. However, it is not just the émigrés that left Spain who felt the consequences of exile, but rather the thousands of Republicans that remained behind in Spain, trapped in their own “inner exile,” that suffered the same marginality, alienation and psychological trauma as those that left

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<sup>72</sup> The francoist political discourse began to refer to the date April 1, 1939, more as the beginning of peace rather than the end of the war. However, from the standpoint of the defeated Republicans and the exiles, the end of the war brought no such peace. In fact, Max Aub questions this conception of peace by stating: “¿Qué paz? Los veinticinco años de paz que ha hecho reinar el general Franco, es una paz exclusivamente suya.” Aub continues by declaring that: “No la puede ganar [la paz] porque no hay paz en España. Miedo sí; pero el miedo no es la paz, aunque cosa tantas bocas. Tampoco es paz la mejoría de las condiciones de vida. No hay paz en España porque Franco es la guerra...La paz que quiso y quiere imponer Franco es sinónimo de ignorancia” (*Hablo como Hombre* 161–62).

Spain. In his study of “inner exile,” Paul Ilie argues that the geographical/territorial location and separation, which traditionally defined exile, is of secondary importance. Ilie conceptualizes exile, both inner and external, as sharing a common set of feelings and beliefs that isolate the expelled group from the majority. As Ilie states: “A resident population may live as much in exile from the expelled segment as the latter does from the former” (2). This is illustrated by the following remark: “Los años cuarenta y los cincuenta fueron horribles. Seguía la guerra, no creáis que la guerra terminó en el treinta y nueve. La guerra continuó. No había comida. España parecía el tercer mundo” (Armengou and Belis 48).

Exile’s predominance has been so strongly felt that it has claimed its ever-lasting presence in the lives of the exiles and even inserting itself into the daily lives of a contemporary generation of Spaniards who were supposedly disconnected from this phenomenon. This “other” or “second” war is called exile, and represents a phenomenon that had already begun to emerge and manifest itself through the rhetoric and discourse established under the Franco regime well before the end of the war. The concept of exile is a continuation of the Civil War beyond Spanish soil that crossed not only European, but also transatlantic borders and boundaries into new territories whose cultural and political institutions were completely detached and severed from those of the mother country. Max Aub confronted the presence of the Franco regime in exile as he was repeatedly victimized by the regime’s censure and by his estrangement from the institutions that had previously fostered his literary career.

*The Spanish Civil War as the seeds of exile*

This “long voyage” to exile, borrowing the concept from Jorge Semprún’s novel *El largo viaje*,<sup>73</sup> represents an allegory that not only points to the physical journey of the Republican exiles across the French border, but also alludes to the traumatic journey that continued to haunt them for the duration of their lives in a perpetual and constant fight against memory. The person who witnessed the trauma and the person who provides testimony of the trauma is not the same person, although they both co-exist in the same body. This tension and duality parallels that faced between the homeland and the new adopted land. Mexico became the exile capital for the Spanish refugees, and their “second” home, although many other countries such as Argentina, Chile, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and the United States also harbored many exiles. The Cárdenas regime agreed to accept all Spanish refugees from France provided that the French government paid for the expense of transporting the exiles. The first exodus of Spanish Republicans to Mexico occurred in June 1937 when Mexico accepted five hundred children evacuated from the Republican zone.<sup>74</sup> A year later, due to the organizational efforts of the writer Daniel Cosío Villegas, President Cárdenas invited a group of Spanish intellectuals to work and continue their research at the Casa de España,

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<sup>73</sup> Semprún’s novel, which was originally written in French under the title *Le grand voyage*, details the journey of Spanish prisoners to the concentration camp of Buchenwald, a journey that ultimately embodies the grotesque and inhumane conditions suffered by the prisoners in the concentration camps. The title alludes to the allegory surrounding the long, traumatic journey of the concentration-camp survivor that goes beyond the mere physical train voyage, symbolizing an eternal, metaphorical imprisonment whereby the traumatic memory of the experience continues to haunt the life of the victim in the present. The continual presence of the narrator’s traumatic memory sixteen years after the experience and the narrator’s need to create a listener in the form of the boy from Semur reinforce the victim’s need to remember and to confront the trauma by bearing witness.

<sup>74</sup> In June 1937, an estimated 3,000 children were sent to the Soviet Union.

which would later become the Colegio de México. According to the Mexican Consulate, as of 1942, more than 12,000 Spanish refugees had embarked towards Mexico, with that number reaching as high as fifteen to twenty thousand by the mid 1940s.

As many testimonies have described, this journey is one that is ultimately characterized by famine, dispossession, dehumanization, separation and even death, at its point of departure, as the exiles were round up and thrown into hurriedly-made concentration camps in the sandy beaches at the French border. However, the road to exile for many Spanish Republicans did not commence during that “long month” of January 1939 that witnessed the mass exodus of the émigrés across the French border. Rather, the seeds of exile that would later germinate into the mass exodus first began to materialize during the Civil War in the form of an internal exile imposed by Franco. One of the primary objectives of the Franco regime resided in the elimination of the opposition, which was accomplished literally through executions and figuratively through a series of state-sanctioned reforms and measures whose primary objective consisted of erasing the memory and identity of the Spanish Republicans. It is this status of oblivion which occupies a large portion of the preoccupations associated with exile literature, illustrating the exiles’ continuous struggle to reconstruct their new identity in a foreign land.

Montse Armengou and Ricard Belis in their book *Las fosas del silencio* state that the notion of violence and elimination of the enemy were implanted in Spain from the elections of February 1939 when the Popular Front’s victory put in danger the fundamental pillars of Spain: the Church, the oligarchy and the military (25). The main objective of General Mola’s coup d’état on July 18, 1936, was to undo the results of the

elections in February and to guarantee that the state of Spain would not return to its pre-war status. This would involve eliminating the adversary and instilling a regime of terror that threatened to kill anyone who did not share the same ideology as the right-wing fascists. The Nationalist's systematic repression was applied equally in all of the conquered territories. This included outright assassinations and executions in what became a "license to kill" for the rebels. General Queipo de Llano, who commanded the Nationalist front in Seville, became notorious for his repression and utter disregard toward the Republicans. His slogan "todo vale contra el rojo," became the driving force behind the Nationalist's take-over of Seville. One out of every six people was executed in Seville during the first few months of the war, many of which were never identified and thus interred in mass graves. This repression is further exemplified by the Nationalist's goal of killing one percent of the population on the first day of the war. The same scenario occurred in Zafra during the first few months, where an estimated two hundred people were killed without due process of law.<sup>75</sup> As Armengou and Belis clarify: "La lista de crueldades, víctimas y verdugos es interminable. El odio se desencadenó como resultado de una estrategia diseñada para eliminar al enemigo y extender el terror. Había que darle la vuelta al resultado de las elecciones de febrero de 1936, y el objetivo se consiguió, ya que la democracia tardó cuarenta años a volver a España" (43).

The ideas that ultimately implanted the seeds of exile during the Civil War came from Franco himself. Franco had stated on numerous occasions that he did not want to leave any prisoners behind. At the beginning of the war, he told an American journalist

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<sup>75</sup> In Zafra, people were killed that were never affiliated with a political party. However, even the slightest connection with the left merited execution.

that: “Salvaré a España del marxismo, cueste lo que cueste [...] No dudaría en matar a media España si tal fuera el precio a pagar para pacificarla” (Armengou and Belis 71). This resulted in silence becoming the norm for many Republicans who feared to tell what they had witness afraid of what could happen to them. This fear emanated not only from Franco’s rhetorical discourse, but also from the “examples” that the Nationalists carried out in cities like Seville, Zafra and Badajoz where large portions of Republicans were killed, houses ransacked and building burned, to illustrate what the Nationalists were capable of doing. The Nationalists often denied this extreme violence claiming that it was a myth and legend invented by the Republicans, but eyewitness testimony and empirical data confirm this reality.<sup>76</sup> What is clear is that the repression was well prepared in advance and executed with precision by the Nationalists even to the point of covering up their crimes. As Armengou and Belis assert: “La guerra civil, a partir de cierto momento, ya no es sólo un acontecimiento de carácter bélico, sino que es también una operación de limpieza ideológica” (82). It is this ideology that ultimately foreshadowed the fate of the Republicans if they chose to remain in Spain and gave rise to an early exile for many intellectuals. Although the Republicans never lost hope during the war, the fall of Barcelona on February 6, 1939, signaled the end of the war and the realization of Franco’s promises, prompting thousands to flee in exile.

Caught between the need and desire to maintain their national identity and stake their claim to cultural hegemony as representing the “true” Spanish culture in exile and

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<sup>76</sup> It is important to remember that the Franco regime succeeded in destroying any evidence of their guilt, leaving behind few traces of the regime’s violent past. This included an enormous effort to cover up any signs of repression by destroying archives, falsifying documents and labeling the Republicans as the “bad guys” that were responsible for the majority of the violence and atrocities committed. As a result, today there does not exist a complete record of the number of Republican victims. The destruction of these documents occurred primarily during the 1960s and 1970s.

that of paying allegiance to their new adopted country, the Spanish Republicans endeavored to reestablish their place within the historical and literary context of a Francoist Spain that sought to eliminate their place in history. Max Aub's infamous story *La verdadera muerte de Francisco Franco* illustrates precisely the Republican exiles' constant preoccupation about Spain, to the point where it became such an exhausting and continuous topic of conversation in Mexican cafés that one Mexican waiter decided to travel to Spain and assassinate Franco in an effort to "shut up" the exiles. The Franco regime's destruction of the fundamental bases of Spanish culture, by obstructing the cultural production of the Republicans, represented a threat to the continued existence of Spanish culture. As Mari Paz Balibrea states, in the case of the Spanish Republicans, the experience of exile became a crisis of modernity since the Franco regime destroyed the modern projects that the Republic had begun. Therefore, the exiles' expulsion from Spain impeded their direct participation in the creation of a more modern Spain and consequently may be conceived as something that interrupts the continuity of modernity (165). This ultimately produced more tension between the exiles and the Franco regime, both of which claimed to embody the "true" Spanish culture.

#### *Francoist discourse toward the exiles*

To comprehend the exiles' journey across the French border in January 1939, their incarceration in French concentration camps, and the subsequent dehumanization of their identity requires a reflection upon the political structure established by the Franco regime during and following the Civil War. The Francoist discourse not only prompted the

eventual “losers” of the war to seek refuge in exile, but it was also the very same political structure that prevented many exiles from returning to Spain and from reclaiming their former lives. Even when many exiles had already sought refuge in Mexico (or other harboring countries) and felt themselves to be beyond Franco’s reach, behind a safety net of democracy and a government that supported their presence, the Franco regime continued its assault. The Regime exerted its force and influence across the ocean, in a psychological war that impinged upon the daily lives of the Spanish Republicans and constantly reminded them of their defeat, disconnection, and lost place in Spain. The apparent liberty associated with exile is therefore reduced to nothing more than an external prison surrounded by, as Francisco Caudet puts it, “an invisible, moving wall that is impossible to jump, but yet continues to enforce its presence in the daily life of the exile” (1997; 346).

From the onset of the Civil War, Franco made clear his distaste and disregard for the Spanish Republicans, whom he clearly perceived as the enemies and as the essential cause of the war. This notion of eliminating the adversary at any cost has raised many questions regarding the possibility of conceiving the Franco regime as a genocide or “Spanish holocaust.” The use of the terms genocide or holocaust in this case seems odd and perhaps controversial, as they have traditionally been associated exclusively with the Shoah. Genocide has often been defined in more biological and genetic terms. However, in more recent times, the usage of the terms holocaust and genocide have broadened to include similar experiences, although the Spanish case has usually not been included under this category. Nevertheless, given that the Franco dictatorship was the longest of its kind in the West during the twentieth century, whose repression remained constant

until the very last day, it is difficult not to look at the Franco regime as possessing genocidal traits. What is certain is that Franco was completely conscious and aware of the conditions implemented by his regime, including the annihilation of the enemy through the creation of a concentration-camp like infrastructure that gave rise to inhumane conditions. Notwithstanding the fact that the concentration camps established by Franco were not extermination camps, in the same fashion as the Nazi death camps, which were highly organized and systematized “death machines,” one cannot overlook nor underestimate the characteristics that Franco’s concentration camps shared with the German camps, namely their nature as places of death and dehumanization.<sup>77</sup> This is illustrated by the following remark by Edward Malefakis: “[L]a violencia política del régimen nazi—excluyendo el exterminio de los judíos—provocó menos víctimas que la represión franquista” (Armengou and Belis 23).

The historical traces of the Francoist concentration camps represent one of Spain’s unknown ghosts from the past victimized by the historical silence imposed by the regime. It is believed that the concentration-camp system implemented by the Franco regime originated in 1936 as a result of the rapid increase and accumulation of prisoners of war. The construction and utilization of the concentration camps facilitated the internment and mass crowding of the prisoners; however, they were not used as a penitentiary system, but rather as provisional holding places. Although the exact “end” of the Francoist concentration camps is uncertain, it is known that as of 1946, three camps were still operating. It is estimated that during the entire Civil War there existed 104 concentration camps (Molinero 34). From this phenomenon arose the image of

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<sup>77</sup> In 1939, a large portion of Republican soldiers were interned in the Francoist concentration camp of Castuera. Many died of hunger, while even more died as a result of execution.

overcrowding, of masses of people packed together, constituting a topos that runs throughout much of the concentration camp literature. The mnemonic function of this imagery inevitably recalls in the reader's mind images of cadavers and dead bodies piled up, lifeless and moribund, inside the walls of the German concentration camps. The very first line of Semprún's *El largo viaje*, "Este hacinamiento de cuerpos en el vagón, este punzante dolor en la rodilla derecha" (11) instills in the reader's mind from the opening words of the novel a dehumanized image of the prisoners who find themselves crowded inside the freight train on their way to the concentration camp of Buchenwald. In this sense, the novel represents an allegory of the concentration camp, whereby the freight train symbolizes an extension of the concentration-camp world whose systematization and organization already find its presence implanted in the train.

This opening scene of *El largo viaje* represents precisely the image that Franco perceived of the Spanish Republicans; who, according to Francoist rhetoric, embodied a subhuman nature and consequently were labeled as "other," "foreign," and not Spanish. This lack of tolerance and complete disregard toward the Republicans, or, as they were so commonly known, the "vencidos," explains Franco's desire to eradicate and expel this dissident group of "manzanas podridas" from Spanish soil. The manifestation of this exclusionary discourse is ultimately rooted in the creation of a penitentiary and concentration-camp system designed to carry out that finality. The power possessed by the Francoist concentration camps is best exemplified and summarized by C. Molinero's conceptualization of the camps in terms of "fábricas de cadáveres" and "fábricas de destrucción de la personalidad." This imagery clearly pinpoints the association and the link between the concepts of dehumanization and dispossession in relation to the

concentration-camp experience, further reinforcing the repressive nature of the Franco regime and the power exercised by the Spanish government.

The Francoist concentration camps operated on various levels. Aside from being centers of torture, malnutrition and executions, the concentration camps also embodied places of mass detention, religious indoctrination, and slave camps. The regime often utilized the prisoners as cheap labor in the construction of national projects and monuments glorifying the victors of the Civil War. Along with the executions that took place in both the concentration camps and the prisons, another cause of atrocities committed were the horrible living conditions endured by the prisoners. These conditions included: overcrowding, unsanitary and unhygienic environments, scarcity of food, often times leading to massive hunger, and stringent working conditions. Therefore, the mere fact that the Francoist concentration camps did not constitute death camps per se does not diminish nor reduce the magnitude of the atrocities perpetrated, nor does it signify that the seeds of extermination were not present inside the entire prison/concentration-camp structure. Spain, under Franco's rule, both during the Civil War and following its aftermath, transformed into an open hunting ground through its continual physical repression. This is exemplified by the concentration camps and through a more figurative mental incarceration propagated by the strict and censored regulation of the dissemination of information.<sup>78</sup> This ultimately erased the boundary and

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<sup>78</sup> This notion of an open hunting "ground" is exemplified in Carlos Saura's film titled *La Caza* (The Hunt). This film, which was rejected several times by the censorship board due to several political allusions within the script (see D'Lugo), is about four men that go on a rabbit hunt in the same valley where a Civil War battle was fought. Although there are no direct references to the Civil War in the film, the plot recounts the same violence and repression that took place in that very same ground during the Civil War, illustrated by the constant tension and conflict between José, Paco and Luis throughout the film. The merciless killings of rabbits throughout the film (by former Nationalist supporters) parallel the Nationalists' assault on the Republicans during the Civil War, whereby Spain became a literal "hunting ground" for Republicans, killing them at will and without due reason. However, the end of the film presents a twist of

eliminated the differentiation between the exterior and the interior of the concentration camp, rendering what one might term a restricted or conditional freedom. The metaphor of Spain as an “immense prison,” which has been conceptualized by C. Molinero and many other critics, that restricts and controls the movements and ideology of all Spaniards, whether physically inside or outside the prison walls, is clearly supported by this notion.

### *Historiography under the Franco regime*

The dispossession and dehumanization of the exile’s identity as a fundamental base of the concentration camp system coincided with the moral redemption of the prisoner and Franco’s political agenda of erasing their footprints through a series of measures or mythic discursive practices. These sought to legitimize the Franco regime by modifying the past in an effort to substantiate and support the concerns of the present. As Halbwachs maintains: “The beliefs, interests, and aspirations of the present shape the various views of the past as they are manifested respectively in every historical epoch” (25). The regime also sought to eradicate the collective memory of the Republicans in order to uphold the official Francoist discourse as the dominant and only memory available. Franco’s omnipresence as the authority figure, whose voice represented the only historical truth, transformed Spanish historiography by reducing the writing of history to a one-dimensional series of fictitious narrative practices governed and

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irony, for the three “older” Nationalists (José, Paco and Luis) all kill each other, while the “younger” Enrique survives, perhaps signaling the demise and the ultimate failure of the Franco regime as the last man standing is not a Nationalist hero.

controlled by a limited group of historians selected by Franco. This dialogic exchange with the past in a recontextualization of Spanish history enabled Franco to rewrite the past in terms of present interests and values. This mechanical process of indoctrination underscores the regime's and the institution's power to control the thoughts and the memories of the "vencidos" through a political discourse of terror and force made possible by Franco's complete control over the construction of historical discourse. From the outset of the regime this discourse set out to liquidate any possibility of testimony by eliminating the voice of the other. As David Herzberger asserts: "The pattern of discourse offered by historians of the State during the Franco regime enabled them to create and sustain coercive power over ideas about the past with the aim or objective of controlling history" (12). This ultimately illustrates the fundamental role that coercion and fear played in the maintenance and longevity of the regime, completely altering and reshaping the way many writers could criticize it.

The dehumanization of the prisoner's identity is subsequently accompanied by the installation of a plan of perpetual subordination and debt exerted on the Republicans. Under this system the regime endeavored to "cure" the railroaded dissidents in the form of religious indoctrination. This was meant to create an environment of endless reverence toward the regime for "saving" and rescuing the Republicans. The religious rhetoric proved to be a principle element in Franco's official discourse, which further underpinned the regime's legitimacy as Franco conceptualized the Civil War and the Nationalist's dominion in terms of a Crusade. Franco's mythic version of history enabled him to create what David Herzberger labels a "usable past," (16) whereby Franco and his historians were able to shape the official history in order to underpin its claim of

authority over the present. Franco sought to legitimize his regime from within a historical context in which he could continue to embody the legacy of the Catholic Kings and sustain the existence of a historical destiny for Spain (Herzerber 16). As a result, in the government-controlled textbooks written by Franco's own personal historians, the Civil War was usually referred to as the Crusade, the War of Liberation, or the Glorious Uprising, evoking a manifest-destiny rhetoric to justify the regime's actions. In addition, in the schools, the Civil War was never studied in depth, but rather glossed over with an emphasis placed on the accomplishments of the Nationalists.

Franco's insistence on declaring Spain a Catholic nation remits back to Medieval Spain and to the imperial dynasty and stronghold established by the union of Ferdinand and Isabel the Catholic, whose origins form a basis of Franco's mythic construction of Spain's history. Franco always considered Imperial Spain as a supreme model of unity and order. For the Catholic Kings, religious unification was just as important as political unification in the construction of a Modern, Absolutist State, which, accordingly, justified their recourse to military acts of violence in the Reconquest of the Moors. As Jo Labanyi asserts, Franco's desire to return to Spain's natural origins and to call upon the great symbols of Spanish culture and identity, such as El Cid, Isabel the Catholic, and Don Quijote, was meant to provide the nation with a certain sense of universality that would legitimize the imposition of his cultural production on society (1989; 38). Franco employed a religious rhetoric upon conceiving of his regime in terms of a Crusade, whereby he incarnated the person chosen by God to lead the battle against the enemy and realize his divine mission. This project also coincided with that established by the Catholic Kings, whose political agenda rested on the construction of one kingdom with

one God that spoke only one language. Franco's subsequent and self-proclaimed hagiographic persona resulted in his exaltation as a mythic national hero—who saw himself responsible only before God and History—enabling his justification of the military coup on July 18, 1936. This apparent religious/historical discourse ultimately served as a pretext that created a façade of moral legitimacy based on a myth in order to avoid any suspicion regarding the illegitimate nature of the regime and to justify the repression, fear and terror implemented as a means necessary to an end and as a necessary and inevitable consequence in order to reach Spain's supreme destiny.

What enabled the Franco regime to manipulate the rewriting of the past was its complete control and monopoly over the institutions responsible for the production and the dissemination of information. This resulted in the construction of a new agency of memory ultimately allowing Franco to shape and distort the memory of the Civil War in accordance to his own agenda and needs. The manipulation of History represents a prominent characteristic and recourse of totalitarian regimes, whereby the use of manipulation makes impossible the reconstruction of the truth in the face of myth and the desire for oblivion. This recourse to a historical myth of a glorious and imperial Spain served as a means to disguise and hide the true situation and reality that lay behind that façade of legitimacy: one of a decadent Spain economically, politically, and socially, ostracized and isolated by Western societies for a large part of the 1940s and 1950s until Spain's official entrance into the U.N. in 1955. In spite of Spain's internal and external woes, Franco continued to sell to the Spanish people a false reality affirming that everything was normal in Spain.

*Writing History: truth claims vs. radical constructivism*

As a result of Franco's complete control over the historical discourse of the past, any alternative view or version of history that differed from or contradicted the official version was subject to censorship. Historiography for Franco was rooted more on the traditional nineteenth-century conception of "truth claims," albeit in this case distorted truth claims. The principle idea behind truth claims, as Dominick LaCapra highlights in his analysis of historiographic writing, is based upon the presentation of factual content and evidence that is confined to referential statements involving truth claims (LaCapra 2001; 5). This approach subordinates writing as a medium for expressing content. However, as LaCapra notes, truth claims are necessary but not sufficient conditions of historiography, which leads to alternative approaches and methods of writing historiography. This brings into question the role of narratives in the documentation and writing of history. As LaCapra contends, "One might argue that narratives in fiction may also involve truth claims on a structural or general level by providing insight into phenomena such as slavery or the Holocaust" (LaCapra 2001; 13). Max Aub also questioned the relationship between writing History and writing Fiction by demystifying the division between the two: "La gente ha dejado de leer novelas en la propoición de los periódicos y revistas que ve. Prefiere la aportación a granel, sin que haga trabajo de selección. Se debe en parte a que la "ficción" le huele a falso, sin darse cuenta de que la "información" lo es tanto o más. Hubo—hay—un afán de autenticidad" (*Diarios* 121). Aub's narrative work continuously moves between both realms—History-Story—searching for the perfect balance and combination of both. According to Manuel Tuñón de Lara, for Max Aub, the novel is historical by definition.

The censorship of intellectual production forced many of Spain's intellectuals and novelists of the time, particularly those during the 1940s and 1950s when the censorship regulations were strictest, to rethink and reformulate their narrative strategies. Aub reiterates Franco's influence on intellectual production stating: "Yo no he sido el escritor que debiera haber sido, por Franco. Me refugié en la lingüística romántica. Era lo que menos podía comprometerme" (*Diarios* 247). This prompted novelists to adopt new methodologies to represent History and to counter the truth claims proffered by the Franco regime. As older modes of representation became inadequate, writers were forced to adopt new rhetorical devices into their narrative accounts. Aub recognizes this need when he states: "Quién escribe lo que piensa? Quién escribe lo que quiere? Desde luego ningún español que quiera publicar en España...Los demás a callar, por si acaso; a lo sumo, a mentir" (*Diarios* 407). The retelling of History thus no longer entailed a mere regurgitating of truth claims as it broadened its spectrum to place more emphasis on new forms of writing.

One such example of this shift to new narrative forms occurred with the social realists of the 1950s. This group of intellectuals resorted to a narrative strategy that focused exclusively on the present, conscious of the regime's dominance and control over the past. The historical hegemony perpetuated by the Franco regime gave rise to the appearance of new, alternative versions of history. Since official histories are traditionally written by the victors with the objective of repressing the suffering of the losing side, the only viable option for the "losers" to make their pain known is to effectively destroy the official version. The objective of the social realists resided precisely in questioning the official historical discourse of the regime by demystifying the

official history, offering a counter-discourse that challenged Franco's version of the official history and his authority as the only voice of Spain. This results, to use the words of Ofelia Ferrán, in an "unsatisfied memory," which undermines and questions any previous version of history that pretends to have settled all accounts with the past (2007; 55).

By focusing on an apparent objective representation of the present, that is, much like the realist novel of the nineteenth century which emphasized the objective capturing or reflection of reality, the reality portrayed by the social realist novel sought to describe a social reality far distant from that exposed by the official discourse. This discourse was often portrayed as an illusory world of confusion and chaos, where the differentiation between fact and fiction became imperceptible, leading to an upside-down baroque-like world in which the real and the fictitious mixed together into one indiscernible reality. However, in spite of the apparent absence of the past in the social realist novel, there existed a direct relation between the narration in the present and an "implied" past, that is, an inferred past embedded inside the narration in the present, which contrasts and differs from the history propagated by the regime. As David Herzberger contends: "The past assumes presence and meaning through its absence. The dialogue of social realists with history involves a dynamic response to the past that implies divergence" (44).

The mere act of portraying the actual conditions of the present from a non-Francoist perspective highlights a reality so distinct from that represented by the official history that it produces a social criticism against the official rhetoric. Nevertheless, the Franco regime's strictly enforced censorship did not facilitate the transmission of this social reality, forcing the social realists and many other novelists of the time to find a more

subtle avenue through which they could express their dissent. This resulted in the need to compromise their literary freedom, or as Max Aub stated: “[Un]o no hace la literatura que quiere, sino la que puede” (*Diarios* 140). However, as many Spanish exile writers, such as Max Aub, would later discover, exile did not completely shield them from the influences and power of the regime. A large portion of Max Aub’s work reflects the notion that the Franco regime succeeded in deterring the dissemination of the exiles’ work inside Spain, virtually relegating them to a place of anonymity inside their own motherland as they were severed from their institutional links to Spain causing their memory to disappear. The regime took the measures necessary to ensure that neither the cultural nor literary works of the émigrés would arrive to Spanish libraries, making it extremely difficult to find their works inside Spain. As Paloma Aguilar Fernandez claims, “The duration of the memory within a certain period of our lives depends either on the duration of the group or on our links to the group” (12). This ultimately places the fate of the exiles, especially their memory and place within Spanish literary history, at the hands of a regime that sought to institutionalize a policy of “forgetting,” which began with a plan of marginalizing the losing side.

### *The marginalization of the defeated and the road to exile*

The marginalization of the defeated comprised a series of exclusive measures undertaken by the regime to dispense with the adversary, such as its control over the NO-DO, eliminating any possibility for reconciliation or tolerance. The regime’s monopoly over the NO-DO represented its control over all news and documentary productions, whereby

it continued to glorify the Nationalist's victory in the Civil War, often portraying the fallen on the Nationalist side as martyrs, while any references made to the fallen Republicans were ignored and denied any kind of recognition. As Paloma Aguilar Fernandez adds, "the reasons given by the defeated for having fought in the war were never recognized nor were their reasons for defending a legitimately established and elected regime ever acknowledged" (148). Perhaps the most indelible measure of the marginalization of the fallen Republicans came with the construction of the Valley of the Fallen. This was a monument erected to honor and glorify the fallen Nationalist heroes who died in the Crusade.<sup>79</sup> What is ironic about this national monument of exaltation resides in its dual, binary function as a symbol of victory and triumph of one side over another and its demoralization and dehumanization of the identity of the fallen Republicans. In an effort to defray the costs of constructing the Valley of the Fallen and to further seek retribution on those who were declared responsible for the Civil War and contributed to the destruction of the country, Franco resorted to the use of political prisoners to build the monument. This represented a symbolic gesture whereby the defeated Republicans participated in their own erasure from national memory. This parallels to a similar degree Hitler's program of total destruction and annihilation of the Jews and their elimination from memory. Hitler planned to substitute Nazi memories of Jews for Jewish ones through monuments that commemorated his acts of destruction and oblivion (LaCapra 64). The construction of the Valley of the Fallen essentially sought to relegate the memory of the Republicans to a status of oblivion by excluding their

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<sup>79</sup> This monument represents only one example of the many monuments and tributes that have been erected and dedicated to celebrate the achievements of the victorious Nationalists. Recently these monuments have been under severe attack by the Zapatero government, which has begun to remove many statues of Franco. However, this proposition has provoked much debate and controversy as to what monuments the State should remove.

presence from that particular site of memory. This state of oblivion, as Manuel Vázquez Montalbán once stated, forms part of the official history of post-Civil War Spain that omitted their story of loss, displacement, and struggle (Cate-Arries 14).

Vázquez Montalbán's comment reiterates one of the underlying notions regarding the defeat and subsequent exile of the Spanish Republicans: their erasure and oblivion from the official history, their displacement from Spain and their need to reclaim their place in Spain's history. Franco sought to continue this oblivion even beyond his death by the proclamation of the Organic Law of State, which guaranteed the continuity of the regime by a future (proclaimed) King that had sworn to uphold and to continue the fundamental principles of the regime and to control the political life upon the dictator's death. As Carmen Moreno-Nuño affirms, this law represents Franco's attempt to condition Spain's future upon his death (172), ultimately resulting in Franco's eternal and indestructible presence in Spain beyond the grave. Although, King Juan Carlos refused to continue Franco's political agenda, the democratic transition elected not to deal with the past. This became known as the "pacto del olvido," in which silence was the strategy elected by the PSOE to deal with the tragic memory of the past. The purpose of this pact essentially resided in an institutionalized attempt to avert any effective remembering or discussion of the Franco regime or the Civil War. It was thought that the best way to not repeat the past was to forget about it. At a time when Spain was preoccupied with modernizing, developing and integrating itself into the European Union, the thought of remembering the past not only seemed irrelevant, but also became an obstacle to the realization of those goals. As Cristina Moreiras Menor states: "Total identification with

the world of consumption and spectacle disassociates Spain from its recent past of repression, silence and homogeneity” (136).

This so-called peaceful transition to democracy was founded on the premise of consensus and reconciliation between all Spaniards that endeavored, as Carmen Moreno-Núñez affirms, to metaphorically shut away the painful memories of the Civil War by erasing and essentially repressing any traces or foot prints of the trauma and replacing them with silence (13). The process of memory recall should not be based on consensus, but rather dissensus, allowing the space for different memories and contradictory memories to dialogue with one another. This ultimately creates a healthy discussion of memory instead of an imposed view that closes off any form of debate. However, neither Franco’s death in 1975, nor the proclamation of a democratic state and the ratification of a new constitution in 1978, succeeded in dealing with the painful memory of the Civil War, which continued to be present in the collective memory of a democratic Spain, playing an important role in the politics behind the transition to democracy.<sup>80</sup> This continued presence or “haunting” confirms Moreno-Núñez’s assertion that the Civil War is a wound that continues to be open even in a democratic Spain, reinforcing the notion that the historical trauma has not been forgotten, nor properly remembered, and persists as a painful wound in Spain’s collective memory (14).<sup>81</sup> It also confirms Freud’s theory of repression whereby the compulsion to repeat the trauma is a function of repression itself. This causes the patient to repeat the repressed material as a current experience instead of remembering it as something from the past. The post-Franco period was

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<sup>80</sup> The transition’s recall of the Second Republic and the Civil War illustrates the paradox of memory, for in order to “forget” this period, one must simultaneously remember it.

<sup>81</sup> As Ofelia Ferrán states, “In November 2002, the Spanish Congress officially recognized that the transition had not adequately faced the consequences of Spain’s past of repression” (2007; 21).

essentially founded on this principle wherein the past was repeated instead of remembered. The survivors had not only suppressed their memory, but also had no true desire to remember, for as one survivor stated: “De algo malo procuras olvidarte” (Armengou and Belis 175). This behavior adheres to the concept of post traumatic acting-out when one is haunted or possessed by the past and mired by the compulsive need to repeat the trauma.

Confronted with this dilemma of living a life of infamy and oblivion, on the threshold of total disappearance from the public sphere and from collective memory, the defeated Republicans lacked feasible options or alternatives: either live in Spain and endure the same conditions of terror and imprisonment, or embark upon the road to exile in search of better conditions. However, as Michael Ugarte asserts, exile is the signature of one whose identity has been stripped, whose very existence is no longer verifiable with a name and therefore exile, both the phenomenon and the person, finds itself on the margins of something (1989; 3). No matter how much the adopted country resembles the mother country, it never equals the exile’s homeland. As Max Aub wrote: “Pero el parecido es parecido, no es la cosa en sí. El parecido sólo es cosa de afuera, pero es otra cosa” (*Diarios* 165).

One way of looking at exile is as an enforced choice whereby the exile becomes an “outsider” or “alien” caught between two shores, whose self has been reduced to that of a mere spectator (of what continues to happen in his homeland), lost among a world of chaos, with little control and left to chance. The exile becomes the victim of events and circumstances for which he is not responsible and that are out of his control, converting him, as Jacques Vernant states, into a “helpless casualty” (qtd. in Caudet 1997; 329). A

vast majority of the Spanish intellectual community in 1939 supported the Republicans and therefore preferred exile to living under a fascist dictatorship. Max Aub illustrates this point clearly in his story *Enero Sin Nombre* when one of his characters states: “Prefiero morir a ser fascista” (123). What defines the life of the exiled intellectual resides in his being cut off and severed from the social and cultural life and reality of his national community and from the institutions that supported them. As Sabastiaan Faber asserts, exiled intellectuals are denied the right to participate in their community and as a result the exile ceases to live in the present and is therefore forced to live off memory (1), for memory is all that the exiled writer has left. Exile therefore denies one the opportunity to dialogue and communicate (exchange ideas), essentially denying the exile his voice. Max Aub evinces these sentiments when he states: “el luchar solo tiene sus terribles inconvenientes: el sentir la soledad, la duda constante de la inutilidad del esfuerzo, el resquemor del silencio con su caudal de dudas, la falta de público lector” (*Diarios* 243).

Exile is equated to the loss of one’s familiar spaces and a sense of security, especially cultural and social institutions that sustained and provided the framework for their survival in their native land, and the need to begin a new life and create a utopia in the adopted homeland that brings back a lost piece of stability into their life. Given that memory depends on its social environment, if that environment is suddenly taken away, one will begin to lose those memories. Therefore, as Halbwachs acknowledges, “in order for one—who has been separated from his roots or his original society—to retrieve some of those uncertain and incomplete memories, it is necessary that the person, in the new society of which he is part, at least be shown images reconstructing for a moment the

group and the milieu from which he had been torn” (38). The recollection and retrieval of these images comes in the form of an external dialogue with the members of one’s group. In the case of Max Aub, who remained an active participant in all areas of Mexican society, the constant dialogue among his contemporaries and fellow exiles, through an enormous epistolary collection of letters, in addition to his writings, continually reaffirmed the traumatic memories of the collectivity.

Unlike the economic exile, whose decision to leave his homeland is more voluntary, the political exile tends to encounter more difficulties and tensions between his political cause and ties that united him to political organizations in his homeland, and his need to integrate into the new host society. As Jacques Vernant adds: “...the very circumstances of his departure oblige him to go not where he will, but where he can...” (qtd. in Caudet 1997; 337). This notion reinforces the exiles’ lack or diminution of choice and control in the decision-making process. This often leads to a condition of aporia—a dead end or stalemate—filled with contradictions and paradoxes in which the exile initially shows resistance to assimilation.<sup>82</sup> Therefore, as Ugarte contends, writing

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<sup>82</sup> Sebastiaan Faber analyzes the concept of aporia as a topos in the work of Max Aub paying particular attention to Aub’s conceptualization of exile as an obstacle contributing to his isolation and ultimate marginalization from Peninsular culture. Aub’s literary work tends to paint a negative image of exile as a phenomenon predominated by sentiments of failure, defeat, hopelessness and isolation. Aub’s vision of exile differs radically from that proffered by José Gaos, whose positive and optimistic outlook on exile begs the question of exilic reception as a condition of one’s social status. As Sebastiaan Faber asserts, José Gaos contended that the notion of *destierro* did not capture accurately the experience of the Spaniards in Mexico, claiming that the experience was an easy transition, rather than a traumatic experience. As a result, Gaos coined the term *transstierro*, which defines exile as a mere transplantation from one society into another, as opposed to the more traditional notion of exile as a form of uprootedness. Gaos argued that the Spaniards’ sharing of a common language and what he considered a shared cultural heritage or “Hispanic” culture facilitated the exiles’ transplantation from Spain to Mexico. Gaos also contends that there has always existed continuity between Spain and Mexico that has enabled the Spaniard to adapt to Mexican society without enduring further trauma. Many have questioned the validity of Gaos’ premises asserting that his theory derives from a privileged experience shared by only a select group of exiles. Gaos’s perception is an over-simplified vision of exile that is not widely accepted among the exile community, which tends to maintain that exile involves more complex and delicate issues.

becomes a necessary task that represents an existential need to recover something lost which results from the absence of an integral part of one's being. Exile in itself is a trauma, and also a metaphorical death,<sup>83</sup> for as Max Aub once stated: "El desarraigo constituye siempre un trauma" (Archivo Max Aub Caja 1-19/10). Aub also alludes precisely to this metamorphosis: "salirse de sí, hacerme otro, otra vez" (*Diarios* 185). The paradox surrounding this metaphor is that life ultimately continues after death. As Michael Ugarte indicates: "The initial break from the motherland gives rise to a need to recover a lost identity and thus re-create the former self in a struggle against oblivion" (1989; 108).

In the case of the Spanish Republican exiles, this endeavor became even more difficult and dubious as they found themselves lacking any identity or nationality no matter how hard they tried to remember Spain or assimilate into Mexican society. In the words of José Pascual Buxó: "...han venido a perder las dos nacionalidades. No son españoles, aunque se esfuercen por serlo, por cuanto piensan España sin vivirla; no son mexicanos por cuanto viven en México aislados o solitarios" (qtd. in Caudet 1997; 502). The act of bearing witness and granting testimony is thus transformed into a discursive vehicle and a symbolic speech act that goes beyond a mere verbal expression of trauma and performs the action of giving life and voice back to the victim. The performative speech act also serves to affirm the reality of the event witnessed. Language therefore becomes the quintessential means by which the testimonial act is performed, for by telling his story of suffering and pain, the victim of trauma begins to recapture the hidden power of his own voice while at the same time reliving the traumatic experience as he

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<sup>83</sup> Charlotte Delbo is well-known for her declaration "I died in Auschwitz," which alludes to the metaphorical death caused by the concentration camp and the new identity subsequently recreated thereafter.

initiates a process of reorganizing, restructuring and even awakening to the memories of the past. The memory of the past and its verbalization in narrative form serve as antidotes against oblivion and facilitate the process of curing the open wounds. In the words of Francisco Caudet: “Reconstruir su propia vida es una especie de antídoto eficaz contra la fragmentación o dispersión, un ejercicio de serenidad” (1997; 23). As Carmen Moreno-Nuño affirms, through testimony, the subject finds an identity that was lost and that has now reappeared (344), not as an identical entity to the subject’s previous one, but rather as a renovated, reformed, new one, whose speech act confronts and demystifies for the first time the traumatic event that ultimately resulted in the subordination and dispossession of his identity.

### *The “double” exile of the Spanish Republicans*

What differentiates the Spanish exiles’ experience from that of other forms of exile resides in what I term a “double exile,” composed of two distinct exilic journeys.<sup>84</sup> The exiles’ traumatic journey and flight out of Francoist Spain was first met with an internment and detention in French concentration camps as the exiles crossed the French border. The second exile occurred as the émigrés left France for Mexico (or other Latin American countries). It is important to underscore that exile to Latin America was more of a privilege than a right, for only a select number of refugees were afforded the opportunity. Perhaps the most representative and emblematic figure of this journey and the most significant symbol of exiled Spain was Antonio Machado. His death in

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<sup>84</sup> It is important to underline that not all of the Spanish exiles experienced this “double exile.” This term only applies to those that experienced both the concentration-camp experience, in addition to a second exile in Latin America.

February 1939 in Collioure after crossing the French border, continues to evoke, on the one hand, images of the painful journey of the thousands of Spanish exiles, like himself, that perished on French soil, while on the other hand it sparks a sense of collective unity and solidarity among the exiled community who used Machado's tragic death as a source of inspiration. This propelled many of them to keep alive the memory of this forgotten phenomenon through literary discourse. As the defeated Republicans embarked upon their journey towards France, placing their fate in the hands of the French government, they did not know what awaited them across the French border.<sup>85</sup> Ironically, to their surprise, what the exiles found did not come in the form of an open-armed, warm welcome by the French in the land known for "liberty, fraternity, and equality," but rather the French greeted them with hostility and indifference to their plight. Under France's Republic III, the Spanish refugees formed part of the prison population. Soldiers were stripped of their arms, while many civilians were deprived of their valuables before their detention in the concentration camps. This is exemplified by a ruthless, uncompassionate, rude imprisonment behind barbed-wire in the beaches of the south where not everyone survived the hunger, cold temperatures and sickness that abounded. One could argue that this represented a symbolic continuation of their Non-Intervention Pact initiated during the Civil War.<sup>86</sup> France's Prime Minister Léon Blum proposed the idea of Non-Intervention on August 2, 1936, and subsequently closed the French border in the Pyrenees. The French press (a right-wing press) also played an important role in

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<sup>85</sup> The three points of entrance into France were Cerbère, Le Perthus and Bourg-Madame.

<sup>86</sup> Aub also adds that: "las fuerzas internacionales impidieron, desde el primer momento, que la República Española pudiera vencer y llevar a cabo la revolución que la hubiera salvado cinco años atrás" (*Hablo como Hombre* 132). He also states that the help from the USSR, Mexico and the International Brigades was not enough. Mexico was the only country to publicly declare its opposition to this Non-Intervention agreement.

the dissemination of this negative attitude toward the émigrés, as it labeled them “rojos asesinos,” “rojos con rabo,” and “leprosos.” As Francisco Caudet asserts: “Esa imagen falsa favoreció poco a los republicanos incluso en los países cuyos Gobiernos decidieron aceptar diversos contingentes de refugiados” (1999; 197).

As Francie Cate-Arries declares, perhaps one of the most forgotten chapters of all Civil War exile history belongs to the Spanish Republicans who were interned in French concentration camps where a significant portion of the marginalized memory of post-Spanish Civil War history belongs (2004; 15). The concentration camp therefore represents a site of memory that has been systematically excluded from the official Francoist history, but one that is never erased from the memory of the exile. The Spanish exiles who wrote about their experiences of the Civil War attempt to reclaim their own identity, history, and position, as well as reclaim the lost memory and collective identity of the thousands who were not so lucky and remained in France and/or perished in the concentration camps. This is an expression of the collective trauma endured by the refugees that continued to show its presence beyond their own personal traumatic experience. Therefore, as Francisco Caudet asserts, the French concentration camp becomes a concrete, physical and symbolic space that linked and brought together the experiences shared by a diverse group of Spanish exiles (1997; 14).

### *The French concentration camps*

One of the central topos of exile literature describes the moment of crossing the border into exile as the entrance into an empty space of cultural and spatial displacement that

dispossess one's individual identity, incapacitating the individual as he enters into an unknown foreign reality. One of the most symbolic gestures that shows the dehumanization of identity upon crossing the border is the destruction and the literal tearing to shreds of any paper or document that pertained to the exile, metaphorically destroying his old "Spanish" identity. The exiles' flight out of Spain is often depicted as a mass exodus of hundreds of thousands of Spaniards lined along the side of the road, carrying with them what few possessions they had left, as they pushed blindly toward the French border in the midst of rain, scarcity of food and prevalent hunger while Nationalist planes constantly bombarded them. Countless testimonies exist by survivors of this traumatic journey that depict the mortifying conditions faced after being defeated in the Civil War.<sup>87</sup> Never in the history of Spain had there been an exodus of such magnitude and proportions as the Republican exile to France.

The French government was caught by surprise and ill-prepared to handle the sheer volume of Spanish refugees that crossed the border. It has been estimated that between 350,000 and 500,000 émigrés crossed the French border between January 27 and February 10, 1939. This influx made it impossible to manage them in an orderly manner, leading to massive chaos. Sports stadiums and large open fields were used as temporary shelters until concentration camps, which were quickly and hastily constructed to alleviate the disarray, could be organized to contain the enormous numbers of refugees. The irony behind the construction of the concentration camps, similar to that of the construction of the Valley of the Fallen, resides in the use of wounded Spanish

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<sup>87</sup> Among some of the other prominent Spanish exile writers that have also written about their experiences in the concentration camps are: Celso Amieva, José Gaos, Jorge Semprún, Manuel Andujar, Agusti Bartra, Paulino Masip, Luis Suárez, Manuel García Gerpe, and Mariano Constante.

refugees to construct the camps, whereby the exiles were again constructing their own grave site.

The first of these concentration camps was to be constructed on the beach of Argèles-sur-Mer followed by two other concentration camps located at Saint Cyprien and Barcares. Additional camps were also installed in Agde, Bram, Collioure, Gurs, Rivesaltes, Septfonds, and Le Vernet. The physical surrounding and construction of the concentration camp in itself paralleled the life of the exile, for both were bereft of life, located in an isolated space devoid of an external or internal structure and filled with emptiness. As Francisco Caudet points out, those men interned in Argèles-sur-Mer lacked proper clothing or fire to protect themselves during the cold, winter nights, or a roof to cover their heads from the strong winds (1997; 103). These concentration camps in many respects shared some of the same characteristics and dehumanizing conditions as the Francoist concentration camps during the Civil War. For the Spanish exiles, Spain represented a place of assassinations, torture, and persecution, and the mere idea of returning to that land instilled fear in their mind, for they knew that returning to Spain essentially equaled a certain death, either literally or figuratively.

In spite of the horrible conditions endured in the French concentration camps, such as a lack of food, housing and medical care, poor water, no latrine facilities, poor hygiene, infestations,<sup>88</sup> and a corrupt French government that did not support their presence, the idea of expatriation to Spain seemed worse (or less popular) than remaining in the camps. For the French government, repatriation became the first viable option for mitigating the ever-increasing population of refugees interned in the camps and the cost

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<sup>88</sup> These conditions led to many health problems such as typhus, vitamin deficiency and dysentery, which often resulted in death. In the concentration camp of Argèles, an average of ten deaths was registered daily. To address the health problem, hospitals were erected in the cities of Perpignan and Montpellier.

of maintaining them.<sup>89</sup> Therefore, the government encouraged refugees to volunteer for repatriation although it maintained that repatriation would be a voluntary decision. Faced with a difficult choice, many chose to return to Spain, although the eventual outcome of the repatriation plan failed to produce the desired results as many feared that they would be punished or even killed upon their return. Their resistance to repatriation and their endeavor to avoid contact with the Franco regime clearly exhibits their desire to disassociate themselves from Francoist Spain. Many of those who returned to Spain found themselves face to face with the firing squad or incarcerated for long periods of time in Francoist prisons.

The internment of the Spanish exiles by French armed forces produced a further loss of identity, possessions and even family members as part of their long voyage into exile, stripping away essentially every last fiber of their being. As Francisco Caudet asserts: “Family and friends, work and social roles are left behind, as well as all the central elements of national identity...Exile is a brutal process of transplantation which produces a period of mourning for the loss of belonging...” (1997; 329). As the émigrés entered France, families were immediately separated from one another. The women, children, and elderly were dispersed to various cities and taken to special shelters, while the men were interned in the concentration camps. Perhaps the one lasting remnant that the concentration camp failed to take away were their memories and their stories, which accompanied them into exile and ultimately formed the basis of their narrative and testimony. The irony behind this situation is that the exiles turned to their fellow anti-

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<sup>89</sup> Negrín’s government in exile did help the French government finance the cost of running and maintaining the concentration camps.

Franco and anti-fascists neighbors for support upon their defeat, but were ultimately castigated and imprisoned as a Communist threat.

The Use of Humor and the Unusual Narrator as a means of Representing  
the Concentration Camp in *Manuscrito Cuervo* and *Enero Sin Nombre*

*Representing the Holocaust*

The mere utterance of the words “concentration camp” continues to carry with it a heavy symbolic weight that immediately evokes images of the Holocaust and the genocide of the Jews in the Nazi death camps. The systemized mass killings of six million Jews and other targeted groups as part of the “Final Solution” incarnated the ultimate model of evil that separated this event from other atrocities. As Jeffrey Alexander contends: “It [the Holocaust] acquires a transcendental status that separates it from the specifics of any particular time or space” (226). The term *Auschwitz* has thus acquired a new meaning within the post-Holocaust lexicon and discourse becoming synonymous with the Shoah and embodying the anti-Semitic worldview that attempted to create the vision of racial purity that underlay the Nazi campaign. Although the post-Holocaust period was filled with silence and bewilderment, there is little disagreement that the Holocaust represents the most unthinkable, unimaginable, form of mass destruction and genocide that the twentieth century witnessed. At no other place or time in history has one seen a phenomenon so unexpected and so complex in which so many human lives were so systematically extinguished in such a short time. This has resulted in the Holocaust’s transformation into a symbol of human suffering and moral evil, whose traumatic nature

blocks understanding and disrupts memory. The question of how to respond to the Holocaust has been and continues to be a prominent issue since the end of World War II.

The enormity of Holocaust studies has nonetheless paved the way for new theoretical frameworks that endeavor to problematize and ultimately to make sense of this inexplicable reality. The Holocaust incarnates a symbolic reference point in the comprehension of other similar, concentration-camp like phenomena that have occurred on a smaller scale.<sup>90</sup> As Zygmunt Bauman argues, the Holocaust should not be marginalized solely as a phenomenon relevant to Jewish or German history and to the work of specialists in those areas (LaCapra 1994; 92). The advent of memory and trauma theory has opened new doors that have allowed scholars and historians to approach this task by providing new tools for thinking [about] the Holocaust from different and new theoretical perspectives that may not have been accepted or considered “viable” methods of representation in the past. Although this theorization has produced numerous “new” representations of the Holocaust, it has also raised many questions regarding the extent to which the Shoah actually produces knowledge or impedes one’s access to that knowledge.

One may question whether or not theorizing the Holocaust is an appropriate measure; however, reflecting upon the Holocaust through theoretical applications not only contributes to a better understanding of this phenomenon, but also further prolongs the debate regarding its place in history and its aesthetic representations, keeping the discussion and its memory alive. As James Young points out in his study of images of

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<sup>90</sup> Among other examples of concentration-camp like situations that illustrate the cracks of democracy are: World War I, concentration camps run by the United States for Japanese citizens, the Soviet Gulag, concentration camps in Argentina, Chile, Yugoslavia, or Guantánamo (Naharro-Calderón 99).

the Holocaust in contemporary art, one of the proposed ideas for the Holocaust memorial was not even a monument, but rather one hundred years of debate. By this James meant one hundred years of discussion and remembrance of the Holocaust in an attempt to force the world to remember and to confront the subject matter. The binary opposition that has traditionally characterized the relationship between history and theory has now been deconstructed in favor of a more dialogical relationship, in which the two approaches work together. In this respect, as LaCapra remarks, historians must conceive of history with theory, for there is no history without theory (1994; 3).

The interplay between history and theory has also become a source of controversy and debate especially with regard to the binary relationship between history and memory. With the increasing popularity of the interviews of survivor testimony, which have raised many questions concerning the role of history and memory as means of accessing information about specific historical/traumatic events, history is now being challenged as the most viable means of conveying traumatic realities. When dealing with extremely traumatic, limit events, survivor testimonies, like the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimony, become an important and even a privileged mode of accessing the past and its traumatic occurrences (LaCapra 1998; 11). Traditionally, history and memory have been conceived as opposing forces, where history is defined in terms of fact and empirical source while memory falls along the lines of subjective recollection or myth. This is partially due to the various psychological mechanisms, such as forgetting, repression and distortion that attribute to memory a sense of ambiguity and fallibility.

Bearing witness to traumatic events does not seek to express the accuracy of empirical data, but rather to allow the survivor to take ownership of his/her traumatic

memory. This may occur by placing that memory into his/her conscious recall, thus freeing himself/herself from the repressive, repetitive, uncontrolled memories of the trauma, and reclaiming his/her place as a witness. As Michael Bernard-Donals and Richard Glejzer assert:

Living memory is not history; witnessing the event, and having been in the train, does not guarantee that its representations will not be inaccurate, or ineffective, or simply wrong. In fact, living memory is not so much the recuperation of events as it is an imprint of the loss of the event, and narrative histories, built as a bulwark against memory's loss, stand in for and replace the event. (5)

Dori Laub illustrates this idea through the testimony of a Holocaust-survivor who testifies to witnessing an uprising in Auschwitz where four crematoria exploded in flames. This testimony has stirred debate among historians and psychoanalysts regarding the historical accuracy of testimony. From the standpoint of the survivor/witness, what mattered was not the number of chimneys that exploded in Auschwitz, but rather the expression of and bearing witness to the incomprehensibility of such traumatic events. The historical authenticity, or lack thereof, may be considered irrelevant. What is important is the survivor's expression of survival. For Dori Laub, the way in which the witness enacted the memory and the way her testimony resists the silence that Auschwitz itself attempted to enact lies at the heart of her testimony (Bernard-Donals and Glejzer 4). As Max Aub illustrates in many of his works (*Manuscrito Cuervo* for example), sometimes in order to bear witness to a trauma, one must disregard historical accuracy or verisimilitude and opt

for fantasy. Much of Aub's work problematizes the notion of historical reliability as Aub is unable to faithfully remember (due to his "bad memory") and transcribe accurately every detail of his concentration-camp experiences. This results in Aub's need to turn to fiction as a way of reconstructing those memories. The use of fiction also suggests the impossibility of copying such a traumatic reality. History and literature (fiction) become adjoined to each other as they each enter the same world.

What therefore makes memory such an integral part of history is that memory is what history must define itself against (LaCapra 1998; 16). The historiography of the Holocaust would not be possible without the memories of the concentration-camp survivors. The same is true with regard to the memory of the French concentration camps, which, to a large extent, relies on the testimonial narratives of its survivors, since its History was essentially excluded from the historical discourse under the Franco regime. In this sense, one must begin to look at memory as a fundamental condition for the construction of history in which the two mutually and reciprocally work together as "testing" or questioning agents against each other. As LaCapra asserts: "Memory is neither identical with history nor is its direct opposite. Memory is a crucial source for history and has complicated relations to documentary sources...History may never capture certain elements of memory. History also includes elements that are not exhausted by memory" (1996; 19–20). While both history and memory are reconstructions of the past, memory is characterized by its live presence and constant evolution that is experienced in the present. As Pierre Nora contends in his essay "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*," memory attaches itself to sites, whereas history attaches itself to events of what is no longer (qtd. in Dupláa 30). It is

thus evident that a slight distancing from traditional historiographical methods and an emphasis on new theoretical approaches, such as memory theory allows for new interpretations of trauma narratives.

The recent preoccupations with the representation of the Holocaust has turned into an endeavor by contemporary artists who seek to find new and different means of producing meaning and memory through their work. Often times these works tend to go against the traditionally accepted norms of representing the Holocaust, ultimately problematizing and questioning the place of traditional narrative strategies. The recent surge in the creation of monuments and countermonuments as predominant forms of representing the Shoah only embodies one particular dimension of Holocaust representation that has surfaced within recent decades. Many new and different forms of artistic expression have emerged, whose limits—as Adorno’s famous contention of the impossibility of writing poetry after Auschwitz clearly expresses—have been questioned. In spite of the controversy generated by Adorno’s statement, the Holocaust is and has been represented.

Among some of the more conventional methods that artists have used to represent the Holocaust, aside from the monuments and countermonuments, are: photography, literary narratives, poetry, paintings, and documentary films. The serious representation and portrayal of these phenomena has ultimately paralleled the seriousness of the themes that emanate from a discussion of the concentration-camp discourse. A reading of Elie Wiesel’s *Night* or Charlotte Delbo’s poetry, watching Claude Lanzmann’s film *Shoah*, or even visiting a Holocaust museum will evoke sentiments of sorrow, horror, bafflement, and ultimately silence. Any other reaction or perception contrary to

these traditional approaches may appear to be sacrilegious and disrespectful. The question that continues to remain is the extent to which what was witnessed can be made visible to others and by what means it can be made visible.

While some scholars denounce a humoristic representation of the Holocaust as a mere trivialization of a serious theme that should only be represented as a tragedy, others question this traditional, sorrowful representation and advocate for the admissibility of humor. The symbolic weight of humor carries with it a much deeper realm of theoretical implications that exceed sheer laughter. Scholars have therefore been forced to rethink the role and the place of humor as a legitimate means of representing the Holocaust due in part to the limitations of language and the limits of meaning available to explain this phenomenon and also as a result of the increasing popularity of cinematic movies and even literary works that utilize humor. As conventional techniques of representation become inadequate, scholars must resort to alternative methods that ultimately cause them to reconsider the historicization of the Holocaust in a new, postmodern light.

Upon attempting to represent the Holocaust, one must ask if serious themes can be represented or illustrated by humor and whether or not there can be anything funny about representing this experience. If the response is yes, then one must wonder how the use of humor contributes to an alternative representation and embodies another medium through which it may be conveyed to a distant public whose level of comprehension is far removed and disconnected from the reality experienced by the survivors. The notion of making a comedy out of a tragedy has raised many questions regarding the proper or prescribed etiquette that one must follow when representing the Holocaust. However, as many humorous films and literary works have illustrated, the use of comedy or humor

goes beyond a mere “making fun” of a tragedy and becomes a technique or tool that enables these artists to approach this seemingly impossible and difficult subject matter via an alternative route.<sup>91</sup> It is this alternative route that makes possible the representation of the “unrepresentable.” In the words of Carmen Moreno-Nuño, the appearance of the comical represents a form of reducing the solemnity and the desolation, even to such a point that the most serious of events can be the butt of a joke in accordance with the proper temporal distance (164).

The idea of using humor does not endeavor to laugh at the victims or their suffering, but rather partly to illustrate that laughter and humor were a part of the lives of many concentration-camp survivors. As many survivors have commented in interviews, humor was just about the only facet of their life that still remained and that had not been stripped away by the concentration camp, representing their only means of survival. Thus, confronted with the ominous horrors of totalitarian and fascist regimes whose violence and repression surpassed any realm of liberty and freedom, humor may be a victim’s response to the trauma whereby their voice is temporarily restored as it usurps and undermines the once dominating totalitarian discourse. Humor therefore becomes a vehicle that combats and deconstructs the powerful totalitarian discourse by shedding light on its repressive, coercive rhetoric. When no other solution or alternative representational mode exists to confront the trauma via traditional means, humor becomes a vehicle that enables the victim to bear witness to the trauma by allowing the victim to confront the trauma as a free agent affirming the power of life over death. As Carmen Moreno-Nuño contends, humor is closely linked to the concepts of myth and

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<sup>91</sup> Among some of the more popular films that use humor as a means of representing the Holocaust are: *Ghengis Cohn*, *Punch Me in the Stomach*, *Jacob the Liar* and *Life is Beautiful*.

trauma<sup>92</sup> and as a result humor functions as a form of catharsis of collective memory and as a vehicle for the construction of memory traces and sites of memory (354). These therapeutic and cathartic attributes function as a pseudo-therapist that enables the victim to heal his wounds. In this sense, humor is used to construct a utopian community for the survivors of trauma while at the same time attacking the regimes that made possible their fate.

According to Bahktin's theoretical premises regarding humor, comedy functions as a subverting mechanism in which laughter attacks any previous form of authoritarian or hierarchical order (qtd. in Moreno-Nuño 366). This undermines the foundational logic of the totalitarian regime by labeling its behavior as non-acceptable. Laughter therefore represents a way of expressing a certain punishment for one whose behavior has exceeded the limits of conventional society. The concentration-camp world incarnates this unconventional, unacceptable behavior in which laughter ultimately, as Moreno-Nuño suggests, deconstructs the logic of the regimes that implement this reality. The cathartic nature of humor mitigates any inappropriate or offensive feelings that may emanate after a first glance or reading of the text. Humor breaks down and unmasks the dogmatic and repressive ideology of the State in an effort to create a freer, egalitarian society, restoring order and a sense of justice to those victimized.

The distance between what has been witnessed and what can be committed to testimony—what was seen and what can be said—is often wide and always palpable

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<sup>92</sup> In her book titled *Las huellas de la Guerra Civil*, Carmen Moreno-Nuño examines the concepts of myth and trauma as they apply to the representation of the Spanish Civil War in the post-Franco and newly constructed democratic regime. Moreno-Nuño looks at five different works written during Spain's new democratic government in the eighties and nineties and analyzes the representation of the Civil War as a place of historical memory or *lieux de mémoire* in each work. She uses as a point of departure the construction of the Civil War imagery in terms of both myth and trauma. Moreno-Nuño defines myth in terms of "forgetting," and trauma in terms of "remembering."

(Bernard-Donals and Glejzer 7). The notion that only those who experienced first-hand the Holocaust can truly understand its meaning and render an accurate representation of it has predominated much of the critical thinking and analysis of the subject matter. This automatically creates a division or barrier between the survivors and the non-survivors, allowing only a certain degree of accessibility to the survivor's story. The only connection binding the survivor and the non-survivor together is an emotional commitment, in which the listener now must become an involved and an active participant in the story-telling of the victim, which, for many non-survivors, is a journey that requires too much pain. The most common result is the subsequent disconnection and detachment of these two different worlds (that of the survivor and that of the listener), separated by two different realities. Humor helps to bridge the gap between the incomprehensible reality of the Holocaust and the disconnected world in which the listener/reader attempts to make sense of this reality. It also functions as a mechanism that shows the inherent limits that a historical narrative of trauma ultimately confronts in its representation of language and narration.

The representation of the Holocaust (and the Spanish Civil War and French concentration-camp phenomena for that matter) in terms of trauma insinuates that this event goes beyond the limits of representation. Holocaust testimony is oftentimes a language and discourse that only a select group of people have access to, while laughter is a universal language that codifies the incomprehensibility of the Holocaust into a vernacular language that we all understand and to which we can all relate. Therefore, the use of humor softens the impenetrability of the atrocity and permeates its outer shell inviting the membership of a previously excluded group. This chapter examines the use

of humor and the unusual narrator in Max Aub's short stories *Manuscrito Cuervo* and *Enero Sin Nombre* in an effort to understand how these elements serve as distancing and therapeutic techniques that allow Aub to delve into the difficult subject matter of the French concentration camps.<sup>93</sup> Laughter in this context represents a coping mechanism that is used to confront the seriousness of the concentration-camp experience and to bring to light many of the repressed or forgotten issues that continue to be present and haunt the lives of the victims.

*Manuscrito Cuervo*<sup>94</sup>

Published in 1950<sup>95</sup> in Mexico as part of Aub's collection of short stories encompassing *The Magical Labyrinth*, *Manuscrito Cuervo* presents a moralist, ethical discourse that denounces the corruption and injustices of the French concentration camps and poses many fundamental questions regarding the reconstruction of identity and collective memory of the exiles. *Manuscrito Cuervo* is arguably one of Aub's most important works dealing with the camps due to its length and to its unusual narrative structure. This text, like many of Aub's other writings, represents a clear example of his humanistic

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<sup>93</sup> The story *El limpiabotas del Padre Eterno*, written in 1954, is another example of a text that uses an unusual character and estrangement to recount the tragic conditions of the camp. The narrator, who is an outside observer that does not take part in the events that he recounts, tells the story of El Málaga, a semi-retarded shoeshine boy whose internment and ultimate death in the French concentration camps becomes a testimony for the situation in France. El Málaga's innocence prevents him from understanding the true situation in the camps as he is victimized by a harsh reality that goes well beyond his comprehension.

<sup>94</sup> *Manuscrito Cuervo* is Aub's longest story that centers its theme on the experience of the concentration camps.

<sup>95</sup> Aub began to think about and outline his ideas for *Manuscrito Cuervo* in 1940 during his first stay in Vernet. He continued to work on the writing and re-writing of this text throughout his second stay in Vernet in 1941. The final version was not finished until 1943, although the text was officially published in 1950.

tendencies and his resistance against the established order of the camps and the totalitarian regimes that sustained them, as well as the defense of freedom and human rights. In spite of its apparent simplicity and playfulness, Aub deals with a series of complex and serious issues that hide behind this fictitious narrative reality. What differentiates this “story” from the rest of the stories of *Enero Sin Nombre* is that *Manuscrito Cuervo* escapes and goes beyond the traditional restrictions of the short story due to its more Avant-garde form. *Manuscrito Cuervo* escapes the traditional discursive mode, for as Valeria de Marco has pointed out: “El relato quiere insistir en indicar que las formas discursivas humanas utilizadas para narrar, sistematizar y transmitir la experiencia y el conocimiento no logran expresar la vivencia del campo de concentración” (qtd. in Degiovanni 219). In order to create this particular framework, Aub structures the story around a multiplicity of narrative voices that operates on various different levels. It is ultimately this multiplicity of voices that contributes to the distancing and defamiliarization technique that allows Aub to engage in his criticism. In this story, Aub chooses to distort the perception of reality, or borrowing a term from Valle-Inclán, he evokes a kind of *esperpento*, using concave mirrors that disfigure reality instead of presenting a more faithful reflection of reality. One of the principle questions raised by this text concerns the means of transmitting and conveying painful experiences in the form of literature.

The central protagonist of this story is a crow named Jacobo who witnessed (but did not suffer) the conditions of the concentration camp of Le Vernet. Jacobo documents his observations in a notebook, which was later found and translated by J.R. Bululu and edited by Aben Máximo Albarrón. From the very first page of the story, a clear

Cervantine influence is detected in the usage of certain distancing and estrangement techniques in which Max Aub seeks to create a separation between the narrator and the reader, evidenced by the introduction of the paradoxical characters of J.R. Bululú and Aben Máximo Albarrón. It is J.R. Bululú who found Jacobo's manuscript in his suitcase and was in charge of preparing the edition, writing the prologue and editing the notes of the manuscript,<sup>96</sup> although as he affirms, "Yo no tenía relaciones personales con Jacobo" (*Enero Sin Nombre* 178). This affirmation immediately eliminates any personal connection that might have existed between Jacobo and J.R. Bululú, which further distances the witness's testimony from its narration. Luis Bagué Quílez states that the story uses the technique of the found manuscript in order to submerge the reader into a portrait of the conditions that the prisoners faced in the concentration camp of Le Vernet (150).

Aben Máximo Albarrón, on the other hand, translated the manuscript from crowd language into Spanish. This act of invoking the use of a translator further obscures the transmission of Jacobo's testimony as meaning is ultimately lost in the translation from one language into another. The insertion of these two characters, whose names invoke a humoristic, exaggerated parody of Cervantes' characters in *El Quijote*, creates a fictitious world of imaginary characters that represents the antithesis to the prototypical seriousness attributed to the concentration-camp narrator. This notion of a lost manuscript, its reappearance, and then its translation into Spanish reminds of *El Quijote* where the end of chapter eight coincides with a break in the narration at which point the narrator is forced to discontinue his narration of the story due to his inability to find the rest of the

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<sup>96</sup> J.R. Bululu, like Max Aub, was interned on more than one occasions in Le Vernet, as he states in the very first sentence of the story: "Cuando salí, por primera vez, del campo de concentración de Vernete y llegué a Toulouse, en los últimos meses de 1940" (*Enero Sin Nombre* 177).

manuscript. The manuscript is later discovered, written in Arabic and subsequently translated into Spanish by Cide Hamete, who assumes the role of the ensuing narrator. Much in the same manner, both J.R. Bululú and Aben Máximo Albarrón assume a particular role and participate as both primary (J.R. Bululú) and secondary (Aben Máximo Albarrón) narrators in the narration of Jacobo's story.

The fact that the transmission of the story itself passes through the hands of various narrators/voices, instead of relying solely on the testimony and discourse of one narrator/witness (Jacobo), further contributes to the estrangement of the story by diffusing the responsibility of the witness and averting Jacobo's direct testimony by providing new filters between the reality presented and the reader. Therefore, the inclusion of two human figures facilitates the transmission of Jacobo's testimony to a "human" audience. J.R. Bululú's role as the editor not only reproduces Jacobo's testimony into a more coherent text, but he also interjects additional comments and observations that go beyond his role of providing explanatory notes, granting a certain degree of subjectivity to his annotations. The insertion of J.R. Bululú and Aben Máximo Albarrón also serves the purpose of bearing witness wherein both characters bear witness to Jacobo's trauma upon their direct participation in the telling of his story. This multiplicity of voices confers to *Manuscrito Cuervo* a degree of collective trauma as the trauma of the French concentration camps now passes through the hands (and voices) of many narrators that now assume a collective responsibility of this trauma. As Eloisa Nos Aldás has pointed out, the creation of these two characters also serves to distance the text from the form of a traditional autobiographical text; for Aub's autobiographical experience is limited to that which is told by a crow that lived in Le Vernet and J.R.

Bululú, the editor of the text (201). However, just as Cervantes's voice never really disappears from the narration of the text, Max Aub's voice, and the fictionalization of his own personal experience, continues to remain present.

Nonetheless, the clearest example of estrangement comes from the use of an unusual narrator, Jacobo, to recount the traumatic story of the concentration-camp world. Aub chooses to give voice and the authority of the word to a crow, who is not only non-human, but also did not live through the concentration-camp experience. Jacobo is therefore neither a hero nor a survivor of the concentration camp, although he was a witness who lived among the humans, flying from one barrack to another, observing their way of life and daily activities. Therefore, despite the fact that the traumatic event has its greatest impact and effect on the victim, as Dominick LaCapra asserts, it also affects everyone who comes in contact with it (1996; 8), which subsequently explains Jacobo's need to document his observations. This enables Jacobo to become a more involved narrator, for the place of enunciation of his testimony takes place inside the actual parameters and events of the concentration camp. Throughout the text, Jacobo continually reminds the reader that he has seen and heard first-hand that which he describes and documents in his study as illustrated by the following remark: "Todo cuanto describa o cuente ha sido visto y observado por mis ojos, escrito al día en mis fichas" (*Enero Sin Nombre* 185). This reinforces the testimonial nature of Jacobo's account.

The act of granting testimonial precedence to a bird, especially one who claims to speak on a more superior level than humans, subordinates the voice of the human subject. José Antonio Pérez Bowie labels this "una estrategia desrealizadora," which creates

distance from the actual events presented by bearing witness to the tragedy not from the perspective of the immersed subject, but rather through the lens of a hypothetical witness and an unlikely subject. This symbolizes the dehumanization of the exile or survivor of the concentration camp upon being stripped of his human identity and reduced to a subaltern entity and to an inferior space that even ranks below that of the bird species. The fact that the narrator of the story is also an animal, whose voice has been personified, further contributes to the dehumanizing effect of the text, since Jacobo represents the medium through which the reality of the French concentration camps is transmitted to the reader. The use of the “estrategia desrealizadora” therefore enables Aub to create the distance needed for a reporter to document painful events. It also reinforces the meta-narrative dimension of traumatic writing as it represents a continual fight against writing and the need to explore new literary and linguistic forms of expression.

Through the creation of Jacobo, Aub gives voice to a historically silenced and forgotten phenomenon erased from Spain’s collective memory. In spite of belonging to the most illustrious crow family, the reader still feels sorry for Jacobo as he too becomes a victim, although not to the same extent as the internees, of the human brutality that permeates the concentration-camp world. This idea is exemplified by Jacobo’s comment that he is protesting against the bad name that the humans have bestowed upon the crow species, illustrated by the many expressions and sayings that invoke the crows’ name and defame their character. In light of the central position that Jacobo occupies as a victim and bystander of trauma, whose nature is essential for the narration of the traumatic account, he is ultimately converted into an antihero. Jacobo lacks the traditional heroic qualities due to his inferior place with respect to humans and his position as a non-

survivor of the camps. However, his mere victimization as a witness of the trauma supposes a continual confrontation with the painful traumatic memory.

Many scholars assert that Jacobo represents an unreliable narrator in the sense that his knowledge is limited as a result of being a bird. While it is clear that Jacobo is a part of Aub's world of literary fantasy, Aub apparently tries to give more verisimilitude to the story, while at the same time adding a certain humoristic and parodic dimension.<sup>97</sup> Aub frames the story within a scientific study wherein Jacobo personifies a university "student" who is conducting an anthropological study of human beings and their curious behaviors from the perspective of the crows. The objective of the study is to examine the flaws of an inferior race in order to avoid that the crow race commit the same errors as the humans, while further prolonging the superiority of their culture over that of the concentration camp. Jacobo's references to his crow professors from the crow university that provide him with scholarly information, and his desire to include only facts in his study give the appearance of an academic discourse to his study, while they ultimately provoke laughter in the face of such an exaggerated reality. This is an example where Aub uses parody to describe the tragedy of the concentration-camp world from the perspective of a wise crow. As José María Naharro-Calderón affirms, there is an exaggerated distortion in Jacobo's experiment because the apparent objectivity that is invoked cannot be sustained through the text-experiment, for the criteria of the experiment are neither scientific nor objective as a result of the plural register of the story in the form of the various voices that ultimately form part of the transmission of the text (221). Luis Bagué Quílez also states that the humoristic parody of the story stems from

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<sup>97</sup> The parody lies in Aub's using a scientific, rational discourse to explain an irrational world.

two complementary sources: from Jacobo's [unique] perspective and from the peculiarities of his object of study (151).

By framing Jacobo's study within an academic discourse, Aub also engages in a discussion about the problems or limits associated with historical facts and the representation of history. Aub enters into a discussion of the postmodernist debate of history vs. fiction where he attempts to deconstruct the traditional conception of history as a science that possesses an absolute truth. The epistemological state of writing after the concentration-camp experience is placed into doubt as Aub offers other versions of the "facts" that contradict those imposed by governing institutions. Aub ultimately questions the reliability of the historical and scientific discourse as being a fixed, predetermined set of memories of the past. While the scientific study guarantees the accuracy of one's observations and conclusions, Aub demystifies the use of science as a means of accurately representing traumatic experiences and advocates for the acceptance of multiple representations of the same historical event. As Fernando Degiovanni contends: "Enmarcado dentro de un supuesto 'discurso académico,' el texto muestra no sólo las limitaciones de la descripción científica, de la interpretación de las culturas, sino también los irreductibles cruces ideológicos presentes en todo discurso que habla sobre el 'otro'" (220). This ultimately reinforces Aub's cervantine approach as being anti-authoritarian.

In spite of his lack of verisimilitude as a narrator and of belonging to the bird species, lacking a perspective of pure objectivity, Jacobo succeeds in describing a universe filled with pain, death and dehumanization through an ironical and paradoxical narrative of the human condition. As José Antonio Pérez Bowie declares, the only way

to understand the reality that Jacobo depicts and to approach the communication of that reality to a public resides in reducing it to the absurd (32). Upon describing the concentration camp of Le Vernet,<sup>98</sup> Jacobo underlines the fact that exiting the camp is not an easy task, symbolized by the barbed-wire fence surrounding the camp that literally and metaphorically prohibits the prisoners from leaving. This symbol ultimately alludes to the assured fate and future of the exiles: death, either literally or metaphorically. Aub uses irony, sarcasm and even elements of the grotesque to describe this reality in which Jacobo observes that none of the interns wanted to leave the camp as a result of: “de tan buen trato, los hombres no quieren marcharse de los campos de concentración” (229). However, in reality, the interns were not remaining in the camp, because of good treatment, for the treatment was anything but good, but rather because they could not leave even if they wanted to. Another ironical example resides in Jacobo’s observation that since man’s invention of money, they have spent their entire lives disputing it. However, the concentration camp has undertaken a new crusade against money whereby the detained prisoners work without being paid. Unbeknownst to Jacobo, this forms part of the reality of the concentration-camp world, and therefore, contrary to what Jacobo perceives, it is not a mere experiment, but rather the brutal reality of a system of slavery.

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<sup>98</sup> The concentration camp of Le Vernet was a punishment camp primarily reserved for prisoners considered to be politically questionable or dangerous. Among other punishment camps were Collioure and Rieucros. During his first stay in Le Vernet, Aub was classified as a “suspicious” communist who was involved in dangerous activities. From 1923, Vernet had been under the auspices of the French Ministry of War, and utilized by the Ministry of Interior for the internment of Spanish Republican refugees. In September 1939, due to the declaration of war, the Ministry of Interior declared this camp a camp for all foreigners of all nationalities. Vernet was known for its strict discipline and was considered as the most repressive French concentration camp. Due to its deficient conditions (lack of food, poor hygiene and cold temperatures) Le Vernet became an authentic concentration camp, comparable, according to some survivors, to Nazi camps, but without the crematorium. When the armistice was signed between France and Germany on June 22, 1940, the French government turned over to the Nazi regime all of the prisoner’s files. Vernet closed in 1944.

The principal problem that Jacobo confronts in his study is that he mistakenly interprets the human behavior observed in the French concentration camp of Le Vernet as incarnating the typical, universal behavior and definitive characteristics of all human beings. Jacobo describes the behavior and customs of the camp as if they represented that of the entire human species. This leads Jacobo to come to many erroneous conclusions, on the one hand, while at the same time ironically (and comically) reflecting the unjust and absurd concentration-camp world. As a result of this generalization, Jacobo believes that the men inside the camp are divided into two principle groups: inmates and the outside guards. He states that the second category (the “outside” guards) must be the inferior group since they attend to the needs of the interns as if they were the “chosen” ones. His inability to completely understand many of these behaviors or expressions also causes him to misinterpret them or at least to assign them inadequate features. However, it is this misinterpretation or distortion that not only adds to the humor of the story, but also further highlights the absurdity of the reality that he is describing.

Jacobo fails to recognize that the concentration-camp world represents what one might call a state of exception that lies outside the boundaries of normal human law and behavior, whereby the behavior exhibited inside this world ultimately represents a distortion from reality. This observation illuminates the incomprehensibility of the concentration-camp world (and the incomprehensibility of the behavior inside that world), which transgresses any logical, human comprehension, entering into a lawless, inexplicable world outside of common law where anything goes. As Giorgio Agamben’s conception of the camp asserts: it is a place outside of normal, conventional law.

The estrangement and distancing strategies implicated by the unusual narrator create the distance necessitated in order to relate painful, traumatic events. The need to invent a new language—crow language—in order to talk about these traumatic experiences reflects and reinforces the difficulty and the impossibility of fully expressing the trauma endured and the lived experience of the witness. It also reminds one of the systematic repression of language that characterized the concentration camps, which sought to erase the survivor's language and voice. Language, therefore, is more than a mere tool of expression, for it becomes the subject of its own discourse. This inability to fully communicate, as words too have their limitations, is one example of the limits that characters confront in *The Magical Labyrinth*. Therefore, it is no coincidence that a non-survivor of the camps fulfills the task of writing about the experience, since the camps sought to prohibit such activities. However, not even this newly invented language succeeds in completely and faithfully transcribing the trauma of the concentration-camp experience into a comprehensible written narrative, for there are many moments in the story where Jacobo confesses that even the crow language fails to express with words the meaning that he is trying to convey, obstructing and further complicating his description of the camps. Jacobo himself points to this breakdown and aphasia: “Nuestro riquísimo idioma cuervo no puede expresar tan exactamente como yo hubiese deseado un cúmulo de palabras de las que no he podido todavía averiguar el exacto sentido” (187).

The live, ubiquitous presence of the trauma in the mind and memory of the witness makes it impossible to face the trauma head on, calling for the need to look for a more distant approach through which he may face the trauma albeit through alternative means. This enables the witness to ultimately get closer to the trauma by distancing

himself from it. Returning to the scene of the trauma insinuates a difficult and often painful journey. One's memory instinctively protects the individual through a process of reconstructing one's memories of the trauma as opposed to simply reliving or retrieving them. In that sense, one does not simply rewind the tape, press play, and see the trauma again exactly as it had occurred, but rather one is forced to re-experience the trauma as disjointed flashbacks or nightmares. As Barry Schwartz asserts: "The past cannot be literally constructed; it can only be selectively exploited" (qtd. in Alexander 67). As Maurice Blanchot states in his book *The Writing of the Disaster*, once an experience occurs, it is forever lost; it is at this point—upon losing what we have to say, the point of forgetfulness—that writing begins. The loss of the event is the source of memory, writing, and history (21). Memory possesses a highly selective and limited nature that entails a particular organization based, not on a chronological order, but rather on specific themes or topics of importance. Memory is not a process of retrieval but rather of representation, which lends itself to certain elements of distortion (Ferrán 2007; 58). As Todorov asserts, memory is a selection process due to the limitations of the witness's retention capacity (qtd. in Nos Aldás 49). In light of these concepts, the satirical and paradoxical elements of the story provide the space and distance needed so that Max Aub may return to the trauma associated with his detainment in Le Vernet and begin to unravel his memories. Given that memory is the fundamental base of testimony, to speak of bearing witness to a traumatic experience is to create a narrative based on memory.

In the prologue, J.R. Bululú comments that Jacobo did not have enough time to complete his study ("Por lo visto no tuvo tiempo de acabarlo, o no se trata más que del borrador del libro publicado en lengua corvina," 178). Jacobo's inability to finish telling

or documenting his story illustrates writing's failure and language's inability to relate certain realities.<sup>99</sup> Lyotard categorically refers to this concept as the *differend*, which refers to the unstable state of language wherein something which must be able to be put into words cannot yet be, so that what remains to be phrased exceeds what one can presently express. In the second sentence of the prologue, J.R. Bululu adds that Jacobo disappeared days before he found the manuscript, but nothing was known about him nor did anyone ever hear from him again (Jacobo había desaparecido días antes y no se sabía nada de él, ni según supe luego, se volvió a tener noticias suyas) (*Enero Sin Nombre* 177).

The fact that Jacobo never finishes his study nor concludes his manuscript also reveals the impossibility of telling an entire traumatic story. Max Aub's immense literary collection of works about the Civil War and the concentration camps exemplify the impossibility of bearing witness to trauma at one particular moment. Aub's incessant need to write and re-write the trauma of the concentration-camp experience proves the necessity to allow the traumatic memories to gradually return one at a time. This accounts for Aub's need to thread together and unravel these memories gradually throughout a series of testimonial works, whose totality and mosaic structure constitute Aub's act of bearing witness. However, even Aub's massive literary collection fails to completely tell his story, as he states: "Las notas y recuerdos que acumulé necesitarían cien años de vida para resolverlos en libros" (qtd. in Soldevila Durante 1973; 357).

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<sup>99</sup> This notion of writing's failure to depict traumatic realities becomes a recurrent metaphor in concentration-camp literature. As José Antonio Pérez Bowie expresses in his "Introduction" to *Manuscrito Cuervo*: "las distintas formas discursivas humanas utilizadas para narrar, sistematizar y transmitir la experiencia y el conocimiento no logran expresar la vivencia del campo de concentración. Es imposible narrar la barbarie, compartirla con un lector" (34).

Jacobo's own sudden disappearance parallels the disappearance of many Spanish exiles, who never returned and were never heard from again. Jacobo's symbolic death therefore remits to the concepts of death and violence that tend to characterize the trauma narrative and represent a precursor to the victim's "rebirth" and rediscovery of their new identity. Although the reader does not learn how Jacobo disappeared, his disappearance represents a metaphorical ellipsis in the narration that disrupts the logical sequence of time and space and presents a void and ultimately a dissociation from the trauma. There is no finality or conclusion to Jacobo's tale, therefore the reader never learns what happened to him beyond the end of his story. This uncertainty creates a break in the narration, and temporarily suspends the trauma, as we do not know the degree to which the trauma continued to affect Jacobo. The ellipsis also produces, what Ugarte terms, the language of war, which I interpret in this context as a long period of silence that characterized the post-Holocaust period. As Maurice Blanchot states: "One can *show* when one cannot *speak*. But without language, nothing can be shown. And to be silent is still to speak. Silence is impossible. That is why we desire it. Writing precedes every phenomenon" (11). Although Jacobo is silenced, the disaster continues to speak as it dissimulates itself in the text.

In accordance with trauma theory, the ellipsis equates with Freud's conception of the latency period. Given that the disaster escapes the very possibility of experience, the only possible way of expressing this impossible reality is with an ellipsis. J.R. Bululú and Aben Máximo Albarrón's presence in the narration therefore serves the function of preserving the memory of Jacobo by organizing and publishing his manuscript. This act ultimately facilitates the reconstruction of Jacobo's identity, not as a bird, but rather as a

witness to this horrible tragedy. This strange and distorted world is therefore characterized by the subversion of logic whereby an implausible character is the narrator that not only tells the story of a concentration-camp world that completely lacks logic, but also becomes the embodiment of reason. However, Aub never attempts to rationalize the fantastic nature of this story, for in a world void of reason or logic things just appear as they are without further questioning. As Nos Aldás so accurately puts it, *Manuscrito Cuervo* goes beyond the mere expression of pain and cruelty that surround the concentration camp, but on a much deeper level illustrates the utter lack of logic of the actions of the French and the injustice of so much suffering (218).

In his prologue to the story, J.R. Bululú affirms that he is sending the manuscript to the press out of curiosity and in remembrance of a time that is now past and that will never return again, since it is well known that the war is over and the concentration camps are all gone. The fact that Max Aub in 1950 continues to try to make sense of this absurd reality proves the fallibility of Bululú's statement. The concept of the trauma goes beyond a conception of time and space. Its ghosts do not vanish merely with the official declaration of the end of a war, or the closing of the camps. Jacobo illustrates the vivid presence of the concentration camp in a poem that he includes that depicts the sad journey of the Spanish exiles upon crossing the French border and being interned in the concentration camp at the beach of Argèles-sur-Mer. The poem reflects upon the once peaceful and joyful nation before the Civil War where food and drinks were plentiful. This contrasts the situation in the camps where the exiles lived in their own excrement with little food, water or privacy as they were forced to relieve themselves with somebody watching them. However, in a world in which they no longer knew what to

do, the poem emphasizes the importance of humor in the life of the exiles interned in the concentration camp, for as the poem states:

y algo de humor,  
que es lo que hemos podido salvar  
tras de tanto luchar  
contra el fascio invasor. (226)

This poem clearly illustrates the power and the importance that humor had in the lives of the detainees by not only serving as a therapeutic means of survival, enabling them to cope with their harsh reality, but also incarnating the only remnant of their beings that they could save in the face of their dispossession. For Dominick LaCapra, humor possesses a curative dimension that represents an important step in the therapeutic recuperation from trauma (qtd. in Moreno-Nuño 355).

In the index, which follows the Prologue at the beginning of the notebook, Jacobo also begins to pose many fundamental questions and problematize the situations and experiences that he has observed regarding the nature of the human character, highlighting the inhuman defects and the strange customs of humans. Jacobo divides his manuscript into fifteen sections and enumerates a list of all of the different categories that he is going to discuss, although many of them never appear in his testimony. Each section is subsequently subdivided into smaller fragments each of which elaborates on a specific aspect of the human behavior. In total, the manuscript contains fifty five fragments. These fragments not only symbolize the fragmented nature of traumatic

memory, but also represent the process through which Aub wrote this story, through a myriad of fragmented notes that he compiled during his two stays at Le Vernet.

The first fragment is in the form of a picaresque-like autobiography of Jacobo wherein he subverts the traditional picaresque tale by immediately alluding to his illustrious origins and extraordinary destiny, asserting himself as the anti-picaro of the crow species. However, Jacobo admits that the index promises more than the text actually offers. This remark ultimately alludes to a certain deficiency and defect in the writing of the text, which reflects and parallels the difficulty in constructing a literary representation of posttraumatic conditions. Rather than taking the form of a coherent narrative, Jacobo's text resembles more a rough draft or notebook. Among some of the most notable defects that Jacobo draws attention to are the scary effects that time has on humans. Jacobo remarks that while crows reach adulthood after six months and change little after that, humans suffer all sorts of "growing old" stages: their skin wrinkles and peels, their hair and teeth fall out, the body begins to sag and droop, and they pass gas. All of these observations produce a disgusting sensation, but yet a sense of comic relief emerges as Jacobo's exaggerated depictions produce laughter. This rapid aging process is a direct consequence of the harsh reality of the concentration camp, wherein the stress endured causes the human body to age and deteriorate faster. One could therefore reduce the entire essence of Jacobo's manuscript to a criticism and diatribe against the strange, barbaric behavior of humans, exemplifying their inferiority and irrationality with respect to the crow species. It is this allusion to human behavior that represents a metaphor for the characterization of the concentration-camp world, exhibited by the misery and

suffering propagated by the inhumane conduct of the French authorities and of all police regimes.

Upon observing the human condition, Jacobo draws attention to many additional oddities that strike his attention. It is the humoristic and comical description of these characteristics by Jacobo that provoke a sense of laughter while ultimately underscoring the ridiculousness and absurdity of the camp. Aub's exaggerated depiction and caricatured description of the grotesque and clownish human condition by a bird that is struggling to make sense out of this reality is utterly comical, although underneath the laughter still lays a serious message. Among the many burlesque peculiarities that Jacobo underscores is that of the humans' obsession and fascination with papers. This observation allows Jacobo to enter into a discussion about the concept of identity and nationalism, which forms one of the central preoccupations of exile. Jacobo thus pardons himself for not knowing his place of birth. This directly infringes upon the humans' conception of birth order, which states that the place where one is born determines their future, their living conditions and ultimately their identity. From this human perspective, one who neither knows where they were born nor who their parents were, is a dangerous person. The imposition of one's identity by birth order is further highlighted by the way in which people are defined by their nationality: Spaniards are sons of bull-fighters; Italians are sons of singers; Germans are sons of professors; Chinese are sons of rice... Jacobo further emphasizes this idea that one's identity is pre-determined by one's place of birth, which directly remits to Max Aub's own identity crisis, as a man born in France, with Spanish and Mexican citizenship. In rejecting this notion of birth-place identity, Aub highlights the true complexity surrounding identity politics, which goes beyond a

mere social or economical categorization and enters into a more profound realm based on the personal circumstances and situations that one has endured throughout one's *largo viaje*. For the Spanish exile in particular, this entails a journey through the concentration camps and is reflected by their ultimate search for identity.

Jacobo incessantly mocks the way in which humans travel through life carrying with them and depending on a set of papers that determines or states their identity. This commentary represents a direct criticism and attack against the corrupt system of the SERE,<sup>100</sup> which required special documents and papers in order to be eligible for the

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<sup>100</sup> The SERE was an organization founded by Juan Negrín in 1939 that oversaw, in conjunction with the Mexican government, the selection process of the Spanish émigrés and their evacuation out of France and transportation to Mexico. From the beginning, the progressive Cárdenas regime supported the Spanish Republic, refusing to establish diplomatic relations with Franco's fascist regime, and agreed to provide economic support and initiate a policy that opened its doors to all Spanish refugees. In order to further facilitate and accommodate the arrival of Spanish refugees to Mexico, Cárdenas even elaborated a policy that would grant Mexican nationality and citizenship to those that applied. Cárdenas also founded La Casa de España, which was transformed into an institute that allowed Spanish intellectuals to continue their intellectual endeavors and support of the Republic. However, many émigrés questioned the "corrupt" practices of the SERE, claiming that the organization gave privilege and priority to those that possessed power and prestige, such as the intellectuals, politicians, or to those that were supporters of Negrín's communist faction, while thousands of those interned in the camps received little help. This has raised many questions regarding the selection process and the criteria used to determine which Spanish refugees would be chosen to receive asylum in Mexico. The sheer number of refugees seeking asylum, along with the limited economic means and resources available, made it impossible for the SERE or the JARE to transport each and every refugee that sought to find new hope in Mexico, especially with the onset of World War II looming in the horizon. This ultimately resulted in the selection of a select group of refugees out of the thousands that desired to leave France and the concentration camps, thus leaving this decision to some degree of pure chance and arbitrariness. Supposedly the selection process was based on the following two criterions: those refugees that, because of their political orientation, were targeted or at serious risk of death if they remained in France; and those that were professional technocrats that Mexico needed. Nevertheless, this select group of refugees was composed of a more heterogeneous cluster of individuals that came from all social classes and political orientations. Francisco Caudet provides statistics that illustrate that only approximately 28% of the Spanish exiles in Mexico were intellectuals, while the remaining 72% belonged to various social and political classes (1997; 482). In 1940 the SERE was abolished and the JARE (Junta de Auxilio a los Refugiados Españoles), which was founded by Negrín's arch rival Manuel Prieto, took over and assumed sole responsibility for the transportation of the Spanish refugees. However, as Francisco Caudet points out: "El problema que más atenazaba a la emigración residía en la división del SERE y la JARE" (1997; 395). The constant fight between these two factions would continue to divide the Republicans in exile and complicate matters of transporting refugees to Mexico. The first ship to arrive in Mexico was the *Sinaia*, which arrived on June 13, 1939. The other ships that transported Spanish refugees to Mexico were the *Ipanema* on July 7 and the *Mexique* on July 27 and the *De Grasse* (to New York) on December 30. All in all, about 25,000 refugees were evacuated from France within a period of approximately fifteen months in 1939 and early 1940.

“second” exile to Mexico. It also represents an attack and denunciation against the corrupt bureaucratic system of totalitarian regimes, which systematically documented everything on paper. Aub was all too familiar with this process as his police record as a dangerous communist would remain open and valid for decades, obstructing his desire to obtain a visa permitting him to return to France. In other words, this need to have papers is what ultimately represented the decisive factor that determined the fate of each exile. It was one single paper—a visa—that marked the road that each exile would take: the journey to Mexico (or other Latin American countries), or the ill-fated road to death in Nazi concentration camps or perhaps back to Spain.<sup>101</sup> In short, the identity of the exiles in the French concentration camps reduced itself to a mere piece of paper, symbolizing perhaps the lowest form of dehumanization of one’s identity.

Jacobo tells an anecdote that clearly underlines this notion. Two Italians were detained and sentenced to one month in jail for not having their papers, although they declared that they entered France in order to serve democracy. Upon leaving the jail, they were taken to a French concentration camp and subsequently executed. In a sarcastic manner, Jacobo reacts to the contradictory notion in which humans express their desire for freedom by constructing boundaries and borders, which ultimately obstruct the realization of that same freedom. At one moment, Jacobo utters the following:

Sébase que frontera es una cosa muy importante que no existe y que, sin embargo, los hombres defienden a capa y espada como si fuese una cosa real. Estos extraños seres se pasan la vida matándose los unos a los otros o reuniéndose

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<sup>101</sup> Aub’s theatrical work *El rapto de Europa* problematizes precisely the problem of obtaining the visa, the correct documentation and then the trip to Mexico upon escaping (or leaving) the concentration camp.

alrededor de una mesa, sin lograr entenderse, como es natural, para rectificar esas líneas inexistentes. (208)

Jacobo's illustration of the nonsense of creating boundaries reminds one of Max Aub's own exilic experience, which crossed through many boundaries. However, in spite of their need for freedom, the concentration camp is characterized by its complete lack or inexistence, which is clearly illustrated by Jacobo's comment: "Por la libertad viven encerrados" (214). In addition, Jacobo notes the humans' desire to travel, but yet they invent passports and visas that only hinder this process. This ultimately prompts them to go to extremes, even to that of killing, in order to obtain those papers, a sign that ultimately reveals the sad state of man. These conditions observed by Jacobo only reinforce the lack of logic and the irrationality possessed by humans, and it is only through this upside-down, distorted world that a phenomenon such as the concentration camps and the assassination of millions could take place and where one man could be interned for not having enlisted in the Polish army, while another man could be interned for enlisting in the Polish army.

One of the most notable observations made by Jacobo is the manner in which humans tend to divide themselves into specific categories or hierarchies. It is through an examination of this system of classification that Jacobo enters into the problematic of exile identity and the difficulty faced in confronting and reconstructing it. The first classification of humans that Jacobo describes consists of three categories: those that tell their story/history, those that do not tell their story/history and those that have no story/history. Max Aub is undoubtedly playing with the double meaning of the Spanish

word *historia*, which in English translates into either *history* or *story*. This division corresponds to the structural framework established by Francoism in which those that told their story were precisely the “winners” of the war, while the last two categories belonged to the “losers” of the war and the subsequent exiles. This distortion also comes from what Jacobo denominates “bulo” or false rumor, which constitutes the principal substance of humans. This notion of false rumors basically represents the base of Francoist historiography, which was founded on a system of lies and on the mystification of history whereby nobody could differentiate between fact or fiction or the truth from a lie. The lack of available documentation in conjunction with the silence imposed by the strict censure resulted in the fragmented and fallible nature of information distribution during the Franco regime. One part of the definition of being an exile resides in the loss of one’s history/story and of one’s individual and collective identity. In this respect, Jacobo’s observations are accurate in that he succeeds in portraying the way in which the exilic and the concentration-camp worlds not only create divisions between humans, but also eliminate and erase traces of historical and collective memory.

The notion of not possessing a history also coincides with a second important classification that Jacobo observes pertaining to the classification of human language. As Luis Bagué Quílez affirms, the same problems that Jacobo encounters in his quest to define man plague him as he attempts to characterize their language (152). Jacobo distinguishes between three categories of people with respect to language: those that do not have a language; those that have a “bad” language and those that have a language, but do not use it, preferring to remain silent. The first category of those that do not possess a language corresponds to the identity of the exile and parallels their lack of history. Upon

writing this story, Max Aub is trying to avoid what Jacobo characterizes as the most recurrent human behavior regarding memory: that of “closing one’s eyes” to reality. Through the lens of Jacobo, Aub looks back and confronts the past, albeit from a certain distance, and at the same time gives himself and all of the other displaced exiles a new identity and voice. This new voice would no longer be lost in the rubble and ruins of the camps, but rather would carry on into the future generations, reclaiming its space among the streets of Spain and restoring life to a forgotten generation of exiles.

The final part of the story fulfills precisely this objective by paying homage to the many fallen and forgotten exiles inside the labyrinth of the concentration-camp world. Aub suspends the fictitious narration of Jacobo’s account by presenting a list, or a mini biography, of many of the prisoners of Le Vernet and the reason why each one was interned. This list, which contains some eulogistic overtones, ultimately serves as a medium of recuperating the lost identity of the many victims of Le Vernet by giving them life again and telling their story. The list also reaffirms what Cathy Caruth recognizes as the faithfulness to the dead as a common burden on traumatized survivors.

Jacobo’s first-person account here disappears in favor of a collective voice. Within this long list of names there exists the common thread that the majority of the interned had no idea why they were interned in the concentration camp in the first place. This issue will be revisited in the next chapter as it becomes one of Aub’s principle obsessions regarding the camp. Many were detained for being Communists, others were detained by false accusations, while a large majority of the interns were detained for ridiculous circumstances. One such example is Julián Altmann, a watchmaker, who was detained for having attended a Communist meeting by accident. What this all illustrates

is the gross stupidity, absurdity and senselessness of a concentration-camp world in which the French government, which was anti-fascist and anti-Franco, detained and interned other antifascists instead of detaining the real enemy. This lacks complete sense and logic and ultimately undermines one of the goals of both the French government and the Spanish Republicans in defeating fascism. Jacobo differentiates fascists from anti-fascists ironically asserting that fascists put anti-fascists in concentration camps, while anti-fascists put anti-fascists in concentration camps. This represents a direct attack on the French government responsible for this irrationality. The ultimate irony of the story is evidenced by the fact that many people escaped from their country in order to live in peace in a democratic nation, but that democratic nation imprisoned them behind barbed wire in a concentration camp. As Luis Bagué Quílez contends, these portraits of the prisoners, which are at times grotesque, illustrate the true dimension of horror [of the camp] that until that moment had only been insinuated in a few annotations in the text (152). When an old man dreamt that he had escaped from the concentration camp, a guard knocked him down and cried out: “De aquí no se escapa nadie, ni en sueños” (237).

*Manuscrito Cuervo* represents a prime example of Max Aub’s use of the Spanish Avant-garde as a narrative strategy employed to represent the reality of the French concentration camp of Le Vernet. Although *Manuscrito Cuervo* was written in the 1950s, well beyond the height of the Avant-garde period of the 1920s, Aub turns to new, artistic and aesthetic forms in an effort to represent a reality that goes beyond any conventional form of representation. The use of humor and the unusual narrator in this story exemplify the Avant-garde’s emphasis on the destruction, rupture and fragmentation of traditional narrative forms that ultimately results in the creation of a

deformed narrative structure. Aub breaks away from the traditional narrative syntax as he engages in a series of games that creates a chaotic, unorganized structure that parallels the chaotic structure of the concentration-camp world. The form of the story loses importance and is superseded by the value placed on the image and the metaphor, each of which is essential in the representation of such an atypical reality. The use of the Avant-garde thus enables Aub to enter into a discussion and criticism of the French concentration camps from an estranged point of view that, to a certain extent, diverts the reader's attention from the traumatic reality, while still implanting a harsh criticism. As José Antonio Pérez Bowie contends, this text is the result of Aub's difficulty in confronting and expressing the horror and indescribability of giving coherence to something that lacks logic (qtd. in Nos Aldás 208). It therefore appears most fitting that Aub resort to elements of the Avant-garde, whose emphasis on anti-rationalism and lack of sense mirror that of the concentration camp world itself. *Manuscrito Cuervo* represents Max Aub's attempt to find an adequate literary model that best illustrates the problematic relationship between writing trauma and language's inability to relate traumatic realities.

What distinguishes Max Aub's use of the Avant-garde from a more traditional definition is his refusal to abandon or completely reject realism while at the same time exalting the use of the imagination. While the Avant-garde seeks to avoid the problematic associated with man by distancing itself from social and political preoccupations and by avoiding any references to collective problems in the daily lives of people, Aub's testimonial work continues to express these preoccupations while at the same time incorporating Avant-garde techniques into his narrative. Aub never attempts

to deny nor forget reality, but rather on the contrary seeks to reinsert this reality back into the memory of the Spaniards. His work therefore cleverly combines elements of realism with elements of the Avant-garde to construct a different genre of narrative that enables him to accomplish his need of bearing witness to a limit experience.

In *Manuscrito Cuervo*, Aub removes the human subject as the narrative voice, but never abandons the underlying “human” concerns or conditions that ultimately prompt his need to write the story. In this sense, Aub reduces this narrative world to an abstract subjectivity in the form of a dehumanized figure. As both the Avant-garde and the social realist novel came and went, Aub continued to hold on to elements of each one of these movements, resulting in a harmonious coexistence that made possible Aub’s creation of many Avant-garde/realist works during the 1950s. Aub once stated that Spanish realism not only represents the real, but also the unreal, for in Spain it was always impossible to separate what exists from that which is imagined (qtd. in Ontañón Rodríguez 283).

### *Enero Sin Nombre*<sup>102</sup>

The short story titled *Enero Sin Nombre*<sup>103</sup> describes the infamous mass exodus of thousands of Spanish exiles who embarked upon the road to France during the last days

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<sup>102</sup> *Enero Sin Nombre* was written between 1943 and 1948 during the same period in which Aub also wrote a large portion of his stories of *The Magical Labyrinth*. As Eloisa Nos Alda points out, this story first appeared in issue 9 of *Sala de Espera* in January 1949.

<sup>103</sup> The title of this story also coincides with the title selected for the book of Max Aub’s complete stories of *The Magical Labyrinth*. Although this story does not specifically deal with the camps, it represents the bridging of the two traumatic worlds: the exodus from Spain where the trauma originated and the entrance into France where the trauma would only intensify in the camps. This accounts for the text’s centrality amongst a series of stories that deal with the Civil War, the concentration camps and exile. The book *Enero Sin Nombre* appeared for the first time as an organized and ordered collection of Aub’s short stories under one volume in 1995.

of January 1939 escaping Francoist repression.<sup>104</sup> The structure of the story is divided into three sections each titled only by the days (26, 27, and 28) in January when the events take place. The date on which the story begins—January 26, 1939—is also of symbolic importance, for it marks the official fall of Barcelona during the Civil War—an event that ultimately triggered the Republican exodus.<sup>105</sup> This story also depicts the horrible conditions that the exiles confronted in the long journey across the border before their ultimate internment in the French concentration camps. The story *Enero Sin Nombre*, which is the final text under the section entitled “Guerra,” represents a transition and ultimately a prelude to the next series of stories entitled “Los Campos de Concentración.” This section depicts the dehumanizing and dispossessing journey through exile that would manifest itself upon the exiles’ arrival in the concentration camps, as already observed in *Manuscrito Cuervo*. In much the same fashion as *Manuscrito Cuervo*, although not to such a humoristic and ironic extent, *Enero Sin Nombre* turns to an unusual narrator—in this case a beech tree rooted in Figueras<sup>106</sup>—in an effort to continue to bear witness and to transmit Aub’s testimonial will of the exiles’ traumatic journey. Although this story portrays a moral/historical document of Cataluña

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<sup>104</sup> This is the only story in Aub’s entire narrative production that recounts this specific episode of the evacuation of Catalonia before the eventual defeat of the Republicans, although the first few scenes of *Campo francés* also depict to some extent this scene.

<sup>105</sup> The fall of Barcelona to the Nationalists not only signaled the closeness of the end of the Civil War, but it also symbolized something much more significant and personal to the Republicans. The Nationalists’ victory in the Civil War also indicated the practical end to what the Republicans in April 1931 had envisioned as a collective dream and paradise in the creation of the Second Republic. In *Hablo como Hombre*, Aub reminisces about the joy and happiness that was felt the day of the proclamation of the Second Republic, and even declared that this was the result of: “la necesidad de una nueva repartición de los bienes, tanto materiales como de educación” (*Hablo como Hombre* 130). The fall of Barcelona therefore also meant the shattering of this dream, which now became a nightmare for the thousands of Republicans that were forced to leave Spain, whose only plausible way of overcoming this nightmare resided in rebuilding the shattered pieces through telling their stories.

<sup>106</sup> Figueras is a city located in the province of Girona, Cataluña, near the French Pyrenees where many exiles crossed the French border in January and February 1939.

during the Civil War, Aub continues to resort to aesthetic games and Avant-garde techniques in order to transmit his message.

Just like a bird who was able to fly around the concentration camp from one barrack to another observing human behavior, a tree represents a non-human element of nature that observes from high above the sad journey of the Spanish exiles as they traverse the long road into France. In this respect, the tree, like the crow, is personified and is converted into a witness of the circumstances that surround it. The tree not only recounts these painful memories, but also gives voice to a series of anonymous people so that they too can tell their stories. As Eloisa Nos Aldás asserts, in these two stories Aub turns to the use of the classical fable, whose emphasis on granting communicative language and human consciousness to animals and vegetation demonstrates the impossibility and absurdity of coming to terms with the reality of the situation (228). One must therefore wonder why Aub chose a tree as the narrator instead of many other possible non-human figures. For one, as the narrator mentions, it was born in the 1880s and therefore possesses an abundance of knowledge and experience as it has remained a continual part of Spain's land. This is further reinforced by the tree's deep roots that literally connect and bind it to the soil making it one with the land. This notion is of utmost importance with regard to the concept of exile, which presupposes the loss of one's roots; the exile is uprooted from his homeland and transplanted to a foreign land. At one moment in the story, the tree begins to experience personally a form of partial uprootedness as it too is harmed and somewhat destroyed by the bombs dropped by Nationalist planes on the highway that the exiles are traversing. This act illustrates that exile is not a mere transplant of man from one land to another, or simply the loss of one's

homeland, but it also involves the loss of one's roots to that homeland, which can never be sowed back exactly as they once were. Although the émigré may return to his lost homeland, he will never be able to recover his severed roots. Therefore, the use of a tree as a narrator is appropriate given its metaphorical association with Spain's roots and its long-lasting place in society as a witness.

The story begins with a metaphorical allusion to man's propensity for walking—evidenced by the fact that they have legs—as the narrator depicts the human nature of man by their inability to remain still: “A los hombres les ha dado siempre por andar, para eso tienen piernas...” (111). Just as Jacobo mistakenly characterizes all human behavior based on what he observes in the concentration camp, the narrator of this story also misdiagnoses man's proclivity to walk upon observing the Spanish exiles lined up for miles and miles as they walk along the road toward France. What is ironic about this observation is that this march does not reflect the exiles' love for walking, but rather symbolizes their exodus or flight from Spain. The narrator proceeds to describe the humans' fear of loud noises and their obsession with flying, which represent two direct allusions to the Nationalist planes' attacks on the Republicans as they walked to exile. In the second paragraph, it is revealed that the narrator is a tree, as it not only refers to its trunk: “...ensanchando poco a poco mi tronco y mi paisaje” (111), but also states: “He nacido de pie” (111). The tree's tremendous height has permitted it to see vast regions of the countryside, establishing from the beginning of the story its position as a witness (“porque lo veo...”) of the behavior and human nature of man. The tree bases its authority for presenting its testimony on its longevity in nature and good memory. In the same manner that Jacobo proclaimed the crow species' superiority over humans, the

narrator also asserts their (the trees') superiority over humans upon declaring, "somos más que ellos" (112). As Eloisa Nos Aldás asserts, "this tone of superiority that appears in both *Manuscrito Cuervo* and *Enero Sin Nombre* on the one hand grants more authority to the text with the insertion of a reliable narrator, while on the other hand provokes a certain irony, which in turn further distances the pain of the narration" (228).

The narrator's description of the mass exodus commences with a symbolic observation signaled by the death of a boy at the foot of the tree the previous night. The boy's sick condition prompted his mother to take him to France in an effort to restore his life. This causes the narrator to reflect upon the concept of death, which, according to its observations, represents the embodiment of the exodus. The boy's death symbolizes the sad condition and the metaphorical "death" of the Spanish exiles and their need to flee their country and abandon their roots in search of a "cure" or remedy to their problems. As the narrator states: "...se lo llevó su madre camino de Francia, creyendo que allí resucitará" (113). The narrator then describes this dehumanized world in terms of a group without a language that passes along the highway like:

Una sangre negra que corre por las cien heridas que la noche le ha hecho. Mundo medio muerto que anda con dos piernas igual que si solo tuviese una, mundo que solo sabe andar y que sabe que con andar no resuelve nada, pero que anda para probarse que vive. (114)

The highway is filled with trucks, police officers, soldiers, automobiles, guards, elderly people, women, cars, broken newspapers, gasoline tanks, three abandoned canons, children, wounded, women, children, elderly people, and more wounded, none of which

stop their exodus, except for those that lay dead along the road. Carrying with them what little possessions remain, loaded in their wagons, the majority of the exiles were forced to abandon and leave behind in Barcelona most of their belongings and therefore head toward the French border with little more than their worn-down bodies. The dark reality of the exodus is evidenced by the narrator's remark that there are more weak, lame people than invalids, and more invalids than wounded in the head, and there are children with only one leg that walk with crutches, all of whom continue along the path of exile as they remain defenseless against the sudden attacks of the bombs dropped by the Nationalist airplanes. The mass of exiles attempts to scurry from danger, but all is in vain as nothing is to protect them from the ultimate bombardment of the Nationalist planes. This results in a scary and tragic scene of the bombardment epitomized by the destruction and dehumanization of nature: the dismantling of walls, the melting of steel beams, the burning, breaking, and shredding to pieces and disfiguring of everything in its proximity, including human lives. This is best exemplified by the body parts that fly around in the air like dust right in front of the narrator's eyes. The bombardment leaves the land filled with dust, blood, and branches, for even the narrator endured the consequences of the bombs which tore branches from its body. The narrator's own traumatic encounter is evidenced as it exclaims: "Ya no soy la tercera parte de lo que era... Toda la tierra empapada de sangre" (128). In this respect, the narrator is no longer merely a passive bystander, but rather becomes a direct participant in the exiles' trauma, its role thus having been transformed from that of a mere spectator and observer to one who is also affected. This is illustrated by the following comment: "diez metros a mi izquierda descabeza a un guardia de asalto y cuelga en mis ramas un trozo de su hígado" (128).

This underscores the literal dehumanization of the exiles' identity as they embarked upon their exodus from Spain. This also shows the impossibility of the objective witness as the subject now becomes involved in the event that it narrates. In the words of Luis Bagué Quílez, the tree manifests a certain sentiment of solidarity with those that suffered the consequences of the war, which is illustrated by the fact that during the bombing it loses the majority of its branches (153). The tree also becomes a synecdoche for the mass exodus of the Spanish exiles as its roots symbolize the roots of the exiles that are torn out upon their departure from Spain. The powerful image of overcrowding that fills concentration-camp memoirs also manifests itself in the exodus as the narrator declaims: "Los cuerpos se hacían en otra camioneta; como no hay bastantes ambulancias ponen los heridos sobre los cadáveres" (129). As the wreckage subsides and the dust begins to clear, those exiles, still intact and capable of continuing the long journey down the highway, once again form their line and resume their march toward France.

The true reality of the exodus becomes even clearer as the narrator gives voice to many of the Spanish exiles by relinquishing its role as narrator and allowing the victims of exile to communicate with one another and tell their story as they walk toward the French border. One could argue that the story itself is transformed into a collective testimony, as the characters discuss their plight and reflect upon their sad reality, telling their stories, bearing witness and wondering why they should continue to fight in the face of more death. Others question how this whole situation even became possible, blaming the government, the communists, the CNT, the Republicans or even Manuel Azaña. The castigation of the Spanish Republicans is best exemplified by a young man who recounts how he was branded on the forehead, in spite of not participating in any political party or

labor union. This act was due to his brother's affiliation with the Republican Party. This ultimately illustrates the Franco regime's endeavor to eliminate or punish not only all of the opposition, but also anyone associated with or related to a member of the opposition regardless of that person's political affiliation or involvement. When detained and brought in front of the firing squad with another ten prisoners, the young man was spared death as no bullet touched him, and after being left for dead, fled during the night. He then calls the fascist regime criminal and professes that he would rather die than be fascist—a statement that clearly elucidates his desire to flee the Francoist Spain that killed his mother and his four brothers. As the young man asserts: “Esta gente no sabe lo que quiere, pero sabe muy bien lo que no quiere. Por eso huyen” (125). This multiplicity of narrative voices, like *Manuscrito Cuervo*, reaffirms Aub's desire to remember the exilic experience as a collective trauma that must be represented in the collective “we” voice.

Notwithstanding the many exiles that testify to their experiences and to their trauma during the long walk along the highway, the narrator expounds that the majority of the exiles did not speak, for they had lost their voice. This “silence” represents a clear sign of their dispossessed identity and the impossibility of telling their story. Silence is a common response to the survivor's need to tell his/her story. However, silence does not indicate a loss of memory, but rather is a consequence of suffering a traumatic experience. As the narrator clearly points out, in spite of losing their voice, the exiles did not lose their memories: “A las mujeres se les han ensanchado las caderas, llevan a rastras los recuerdos...” (124). The dehumanized outlook of the Spanish exiles is further underscored by their complete absence of hope as they continue to walk through the rain

with their heads down, never looking once at the trees. The narrator remarks that it is the first time that it has seen people walk under the rain, for they usually run or wait until it stops. At one point along the road, after the bombardment of the Nationalist planes, a Spanish exile encounters a French journalist and proceeds to denounce France's Non-Intervention policy, which, as the Spaniard asserts in the following quote, was responsible for the Republican's loss and their current dehumanized condition: "Te habla un muerto, un muerto de los vuestros, de los fabricados por vuestras propias manos. Un muerto. Un hombre podrido por vuestra paz de no intervención, de vuestra paz de maricones" (129). The Spanish exile clearly demonstrates his resentment and rancor toward France's indifference to the Spanish Republicans during the Civil War.<sup>107</sup>

This dialogue between the French journalist and the Spanish exile ultimately foreshadows the fate awaiting the Spanish exiles as they make their way across the French border. The original decision to seek refuge in France was beyond question for most Spanish exiles, whose need to escape from Franco surpassed their ill desire for exile. The majority of the exiles considered their exilic journey to be temporary, for nobody asked the question: "When are we going to return?" assuming that it would only be a question of a few months before they could do so. Little did they know that those few months would gradually turn into a permanent exile in which many would never return to the same country that they left. As the Allied forces defeated the fascists in World War II, many Spanish exiles assumed that it would only be a matter of time until

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<sup>107</sup> In *Hablo Como Hombre*, Aub is also strongly critical of the United States's support of Franco and of Franco's welcoming of the United States into Spanish soil by granting the U.S. military bases. Aub condemns the United States's moral position toward the Franco regime and states that the United States's imperialism is only worried about improving its own development without granting the least importance to improving the conditions of freedom and justice in the rest of the world. Aub also criticizes Franco for allying Spain with the United States by stating: "No le bastó [Franco] regar de sangre española la tierra española; tenía que vender el suelo empapado [a los EEUU]" (74).

Franco also succumbed to defeat. They euphorically envisioned their return to Spain and the reestablishment of their severed roots. However, the onset of the Cold War and the eminent preoccupation with Communism would quickly change the course of events as Franco now became an ally rather than an enemy. At this moment, the exiles began to realize that their banishment may become more definitive than they had hoped.

*The “unusualness” of the Camp*

The adoption of an unusual narrator in both *Manuscrito Cuervo* and *Enero Sin Nombre* to recount the traumatic story of the Spanish exiles’ flight from Spain and their internment in French concentration camps parallels the unusualness of the concentration-camp world itself. Who better to narrate the dehumanization and dispossession of the Spanish exiles’ identity than an absurd character that personifies the ultimate finality of both the Franco regime’s political discourse and the concentration-camp’s systematic structure? Through these two narrators, Aub shows that the absurd is not the exception, but rather the norm inside the concentration-camp world. As Naharro-Calderón asserts, the arbitrary and the absurd have now become the heart of daily life (116). Rather than granting testimonial primacy to a person who experienced and survived first-hand the French concentration camps, Aub decides to subvert the traditional testimonial narrative, bypassing and averting the difficulties associated with a survivor’s direct, personal testimony. Testimonial narratives are often marked by the incorporation of ethical and emotional ties to one’s memory, in which the witness’s personal feelings factor into their testimony. This often results in a “speechless terror” with memory lapses and a distorted memory

whereby direct access or recall to the repressed traumatic memories is not immediately available for retrieval. As Shoshana Felman asserts: “It was almost inconceivable for any witness of the Holocaust to completely detach themselves from the event witnessed in order to be an unaffected witness” (qtd. in Caruth 66).

By turning to an unusual narrator, Aub is utilizing an estranging technique that alleviates any traumatic pressure from the witness by giving the power of speech to a more detached (but not completely detached) entity. Therefore, as Luis Bagué Quílez asserts, Aub’s own personal experience was hidden behind the dehumanized appearance of these two narrators (154). This narrative deviation remits to Cathy Caruth’s contention that: “The texts that testify do not simply report facts but make us encounter strangeness/estrangement” (19). In this respect, Aub is fulfilling the imperative need of the survivor to tell, which as Dori Laub declares is also accompanied by the impossibility of telling, for bearing witness is a story impossible to be understood (78). The act of bestowing the narrative voice to a bird and a tree therefore illustrates man’s impossibility of telling his traumatic story, relegating that feat to a non-human entity. As Felman reiterates: “The Holocaust illustrates that people die as numbers, not as proper names. To testify is to engage in the process of re-finding one’s own proper name” (53). In *Manuscrito Cuervo*, Jacobo represents the only character that has a name; the identity of the other characters that he mentions is reduced to mere numbers. As Gérard Malgat also confirms, the use of codified numbers, instead of names, alludes to the numbers that the police put in their police reports and files created for each detainee (2007; 193).

Aside from the insertion of an unusual narrator, *Manuscrito Cuervo* also incorporates humor as an additional distancing mechanism. The use of humor in this

context does not diminish the seriousness of the subject matter, but rather it is used as a means of further reinforcing and preserving the memory of the concentration camp. In this case, humor is employed as a way to criticize and to illustrate that the concentration-camp world is not acceptable in society and falls completely outside the boundary of social order. Humor opens new doors that were once obstructed and facilitates the transmission of certain feelings and sentiments while reducing the tension that in any other circumstance might have interfered with the reader/listener's comprehension of the subject. Cathy Caruth points out that a common finding with survivors of the Holocaust is that there seems to be a limit to how much an individual can give up through grieving; there are limitations to the losses that one may be able to deal with through mourning (85). This conception proposes that grieving and mourning a particular tragedy, in this case the Holocaust, can only go so far and accomplish so much. This suggests the need for alternative means of "thinking" and representing the experience in order to cover the void or bridge the gap left by mourning's limitations. Perhaps the use of humor and the perspective of an unusual narrator are two literary strategies that Aub uses in *Manuscrito Cuervo* and *Enero Sin Nombre* in his attempt to cover that void, bridge that gap, and, ultimately, achieve an alternative way of "thinking" and representing the camps.

Finally, these two texts present a collective testimony of both the mass exodus and the internment in the camps. In each text, the narrative voice is shared by a multiplicity of witnesses and victims that either speak or are remembered by the primary narrator. Jacobo and the tree relinquish their first-person testimony by not only speaking for the larger collective group that they observed, but also allow space for the group to participate in the telling of the testimony.

## Restoring the Forgotten Memory of the Concentration Camp:

*La gallina ciega, El cementerio de Djelfa, and El remate*

### *The presence of memory through its absence*

The texts examined in this chapter all share one common theme: they address the forgotten/erased memory of the concentration camp, of the Spanish exiles and especially of Max Aub himself from both a socio-historical and discursive point of view. The notion of remembering (*recordar*) and its opposite forgetting (*olvidar*) are repeated so frequently throughout Aub's narrative that they become an obsession that the author never completely overcomes. This dichotomy underlines the central paradox of the concentration camp. After the camps succeeded in physically killing thousands of Spanish detainees, it was the Franco regime and the transition to democracy that also killed the exiles' memory. Each text delves into the problematic regarding the *absence* of memory associated with both of these phenomena in an effort to ultimately invoke its *presence* back into Spain's historical discourse. The objective of these texts is twofold: on the one hand, Max Aub endeavors to underline the absence of memory traces in the concentration-camp world, representing the memory of the concentration camp as a forgotten part of contemporary Spanish history, while at the same time he is creating new memory traces by bearing witness

and telling stories of life in the camps and in exile. As Fernando Degiovanni states, Aub has written a series of stories in which orality and memory appear as central elements of the history of the concentration camps (217).

To invoke the absence of something often correlates to a loss, conflating the two concepts. This conflation, as Dominick LaCapra asserts, attests to the way one remains possessed or haunted by the past (2001; 46). The loss of something also implies a lack, which indicates some sort of deficiency whereby something that ought to be there is missing (LaCapra 2001; 53). This missing entity has been displaced and removed from its proper place. What has been lost is the identity of the Spanish exiles, ruined by the forces of exile and the concentration camps. As a result of this loss and displacement, the object of desire for Max Aub is to recover the displaced object through the reinsertion of its memory traces, which take the form of his testimonial literature. As Fernando Degiovanni affirms, the problematic concerning the erasure of memory enters into all of these stories as the characters remember in order to reaffirm a presence, that is, the presence of memory. In this case, the image evoked by the concentration camp makes present that which is actually absent. As Guerin and Hallas contend: “Images replace absence with a different kind of presence: *Iconic presence* still maintains a body’s absence and turns it into what must be called *visible absence*” (10). Aub endeavors to avoid the traditional response to absence—learning to live with it—by filling in the void left by the loss with testimony. As Aub states in *Hablo como Hombre*: “Las obras sólo quedan de la voz de la fama; y nosotros luchamos contra el olvido” (77).

Max Aub is highly critical of Francoist Spain's deliberate exclusion of the concentration-camp memory from its discourse and as a result he sets out to correct this injustice by reinserting its memory into the literary annals. Post-war Germany has continuously struggled in its effort to "properly" deal with the memory of the Holocaust and its commemoration of the Jewish victims, stirring many debates regarding the appropriate manner to memorialize their memory. One of the principle concerns that has arisen pertaining to the creation of Holocaust memorials is whether or not the construction of a monument actually maintains the memory or whether it ultimately suppresses it. Traditionally, the creation of museums and monuments has sought to preserve a memory that has become endangered of being forgotten. Many Holocaust memorials and monuments that deal precisely with this same issue of representing and preserving the memory of the victims of the Holocaust play with the notion of *absence vs. presence* in the construction of their memorial. The absence of memory traces ultimately produces its presence by forcing the spectator to actively participate in the remembrance of the trauma. One such example comes from a Holocaust museum that has five staircases leading to a second floor, one of which leads to a pitch black, dead end. The darkness and utter *absence* of anything compels one to reflect upon the meaning of the Holocaust and the darkness that the victims and survivors endured.

Although the real sites of memory lie in the concentration camps themselves, Max Aub, as well as many other exiled authors, turns to literature as his vehicle to memorialize the forgotten Spanish Republican exiles who also spent time in French concentration camps. Aub uses this symbolic space as a place to create new memory

traces. The act of remembering and writing about the memory of the concentration camp becomes the camp itself, turning the camp from a mere inexistent object of the past into a new subject. In order to understand the object, one must first convert himself into the object. Max Aub does not merely see the concentration camp as an object, but rather he himself becomes the embodiment of the camp as a survivor and through his writings. However, to adopt the position of the object also implies a transformation of the object into the subject. In the words of Ignacio Soldevila Durante, “Devenir su objeto es hacer del objeto sujeto” (1973; 293). In light of this notion, these works illustrate that the concentration camp now takes on a new life form of its own as a place of enunciation and as a subject through which Aub sees and identifies himself. In this sense, Aub’s representation of the *absence* of the memory of the concentration camp in Francoist historical discourse in turn creates its *presence*, a *presence* that Max Aub is reclaiming by means of his testimonial voice.

### *La gallina ciega and the oblivion of the Exile/Concentration Camp memory*

After thirty years of exile in Mexico and numerous failed attempts to enter Spain,<sup>108</sup> Max Aub’s journey back to his homeland would finally be realized in August 1969.<sup>109</sup> At this

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<sup>108</sup> From 1953, Max Aub attempted many times to obtain a visa allowing him to freely enter Spain, but for fifteen years the Franco regime continued to deny Aub the visa. This was due in large part to the censure imposed on Aub’s short story *La verdadera historia de la muerte de Francisco Franco*. Due to its content, especially the assassination of Franco, this story incited perhaps more controversy than any other of Aub’s works, resulting in the need to alter the title. Aub also had difficulties obtaining a visa for France, for on February 9, 1951, the French consulate in Mexico denied Aub a visa allowing him to stay one month in Paris. Aub became so outraged by the denial that he decided to write a letter to the French President stating: “...No deja de ser curioso que por haberla defendido, en su nombre se me prohíba volver. Por haberla defendido me encarcelaron” (González Sanchis 243). Aub reiterates these sentiments in a letter that he wrote to Antonio Caamaño on November 5, 1957, in which he states: “Hace un año, estuve en París,

juncture in his life, Aub had already integrated himself into Mexican society, acquiring Mexican citizenship on January 22, 1956,<sup>110</sup> including a Mexican passport, and had begun the process of reconstructing his dispossessed identity as a Spanish exile and as a survivor of French concentration camps through his extensive literary production. Therefore, by 1969, Aub had already established himself as a writer and literary figure in Mexico, completing the final novel of *The Magical Labyrinth* series, *Campo de los almendros*, just the previous year, along with his already vast collection of theatrical plays, many of which were censored and prohibited by the Franco government. The explicit exclusion of many of Aub's works during the Franco regime defined the parameters of the historicization of the novelistic production that arose during the dictatorship. Within these parameters lied a mediocre novelistic and theatrical production that kept out works from many prominent exiles. Nevertheless, Aub's fame and legacy as a Spanish (exile) writer continued to remain uncertain and in doubt in his native homeland as a result of Aub's disconnection and detachment from Spain and Spanish

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sólo trece días porque, asómbrate, soy la única persona a quienes los franceses niegan el visado y le prohibieron ver españoles" (Archivo Max Aub Caja 3-17/2). By 1958, it appeared that Aub had finally resolved the conflict over his visa in France. Even Aub's mother and sister were denied visas by the French Consulate in Barcelona as they sought to go to France to see Aub's aunt. When Aub's mother died in September 1962, he never received authorization from the Spanish authorities to attend her funeral, nor was he granted the visa to attend his father's funeral. Aub was finally granted a visa for Spain on the historic and symbolic date of July 18, 1967, but health problems prohibited him from traveling until August 23, 1969. Aub would travel to Spain a second time in March of 1972 with the principle objective of trying to convince his daughter Elena and her husband Federico Álvarez to return to Mexico.

<sup>109</sup> Aub had originally intended on traveling to Spain toward the end of 1968, and then in March of 1969, but due to health problems he was forced to postpone his trip.

<sup>110</sup> Alfonso Reyes wrote a letter of recommendation on August 6, 1955, to Luis Padilla Nervo, on behalf of Max Aub and his application for Mexican citizenship. Reyes underlines the fact that the applicant (Aub) has rendered many cultural and literary services to Mexico and therefore deserves the right to obtain Mexican citizenship. Aub petitioned for "privileged naturalization," which was requested by many individuals who believed to have produced pro-Mexican works. This marked the second time that Aub had applied for citizenship.

society for some thirty years.<sup>111</sup> This was also due in large part to the Franco regime's repressive discursive practices that sought to eliminate Aub's—and the remainder of the Spanish exiles'—collective memory. His return to Spain in 1969 therefore represented, on the one hand a symbolic return to an unknown, fictionalized land that Aub himself had already created discursively from the remnants of his historical memory, while on the other hand it embodied the ultimate return to the trauma of an exile that initially began in that very same land.

The primary pretext of this trip resided in the investigation and research for a book that Aub planned to write about the life and work of his good friend and fellow exile Luis Buñuel.<sup>112</sup> Aub was offered this opportunity by the editorial Aguilar with the prospective title of *Luis Buñel: novela*; however, this project remained unfinished and was eventually published under the title *Conversaciones con Buñuel*. Aub often reiterated that the initial objective of his trip to Spain solely constituted an academic, work-related endeavor, and therefore his “return” would not be a permanent, but rather a temporary one. This notion is exemplified when Aub states: “Vengo a dar una vuelta, a

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<sup>111</sup> It is important to recognize that Aub did in fact keep in touch with many of his fellow exiles and friends that either remained in Spain or were exiled in other countries. For the Spanish Republicans, the correspondence with other exiles via letters was the only form of communication that they had at their disposal that enabled them to bridge the distance separating them and helped them to endure the difficulties of exile. As Francisca Montiel Rayo asserts, the letters that the exiles wrote to one another became valuable documents of the life and time period with which it is possible to reconstruct the author's professional trajectory. She continues by stating that the letters allow the exiles to recreate certain episodes of their history, which offer us more accurate visions of the exiles themselves and of their interlocutors (246). Just as Aub does in his fictional and testimonial works, the letters illustrate Aub's need to write, to remember and to bear witness. One of the many friends with which Aub communicated was Juan Ramón Masoliver, who remained in Spain as an avid defender of the Franco government. In spite of their ideological differences, Aub and Masoliver remained friends and eventually met again face to face upon Aub's return to Spain in 1969. This encounter, which is documented in *La gallina ciega*, reveals Masoliver's own ignorance regarding the deaths of many Spanish exiles. This ignorance reflects Spain's ignorance of the exiles during the Franco regime.

<sup>112</sup> Aub wrote to Ignacio Soldevila Durante that this book about Buñuel “es un intento de biografía de Buñuel y su grupo que, en sus principios nada tiene que ver con el cine y sí mucho con la vida de los ‘señoritos’ de Madrid al principio de los veinte” (*Epistolario Aub/Soldevila* 278).

ver, a darme cuenta, y me voy. No vuelvo; volver sería quedarme” (220). This concept of “returning” presupposes the act of returning to a place that one knows or is familiar with, while it is clear that Aub does not know nor is familiar with the Spain that he revisits in 1969. He did not find the same Spain that he once knew and loved before he left in 1939, but rather found himself in a much different country, a country that he did not recognize and one that did not recognize him. At one moment he calls himself a “backwards tourist,” (“Soy un turista al revés; vengo a ver lo que ya no existe,” 20), for he comes to see what no longer exists. This notion of being able to come but not return reflects the endless uprootedness of exile, which encompasses both a spatial and temporal dimension that the exile will be unable to overcome even with the return to his homeland (Ferrán 2006; 205).

Aub’s stay in Spain would be confined to a three-month period, as he only received a visa for that duration. Months before his actual departure, Aub contemplated his trip and expressed the many doubts and uncertainties that he had regarding his return to Spain. Aub stated that the problem of returning to Spain after thirty years was not Franco, but rather time, that is, oneself. The exile had died and Spain had changed. Aub wondered whether, at his age, it was worth it to see a new country knowing that it would be a painful experience. In a letter that he wrote to Ignacio Soldevila Durante, Aub recognizes that he will return to Spain just as much an émigré as he is in Mexico: “No, no estoy saturado de emigración, voy a volver a España con conciencia de emigrado, estoy seguro de que me sentiré tan emigrado allí como en México” (*Epistolario Aub/Soldevila* 308). Aub also questioned what Spain could offer him, realizing that most of his friends had already died and that he was limited as to what he could do as a result of his health

problems. All that remained was meeting new people who would never even remember “el santo de mi nombre.”

The trajectory of this mission would soon take another direction and outlook the moment that Aub set foot on Spanish soil on August 23, 1969. As Aub arrived in Barcelona, he immediately noticed a much different Spain than the one that he had left thirty years ago, prompting him to engage in a series of reflections, contemplations and ultimately a confrontation between a lost, forgotten and perhaps outdated historical memory whose ghosts from the past still remained. What resulted from this confrontation was the creation of *La gallina ciega*, which Max Aub published in Mexico in 1971 shortly before his death on July 22, 1972.<sup>113</sup> Aub avowed that he did not write *La gallina ciega* with any sort of premeditation in the sense that he returned to Spain with the intention of writing a diary chronicling his observations and experiences of Francoist Spain, but rather it soon became a product of the vast discrepancy between his Spain and the Spain, or more accurately the country, that he was visiting.<sup>114</sup>

To categorize *La gallina ciega* as merely a diary would be to overlook and undervalue the rich literary quality that this work possesses. It is a diary to a certain extent in that it reproduces and reflects Aub’s thoughts, reactions, and comments regarding his daily observations of Spain documented each day of his voyage. Its structure is composed of a variety of different elements ranging from notes taken by Aub to recorded conversations and even monologues. However, *La gallina ciega* constitutes much more than an unorganized, random and haphazard enumeration of Aub’s

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<sup>113</sup> In his final correspondence with Francisco Ayala on June 16, 1971, Aub announced the arrival of his “Diario Español,” but then states, “como puedes suponer, no le va a gustar demasiado a nadie” (*Epistolario Aub/Ayala* 184).

<sup>114</sup> One of Aub’s first observations upon arriving in Barcelona on August 23, 1969, is that he sees a Spain that no longer exists, “Veo una España que ya no existe.”

observations and thoughts; it comes to embody its own literary work, one that Aub with great care and detail attempted to reshape and give life through a fictionalization and even invention of certain details and characters. Upon returning to Mexico in 1969, Aub dedicated much time to editing and elaborating the work to perfection before its publication in 1971, molding and shaping the “diary” into a real, substantial literary work. Aub even stated on February 1, 1972: “La verdad es que, con el tiempo, espero que *La gallina ciega* venga a ser una novela” (*Diarios* 495). Many critics argue that *La gallina ciega* should constitute a final chapter of *The Magical Labyrinth* series as it ultimately returns back to many of the fundamental questions raised by Aub in those works, especially the historical memory of the Civil War and exile of the Spanish republicans, now seen from a different vantage point.

*La gallina ciega* represents a true, sincere and completely subjective testimony, or in other words, Aub’s act of bearing witness to his own erasure or death from Spanish history and his symbolic return as a ghost from the past still trying to find his place and reclaim his lost/forgotten past in his homeland. In this sense, as Ofelia Ferrán contends: “...se puede considerar *La gallina ciega* como un testamento, pues es un documento que expresa la voluntad de un muerto...” (2006; 206). Ferrán continues by affirming that: “El Aub de antes del exilio ha muerto. El Aub de ahora vuelve a España para reencontrarse con ese otro “yo” para reencontrarse con la España en la que vivía ese otro “yo,” pero ese reencuentro es imposible: la muerte ha dejado su huella y lo ha transformado todo” (2006; 206). This reiterates the fact that life after exile is, in a way, a posthumous life whereby the victim assumes a new identity and a new life. As already alluded to in this dissertation, this notion becomes one of the recurring themes of not only

*La gallina ciega*, but also of Aub's concentration camp works as a whole. Aub's phantasmal presence in Spain therefore not only functions as an incarnation of a representative of exiled Spain, but also reminds the Spaniards, especially the younger generation who were born after the Spanish Civil War, of an all too true reality that was supposedly forgotten, but continues to show its presence.

The significance of the title *La gallina ciega* problematizes this very same notion in suggesting that the "Blind Chicken" is nothing more than a metaphor for Spain itself, who, during the Franco dictatorship, lost sight and closed its eyes to the generation of Spanish exiles that fled Spain in 1939, unable to see them. As Manuel Aznar Soler asserts, *La gallina ciega* is a militant demand for the recognition of the historical memory and dignity of the Spanish republicans, in which Max Aub decries the forgotten memory imposed by the Franco dictatorship that ultimately converted the exiles into ghosts condemned to oblivion (*La gallina ciega*; "Introduction" 81). *La gallina ciega* therefore goes beyond the boundaries of a mere diary to encompass a testimonial work that seeks to reclaim the erased historical memory of the Spanish exiles and of the concentration camp, for neither Max Aub nor a handful of other Spanish exiles have forgotten about those experiences and continue to remember and relive. Aub's thoughts and observations go beyond those of his own personal experiences as he gives testimony and bears witness to an entire generation of Spaniards, whose hope was ultimately dashed by the Civil War and Franco (Ferrán 2006; 209). This transforms *La gallina ciega* into a work of cultural and collective trauma that Aub confronts as he speaks with other "victims" of this trauma during his return to Spain.

Max Aub's painful struggle between his historical memory and the true reality that he encountered upon entering Franco's Spain in 1969 is evident from the first pages of *La gallina ciega*.<sup>115</sup> Among the most prevalent observations that Aub underlines in the work is the intellectual mediocrity and the moral/cultural collapse and misery of Spain under Franco.<sup>116</sup> This prompts Aub to question Spain's future and its potential for progress as it continues to live in the shadow of the Middle Ages. One of the byproducts of this condition ultimately resided in the disappearance and the inexistence of the Spanish exiles from both a cultural and historical context during the Franco regime. In other words, the large majority of the "contemporary" Spaniards with whom Max Aub conversed during his stay in Spain<sup>117</sup> not only knew nothing about Max Aub, but also were completely ignorant of the history and the reality suffered by the Spanish exiles at the conclusion of the Spanish Civil War, as if that part of Spanish history had never existed. What most bothered and hurt Aub was the young generation's ignorance toward him and his fellow exiles; none of the young interlocutors recognized his name or those of the most prominent and influential exile writers, insinuating that Max Aub and exile literature meant nothing to them.<sup>118</sup> This is evidenced in Aub's entry for September 29,

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<sup>115</sup> In a letter that he wrote to Aub on May 25, 1968, Francisco Ayala warned Aub [regarding his trip to Spain] that: "Te encontrarás con un país desconocido desde todos los puntos de vista, pero sobre todo, y es lo que más importa, desde el punto de vista espiritual. El único problema que vas a tener es el de las muchas y diversas trampas que la mentalidad chinesca aquí desarrollada tiende a los inocentes" (*Epistolario Aub/Ayala* 165).

<sup>116</sup> In a letter to Juan Fernández Figueroa, Aub criticizes and ultimately condemns Spain's current state by declaring: "Miseria moral y vergüenza pública, airón que os une a lo más putrefacto del mundo, rémora que hunde España más debajo de donde nunca estuvo, intolerancia abyecta..." (Archivo Max Aub Caja 5–53/2). Aub also states that: "el reinado del general Franco volvió a imponer en España la política de Fernando VII. España intelectualmente regresó a la fosa cavada" (*Hablo como Hombre* 152).

<sup>117</sup> It is clear in *La gallina ciega* that Max Aub spent a large portion of his time in Spain talking with the younger generation of Spaniards, whereby Aub was awakened to the current reality of Spain in which the young generation essentially had no idea who Max Aub was.

<sup>118</sup> Max Aub's marginal place within Francoist Spain is therefore emblematic of the relative anonymity of the Spanish Civil War exiles, which have produced relatively few canonical texts in exile,<sup>118</sup> for as Ugarte

in which he states: “Aub llora sobre sí mismo, sobre su propio entierro, sobre la ignorancia en que están todos de su obra desconocida” (311). This statement illustrates Aub’s disillusionment at his inability or failure to integrate himself into this new, contemporary Spanish society that knows little of him, his generation or what they endured during the Civil War and exile, resulting in what Aub terms “un futuro imposible” (23). He also awakens to the fact that this encounter marks his own “burial” as he was virtually an unknown in his own country,<sup>119</sup> with the exception of a handful of “viejos amigos” who still lingered in Spain and who had also experienced first-hand the traumatic journey through the labyrinth of exile. The fact that Aub talks about himself in the third person also confirms his death, for it signifies that he has lost his identity (“yo”), which has now been depersonalized to a more distant voice. Therefore, as Ferrán claims, exile (des-tierra) has been a sort of burial ground (en-tierra) for Aub, whose work is destined to be posthumous before Aub’s real death in 1972 (2006; 208). This idea is expressed by Aub exactly one year to the day that he arrived in Spain when he stated:

Hoy hace un año que llegaba de regreso a España, lleno de esperanza. Fueron los meses más tristes de mi vida. Luego nunca estuve tan cerca de la muerte. Tal vez por eso he cambiado bastante, ya no tengo nada que decir, como no cuente lo que tengo apartado en mis viejos cuadernos. Ya no tengo nada que hacer. Aquí, en México, no quieren nada conmigo, y en España son muy pocos...Pero no he

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maintains: “Marginality is far more a trademark of exilic literature than fame, authority, or importance” (1989; 12).

<sup>119</sup> Thirty years of exile and Francoist censure explain the reason why Max Aub became an unknown figure for the majority of the Spanish public in 1969. In fact, this anonymity became the primary moving force behind Aub’s second trip to France in September 1958. The objective of this trip was to introduce to the French public many of the [unknown] works that he had written from his exile in Mexico.

pasado de ser la sombra de un mito. Tal vez un par de decenas de gentes saben quién soy. Tal vez. Tal vez, no. Me estudian como muerto. (*Diarios* 462)

A year after his reencounter with Spain, Aub expresses his disillusionment as his hopes were immediately dashed. The subsequent sadness produced what Aub considered a near death experience as he had never felt himself so close to death. His moribund status is defined by three key verbs: decir, hacer and ser. Aub no longer has anything else to say (decir) or to do (hacer) as his being (ser) has been relegated to that of a corpse (muerto). This is ultimately the tragic condition and fate of exile as Aub sees it. Mari Paz Balibrea underscores the meaning behind this tragic condition: “El componente más trágico de *La gallina ciega* no es la constatación de la represión franquista que silencia a los españoles, sino la evidencia de la victoria de un franquismo que ha conseguido crear ciudadanos alienados y amnésicos. Ciudadanos que no valoran el pasado si no les sirve para justificar el presente” (168). Aub himself reiterates these same sentiments in a letter to Ignacio Soldevila Durante in 1954:

Que desde 1942 he escrito mucho, publicado no poco—algo como veinte libros— y todos por y para España y va y resulta que un muchacho como usted, discípulo de Lacalle, de Entrambasaguas, que estudia en el CSIC, ni siquiera se ha enterado. Comprende que mi tristeza no nace en modo alguno de su ignorancia, sino de las circunstancias que la crean, y tampoco por lo que a mí respecta sino a las condiciones en que tienen que trabajar. (*Epistolario Aub/Soldevila* 32)

Aub realizes that there is little that unites him with the new generation of Spanish writers, among other reasons because of their distance. This prompts him to state: “Tal vez el destierro nos ha servido ante todo para fijarnos y para que nos fijemos más en las raíces, raigones, brotes familiares” (*Hablo como Hombre* 140).

In his first entry on August 23, 1969, the same day that he arrived in Spain, Aub notes while eating dinner with Luis Palomares and Carmen Balcells that everybody was asking him the same questions: “Qué piensa de España?” or “Qué te parece España?” These questions become a recurring theme throughout *La gallina ciega* and ultimately embody the true oblivion and dehumanization of the Spanish exiles, whose past is no longer a concern for the contemporary generation. The mere question, “What do you think about Spain?” is a reflection of the young generation’s concern only about the present condition and state of Spain and their preoccupation about what people think about the present, completely ignoring the past. This lack of concern for the past and the young generation’s ignorance is exactly what bothers and saddens Max Aub in *La gallina ciega*. Nobody asks Aub about the Civil War or his experience in exile or even about the more than two years that he spent in French concentration camps and jails, because they are simply unaware and unconcerned about those past events. Where to place the blame for this problem becomes an even more polemical issue, for as one of Aub’s many acquaintances reminds him, the young generation should not be completely to blame, for the majority of them were born after the Civil War during a Franco regime in which the dissemination of information was strictly regulated and controlled. Instead of pointing the finger at the young generation, the blame should be attributed directly to the source of the problem: Franco himself.

Aub's invisibility and inconspicuousness in the streets of Barcelona therefore provide the answer to this dilemma, for he was just another invisible ghost from the past of whom nobody had ever heard. As Manuel Aznar Soler asserts, Max Aub thus becomes the protagonist of his own work and a victim of his own personal tragedy, one caused by uprooting and thirty years of exile (*La gallina ciega*; "Introduction" 76). This tragedy is illustrated when the young generation of Spaniards is first introduced to Max Aub, at which point their non-response to Aub's presence and to the mention of his name confirms their ignorance and lack of interest. Aub substantiates this notion later on in *La gallina ciega* when he states that everyone has forgotten about the Second Republic and the Civil War except for a handful of old people. However, Aub was already aware of his invisibility in Spain even before his return in 1969. On October 21, 1968, Aub encountered a young man from Seville in the streets of Mexico, and this encounter prompted the following reaction by Aub: "me confirma lo que me dicen y escriben cada día: nadie sabe quién soy en España. Lo digo por los que aquí aseguran lo contrario: para hacerse ilusiones acerca de ellos. Nos borraron del mapa" (*Diarios* 432). On another occasion, Aub wrote: "Ahora ha pasado demasiado tiempo—para mí—, no me tendrían que recordar sino descubrir. Y en España no se descubre a ningún escritor: sólo se olvida. Y a mí, ni eso: con razón. Lo anterior valía muy poco, lo demás lo desconocían" (*Diarios* 369).

Aub's fundamental problem or obstacle upon returning to Spain in 1969 resided in his inability to connect the two distinct and disparate worlds that he now encountered face to face. His first reaction upon arriving in Barcelona was his famous utterance: "Veo una España que ya no existe" (113), followed by "España ya no es España" (76).

Aub cannot help yearning for the past, searching for his historical memory and the “nostalgic” Spain that he remembered, only to find himself caught in his own labyrinth between a present that he does not recognize and a forgotten past. Spain, for Aub, has now become what one might call a “disaster area,” where the absence of something that was once there—the void or empty space—exerts its own psychological effects on the individual. This becomes the case for many traumatic scenes, such as the sites of the Nazi camps or even that of Ground Zero after the September 11 attacks, as the presence of the trauma is continually felt not only by the survivors, but also by those that were never directly affected.

This reencounter with Spain becomes the moment when the exile, confronted with his memories, realizes that he is no longer the same as he once was, in the same fashion that the mother country is no longer the same country that he once knew. However, what Aub ultimately discovers is that he has little in common with the Spain that he observes, which is far distinct from the one that he remembers. For many exiles who want to remain connected to their homeland, the return to the past is perceived as the only way to move forward in the future. However, the Franco regime succeeded in complicating this endeavor as Aub notes when he reflects about “un pasado que no fue y un futuro imposible” (23). This nostalgia even leads Aub to recreate in his mind a new, post-civil-war history as he would have envisioned or desired. At one moment in *La gallina ciega*, Aub remarks that as he was looking for what *was*, the only thing that he could see was what *is*. What Aub was ultimately looking for was a past, which not only included the Civil War, but also a much more forgotten imprisonment in French concentration camps.

His return to Spain and continuous dialogue with different interlocutors showed that the camps no longer existed or formed part of the contemporary Spanish discourse.

Spain's historical memory had changed to such an extent that Aub worried that nobody would ever remember what he saw, both in the Civil War and in the camps, ultimately erasing the memory of those phenomena. In this respect, one could argue that *La gallina ciega* represents Aub's endeavor to reclaim the historical memory of the concentration camps, as its complete absence from the contemporary Spanish discourse under the Franco regime illustrates that its memory is in jeopardy of falling into oblivion. *La gallina ciega* presents a testimony of the erasure of the memory of the concentration camp in the collective memory of contemporary Spain, as Max Aub decries the fact that what existed thirty years ago no longer exists and soon nobody will ever remember that there even were French concentration camps. As a result of his interaction and interviews with many Spaniards, Max Aub comes to the conclusion that the majority of "parents" neither want to know nor remember the Civil War and the exile of the Spanish Republicans, while their children are more interested in "divertirse" than reading books about the past. The fact that nobody ever mentioned a single word to Aub about his novels while he was in Spain reflects precisely this ignorance and lack of interest regarding the past. To this regard, *La gallina ciega* becomes more than Aub's testimony of what he observes in 1969, but also represents Aub's own personal protest and criticism in view of Spain's current situation under Franco.

*La gallina ciega* becomes a perfect example of a new literary genre that Aub explores wherein the memory of the camp lives even when it is not mentioned or is the central focus of the text. Aub's texts tend to take on their own traumatic meaning

whereby the writing about the camp (trauma) in itself becomes traumatic. This is a characteristic that embodies many of Aub's novels. Therefore, even though *La gallina ciega* or the novels of *The Magical Labyrinth* do not explicitly treat the problematic of the camp, the actual work of reconstructing the trauma becomes the site of trauma that emanates from the camps. Based on this notion, Aub symbolically deals with the trauma of the camps through the creation of other traumatic texts. This is further exemplified by the continual repetition of title *Campo* throughout the novels of *The Magical Labyrinth*. The implication of the camp lies behind each novel, although the physical presence of the camp does not appear. Aub's memory of the concentration camp is ultimately hidden behind the narrative structure of those texts and finally comes to its full manifestation in the last novel of the series *Campo de los almendros*.<sup>120</sup> It is in this novel where the trauma of the camp unfolds and becomes evident as the Republican exiles wait frantically for boats to arrive to take them to exile. As time elapses, the exiles realize that this fate is in doubt and that their aspired "freedom" is little more than a dream. In the end, the Republicans do succeed in leaving, but not in the boats that they had desired, but rather in trucks destined for concentration camps. The title of this novel therefore becomes emblematic as the Campo de los Almendros transforms into a concentration camp for the Republican prisoners.

The only direct reference to the concentration camps that appears in *La gallina ciega* arises from a chance encounter between Max Aub and an old friend and fellow concentration-camp inmate that Aub had not seen since he (the friend) escaped from Le Vernet. Upon conversing with his old friend, Aub discovers that after escaping from Le

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<sup>120</sup> It took Aub some twenty years to compose *Campo del Moro* and *Campo de los almendros* as he gathered all of the necessary information, much of which came from interviews that Aub conducted.

Vernet, his friend ended up being interned in the concentration camp of Mauthausen, one of six Nazi death camps created by the Third Reich during the Holocaust. The forgotten memory of the concentration camp comes to life<sup>121</sup> as the friend recounts his experience in Mauthausen,<sup>122</sup> underscoring the fact that of the ten thousand anti-fascist Spaniards who were taken to that camp, fewer than two thousand made it out, leaving eight thousand Spanish republicans to die at the hands of the Nazi death machine. As the old friend continues to describe to Aub his experiences in Le Vernet and Mauthausen, he portrays the atmosphere of this world in terms of a collection of “cadáveres todavía vivos” (355). This image clearly evokes a dehumanized world in which the victim’s identity is metaphorically destroyed well before the actual physical death. This notion of “cadáveres vivos” returns at another point in *La gallina ciega* as Max Aub alludes to the fact that Madrid has converted itself into a city of “cadáveres vivos” (411). However, little does Max Aub know that he himself has become a “cadaver vivo” wandering around the streets of Madrid like an old remnant from the past that nobody recognizes or remembers.

Aub’s allegorical reference to the “vivos muertos” illustrates another example of how the camps—thematically—are present in other ways in Aub’s works. Aub uses this allegory of the camps in connection with his perception of Spain in 1969. What is significant about the usage of this particular allegory is that it remits directly to Aub’s

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<sup>121</sup> For those survivors who experienced first hand the reality of the concentration camps, the memory and the trauma associated with the camps was never forgotten and continued to remain lucid and intact in their historical memory in spite of its erasure from the official historical discourse.

<sup>122</sup> The journey to Mauthausen for many Spanish Republican exiles constituted the final place of a long voyage that began with an internment in French concentration camps, followed by their participation in the French Army, the French Resistance, and/or the Foreign Legion during World War II, whereby they were subsequently captured by German Nazis and sent to German death camps.

memory of the camps. This image continues to remain embedded in Aub's traumatic memory and therefore he is unable to detach it from his own discursive rhetoric. Aub cannot help but resort to the mnemonic power of the camps, which provides him with a lexicon that enables him to describe other realities. In *La gallina ciega*, Aub turns to the memory of the camp to describe other realities, that is, the reality that he sees in Spain. He describes the Franco regime as a state that in many cases resembles metaphorically the concentration-camp world. One of the byproducts of the dictatorship resided in the creation of a moribund society in which one group of people—the exiles—had lost their place in history, relegating them as ghosts from the past. Aub's encounter with his fellow concentration-camp survivor proves that the memory and trauma of the camps remains intact and gives him a new way of understanding the world in which he lives. The concentration-camp experience opens a new world of interpretation for the survivor, who is now able to use that experience as a tool for understanding other unrelated events. Unfortunately for Aub, nobody else asked him about his experiences in the concentration camps or even showed the slightest interest in seeing him another day. This left him no choice but to return to Mexico as anonymous as he had arrived and relegate his memories to paper with the hopes that one day his legacy may reach Spain. However, once *La gallina ciega* was finally in print, Aub seemed to show skepticism toward this legacy, as he stated in the *Diarios* on January 18, 1972: “¿Quién sino los aludidos van a leer esto. Digo leer, no echar un vistazo. ¿Diez, doce, veinte? En verdad no lo publico para más. Tal vez se venda, es otro problema; que no me importa” (494). The popularity of *La gallina ciega* would surpass Aub's expectations and convert itself into a widely read and

well studied work that has recently drawn much attention from both exile and Max Aub scholars.

### *El cementerio de Djelfa*

In a manner similar to *La gallina ciega*,<sup>123</sup> *Cementerio de Djelfa*<sup>124</sup> raises many questions with regard to the forgotten memory of the concentration camp. The idea for this story came from the recent Civil War that was taking place in Algeria, which prompted Aub to reflect on the question: What ever happened to Djelfa? The very first words of the story—“No te acordarás de Pardiñas”—not only reiterate this preoccupation with memory, but also are indicative of the tone set by the narrator Pardiñas, who, from the very beginning of the story, implants the idea of *forgetting* or *not remembering* as one of the principle themes of the work.<sup>125</sup> Pardiñas, like Aub in *La gallina ciega*, also refers to himself in the third person. This reinforces the loss of identity that accompanied the internment in the camps, as Pardiñas has lost his agency, and therefore, has no alternative but to refer to himself in the distant third-person voice. As Eloisa Nos Aldás asserts: “*El*

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<sup>123</sup> One must remember that *La gallina ciega* does not actually deal with the specific memory of the concentration camp, although its lack of memory is implicit and clearly noticeable in the collective memory and current discourse of the Franco regime. While *La gallina ciega* deals more specifically with the forgotten memory of the Spanish exiles, *Cementerio de Djelfa*, deals with the forgotten memory of the concentration camp. Nevertheless, one must be careful in attempting to separate and distinguish these two memories, for the same Spaniards that were interned in the French concentration camps also shared the dual identity of being exiles, combining the two memories into one shared collective memory.

<sup>124</sup> This story appeared for the first time in November of 1963 in the journal *Ínsula* twenty years after Aub left the concentration camp of Djelfa, although the original manuscript was found in one of Max Aub’s notebooks around 1960-61. It formed part of a volume titled *Historias de mala muerte* that appeared in 1965.

<sup>125</sup> *Historia de Vidal* is another example of a story about the camps that comments on the need to remember. Although only four pages long, the story is structured around a series of phrases (“Yo no sé si te acuerdas de él...Te tienes que acordar...Recuerda, hombre!...Acuérdate que cerraba su gabán color café...No te acuerdas?”) that attempts to remember the personal and tragic story of a concentration-camp victim who spent three years interned in the camp.

*cementerio de Djelfa*, evoluciona hacia la propia reflexión sobre el recuerdo alcanzado sobre los mismos o la victoria del olvido y del silencio” (358). Pardiñas continues to return to this question of memory throughout the entire story, repeatedly inserting interrogative statements such as, “¿Te acuerdas de...?” or “¿Recuerdas...?” into the letter that he is writing (in 1961) to a friend and former concentration-camp detainee that he has not seen since 1945 when the friend left the concentration camp of Djelfa for Veracruz, México. The use of the letter as the principle structure of the story remits to Aub’s long tradition of epistolary correspondence with friends and former concentration-camp internees that continued until his death. However, it also refers to what one might call a more personal genre that is predominant in Aub’s writing. This is evidenced by the abundant dialogue, testimony, diaries and letters that constantly reappear.

Whereas the friend succeeded in exiling himself to Mexico, Pardiñas remained in Djelfa even after he had been released from the concentration camp, became a carpenter and married the daughter of a repair-shop owner. Pardiñas’s explanation for this decision is surprising: “Pues sí, aquí me quedé, entre otras cosas porque no había razón de que no lo hiciera” (331). Although he thought of returning to Cordoba, Pardiñas ultimately rebuffed that possibility, preferring to remain in Djelfa. This decision reflects the true power of the concentration camp and its symbolic presence and destructive force on the life of Pardiñas as it separates (ruptures) him from his family and takes away any last remnants of his former identity that still remained. This concept is clearly illustrated as Pardiñas avows: “Familia ya no tenía o la que quedaba no quería saber de mí ni yo de ella” (331). Just like in the story *Ese olor*, where a pungent odor eternally remains present in Djelfa, the presence of the camp goes beyond its actual physical and spatial

boundaries and continues to haunt the survivor's life in the present as if he were still interned in the concentration camp.

The letter becomes Pardiñas' own testimony of the concentration camp of Djelfa, whereby he bears witness to his experience and remembers not only specific scenes and episodes of the camp, but also the faces that he encountered in the camp, bringing their memory back to life with his testimony. Pardiñas' memory of the events of the camp appears infallible, for he cites detail by detail the names of fellow inmates (Gravela) and events that he witnessed—with particular attention paid to the tortures and punishments that were enforced without just reason—as if they had happened just a few days ago. This part correlates with the end of *Manuscrito Cuervo*, for both texts present a list of the names of people that were interned or died in the concentration camp, reinforcing the collective dimension of Pardiñas' testimony. This is what ultimately distinguishes the historical memory of the survivor of the concentration camp from that of the non-survivor and reiterates the often-stated psychoanalytical notion that the trauma never completely goes away. However, at the very end of the story, the narrator's memory is suddenly placed in doubt, as a second narrator intervenes and comments in parentheses: “La verdad fue algo distinta...Por lo visto le dio vergüenza escribirlo con tanta sencillez. Los hombres siempre dan vueltas a las cosas” (338). This quote only further confirms the testimonial nature of the letter, as testimony is not equated with the “truth,” but rather it is based on its co-dependence on memory.

The secondary narrator also reinforces the collective trauma of the camps and the fact that bearing witness is not easy, which justifies the need to go around and around in circles when faced with the task of narrating the trauma. What this narrator also succeeds

in doing is reaffirming the main narrator's (Pardiñas) perception of the erasure of the identity of the Spanish exiles as forgotten figures. This is illustrated by second narrator's description of the desecration of the bones of the Spanish exiles that died in Djelfa ("Está lleno de huesos. Tírenlos donde les dé la gana. Caven y entierren a estos hijos de puta," 337). With the desecration of their bones also comes the desecration of their memory, for they are no more than "hijos de puta." The bones of the concentration-camp victims are unearthed and placed in common graves to make room for the bodies of the Algerians that died during the Civil War.

What therefore distinguishes this story from the other stories about the camps is that the plot does not take place in the camp, although it reflects the experiences of the camp, but rather deals more precisely with the memory of the camp. This story takes place more than twenty years after the actual camp experience, and therefore, as Eloisa Nos Aldás affirms, it problematizes the actual transformation of the experience to memory and the verification that what occurred in the camps has already been forgotten (296). The reality of the camp no longer exists as the narrator tells his story in 1961; it has now been relegated to the narrator's memory in the present. The problem is no longer one of witnessing, but rather of one of the limits of remembering.

The most tragic element of *El cementerio de Djelfa* is the tension between forgetting and remembering and the narrator's quest to force the addressee to remember. It is clear that Pardiñas has not forgotten about the concentration camp. However, his constant preoccupation with remembering and the continual usage of question marks after the words "recuerdas" or "te acuerdas" illustrates a sense of doubt and reservation regarding the collective memory of the camps beyond the survivor's own memory. The

narrator does not affirm the existence of any memory traces of the concentration camp, but rather questions their place within the historical memory of Spain and insinuates that nobody remembers that there even was a concentration camp except the narrator himself. These questions also serve as a warning against the erasure of those memories. The narrator's questioning of his own existence: "No te acordarás de Pardiñas" (331); and that of the camp: "¿Te acuerdas de Djelfa?" (334) reinforces his skepticism concerning the remaining memory traces of the camp by posing apparently obvious questions. One would logically ask, "What concentration-camp survivor would not remember the camp where he were interned?" If the narrator goes so far as to question the survivor's memory of the camp, then he is leaving little room for any other "public" memory, assuming its already forgotten status. In addition to this question, the usage of the present tense also invokes the narrative presence of the concentration camp in the memory of the survivor.

The narrator's attempt to represent the concentration camp is met with the same frustration and obstacles that Jacobo encountered in *Manuscrito Cuervo*, namely language's inability to accurately describe with words one's feelings about the camp. As Pardiñas declares: "Las palabras son tan pobres frente a los sentimientos que hay que recurrir a mil trucos para dar con el reflejo de la realidad" (335). Max Aub's literary work is testimony to this need to resort to "tricks" or alternative strategies in order to reflect and depict this impossible reality and to better understand the memory of the camps. This is where Aub's influence from the Vanguard comes into play by allowing him to undertake new and perhaps unconventional literary techniques as a means of approaching the subject of the camps, such as through a letter. The narrator's decision to remain in Djelfa for twenty-two years (1939–1961) illustrates the camp's continual

presence in the lives of the survivors, whether physically in the camp or far away in exile. The narrator even recounts the recent Civil War that occurred in Djelfa that caused many deaths, reminding his friend that the presence of the concentration-camp world of Djelfa still lives on, even though many have already forgotten about it. It is this battle that would ultimately cost the narrator his own life as he was shot to death.

As he describes the cemetery of Djelfa, Pardiñas points out that the cemetery was divided into many sections: on the one side the rich and on the other the French soldiers. The Spanish detainees that died in the camp were relegated to the corner of the cemetery, forgotten and out of sight. The bodies were later excavated by the French in order to bury the *fellagas*<sup>126</sup> in a common grave. As the narrator remarks: “¿Quién se acuerda de eso?” (337). In his own personal act of memory, the narrator, in a manner similar to what Jacobo did at the end of *Manuscrito Cuervo*, lists the names of many of the forgotten Spanish exiles that perished in Djelfa, reminding his friend that he still remembers and that the memory of the camp is still alive and present as a form of collective memory. The listing of these names is also a speech act whereby Pardiñas is granting these victims a proper burial.

The narrator underlines the fact that nobody is ever going to remember or even thank those who lost their lives defending Spain’s freedom, as he utters: “¿quién se acuerda de ellos? Nadie, absolutamente nadie” (338). Pardiñas then underscores the fact that he saw those people personally perish in the camps and during the Civil War and expresses the need and the importance of telling what he witnesses to another person: “Tal como pasó te lo cuento por contárselo a alguien” (338). The letter therefore

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<sup>126</sup> The word *fellaga* is a French term given to the supporters of the national liberation movement in Algeria for independence.

transforms the friend back into a witness, allowing him to regain his lost position as a witness, which was destroyed by the concentration camps.

The friend's complicity in reading the letter opens the door to his own participation in the bearing witness of the trauma, while also serving as a listener to the narrator's story. In addition, the use of the letter also adds an additional element of collective trauma to the story. The story ends as the narrator informs his friend that tomorrow he will be executed, for as he says: "...que me van a fusilar mañana...porque dicen que mis manos olían a pólvora" (338). The friend now assumes the role and the burden of restoring and passing along the memory of the narrator and of the concentration camp of Djelfa. The narrator's preoccupation with the forgotten memory of the concentration camp has now been transferred to a new interlocutor who will ensure that that memory will not die with the death of Pardiñas. The final sentence of the story: "Olvidan que nacimos así," (338) completes the circle as the narrator concludes his letter in the same fashion that he began it, with an allusion to the notion of forgetting. The irony of this statement is that coming at the end of the story, in which he guarantees remembrance, this "olvidar," becomes a form of memory.

### *El Remate*<sup>127</sup>

The final section of *Enero Sin Nombre* examines the problematic surrounding the Mexican exile of the Spanish Republicans and the vicissitudes endured in their new homeland. Although the stories in this section predominantly take place in Mexico and

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<sup>127</sup> This story was published in 1963 and appeared for the first time in the journal *Sala de Espera* in 1961, although it would later be re-edited in 1965.

reflect upon the issues that the Spanish exiles dealt with in Mexico, it is clear that the questions that Max Aub problematizes are related to those examined in the section on the concentration camps, especially the use of memory as a basis and framework for reflection of the past. One could even conclude that the world of exile for Max Aub ultimately represents an extension of the concentration camp world, as the exiles continued to confront the same questions and problems that confounded them in the French concentration camps, proving that the ghosts of the camps had not yet gone away. As a result, many of the stories in this section expound upon the same themes that were addressed in the stories about the camps, among which is the continual preoccupation with the erasure of the memory of the exiles by the Franco regime and the prolonged consequences of exile. In that sense, exile becomes synonymous with a world of “oblivion” and “obscurity,” in which the exile is further separated and cut off from the mother country. The Mexican exile consisted of a constant reflection, discussion and remembrance of the past, especially of their “tierra perdida,” in an effort to regain their forgotten memory. The story *El Remate* delves into this very issue upon remembering certain important figures, which, after being exiled, quickly faded into oblivion, becoming virtual unknowns.

*El Remate* is a story about the tragedy of exile and the forgotten identity of Remigio Morales Ortega, a Spanish exile writer and renowned Republican and member of the Izquierda Republicana,<sup>128</sup> who, after the Civil War, fled to Mexico in 1939 where

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<sup>128</sup> While in exile, Remigio continues to defend the Second Republic as he states: “Durante veinte años, hemos... Bueno, por lo menos yo, he luchado por la Republica, por mantener, sin querer oír hablar de otra cosa” (467). However, as he also states: “Luchamos por una realidad y no fue” (466). Now this reality has become inexistent and a complete waste. This also leads to Remigio’s metaphorical death in exile as he exclaims: “Creía cuidar, curar a alguien vivo y velaba un cadáver. Muerto yo, sin saberlo. Sin saberlo ellos [los españoles] mismos” (467).

he resided for the remainder of his life. His wife and three children remained in their hometown of Utiel, Spain.<sup>129</sup> As Ignacio Soldevila Durante states: “En este cuento, Aub refleja el estado de espíritu de su generación exiliada. Veinticinco años después, contemplan el olvido en que ya creen haber caído, y consideran que las jóvenes generaciones los tienen completamente ignorados y piensan en el enmascaramiento a que se ha sometido a la Historia, tal como ellos la vieron” (1973; 128). The narrator, a Spanish refugee, whose name coincidentally is also Remigio Morales, now living in Cahors, France,<sup>130</sup> was a recognized writer and journalist before 1930 and an old friend of Remigio, whom he met in Madrid in 1922.

From the outset of the story, the narrator announces that he is going to recount the tragic end of his unforgettable friend Remigio Morales Ortega. What is ironic about this statement is his usage of the word *unforgettable* to describe Remigio, for his account deals more with the *forgettable* Remigio. His story highlights the idea that Remigio, who comes to embody the Spanish exiles, has already been forgotten, for the narrator himself seems to be the only person who continues to remember his memory. However, this story is not just about the retelling and remembering of the life of one exile, but rather that of two, as we also learn of the narrator’s own exilic journey. We learn that the narrator himself, more so than Remigio, felt and suffered the consequences of exile as he was forced to change his profession once in France, from a renowned writer and journalist to a mathematics teacher, living on a modest income. As in many European

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<sup>129</sup> The narrator highlights that he does not know the reason why Remigio’s wife Pilar did not join him in Mexico, although he found out that Remigio lived in Mexico with a Colombian or Argentine woman.

<sup>130</sup> Although this story does not deal specifically with the French concentration camps, there clearly exists a direct connection with France as the narrator was exiled from Spain to France. This illustrates the continual presence of France throughout Aub’s work as this country represents the main *lieux de mémoire* where Aub’s trauma took place. Just as Aub is unable to escape the labyrinth of Spanish Civil War, he also fails to completely break away from the memories that tie him to France.

countries at the time, exercising a professional career was not a privilege granted to foreigners in France. Remigio is also forced to change his language as he and his children speak French instead of Spanish (“mis hijos hablan muy mal el español,” 462). The narrator describes Remigio as being like his brother, although eventually they lost contact with one another as each believed that the other was dead. Remigio, who was a well-respected person, worked in Mexico as a professor of Law in addition to editing books and publishing articles.<sup>131</sup> After twenty-five years of separation, Remigio finally traveled to France to reunite with his son and the narrator, whom he had not seen in many years. Remigio’s pride prohibits him from returning to a Spain governed under the Franco regime, which accounts for their reunion in French soil (Sanz Álvarez 1999; 174).<sup>132</sup> Remigio thus traveled to France to meet his son, who unsurprisingly did not recognize him. They met in Cerbère, on the border of Spain and France. Cerbère also marked the place where many Spanish exiles, including Max Aub, crossed the border to France during the mass exodus of 1939.<sup>133</sup> This encounter only confirmed what Remigio had already suspected: that the exiles were no longer the same individuals as those that traversed the tunnel to Cerbère in 1939. The first few days, Remigio and the narrator spent a lot of time talking about the past and remembering their collective trauma.

Upon returning to France, Remigio begins to confront the struggle that essentially marks the life of each exile: the question concerning his true homeland. On the one hand, Remigio realizes that Mexico now is his homeland and that he is more Mexican than Spanish (“Por lo visto el que ya no lo es [español] soy yo,” 466); (“Veinte años de

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<sup>131</sup> Remigio’s son, Remigio, also studied Law, first in Valencia, then in Valladolid and Madrid.

<sup>132</sup> This prompts Remigio to state: “Ir yo a España? Sería como faltar a un voto. No que me prometiera nada ni a nadie. Pero me sentiría disminuido, deshonrado, humillado, esclavo” (464).

<sup>133</sup> This tunnel also represents an important symbol that recalls the French concentration camps as many exiles were detained and taken to the camps immediately upon crossing that tunnel.

América modifican hasta el oído. Ya no estamos hechos al español, al español de España,” 469); while on the other hand he cannot help but remember that his Spanish roots run deep and continue to form a part of his identity. As the narrator and Remigio begin to reminisce and discuss the past, Remigio asserts that the exiles have become anonymous and unheard-of remnants from the past, erased from the map (“nos han borrado del mapa,” 466), and unknown in contemporary society: “No hijo, ya no somos nadie, ni sabe nadie quiénes fuimos,” (466) and “No somos más que sombra de lo que fuimos” (479). Remigio then underlines the fact that contemporary Spaniards have not only not read anything written by the exiles, but also have failed to recognize anything that they did for Spain, completely discounting their achievements both in Spain and in Mexico. Remigio himself expresses the disillusionment of falling into the shadows of an unknown world as he, much like Max Aub, confronts the total loss of a readership. He has published a novel, a book of short stories and a play, which continue to remain unknown as people have yet to find out about them. As Remigio remarks: “Sencillamente, no existimos. Mira: ahí tienes la historia de la literatura hispanoamericana de Anderson...Busca mi nombre a ver si lo encuentras; ni por casualidad. Coge cualquiera de las historias de la literatura española de las corrientes, tampoco. ¿Para eso luchamos?” (470).

Remigio becomes Aub’s alter ego, whose comments emanate directly from Aub’s own personal discourse and sentiments and reiterate the Spanish exiles’ lost legacy and place in both the Spanish and Latin American history books,<sup>134</sup> marking a

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<sup>134</sup> Max Aub also became frustrated and disconcerted with his exclusion from both the literary and historical anthologies. This idea is exemplified by Ignacio Soldevila who, as a student, once asked his professor (Angel Lacalle Fernández) why Aub was excluded from their classes, only to receive the following answer: “En qué país crees que vives, muchacho?” Exile for the most part has been excluded

true end to their quest for self-realization and any possible renewal of their lost past and reaffirming the “dead end” that the exiles have reached.<sup>135</sup> This ultimately leads to, as the title of the story suggests, a “remate completo,” that is, a death blow to the memory of the Spanish exiles. Also, as Mari Paz Sanz Álvarez asserts: “El remate es el de sentir que sus vidas, las de los exiliados, ya no cuentan; que lo que hicieron antes de la guerra civil y durante ella ha quedado en el olvido; borrando a todos los escritores de después del 98” (1999; 175).

Remigio’s reaction mirrors that uttered by Max Aub in *La gallina ciega*, as he states: “Ninguno de estos muchachos que empieza ahora ha leído nada mío, ni conocen el santo de mi nombre...Los demás nos pudrimos, desaparecemos. Porque, como es natural, tampoco en Méjico somos nada” (467). Remigio finally comes to the realization that while the Spanish Civil War has continued to remain one of the central preoccupations in the minds of the Spanish refugees, the rest of Spain, and the world for that matter, has long forgotten about the Civil War, for as Remigio states: “...la guerra española no era ya el centro de las preocupaciones del mundo...” (478). It was not until Remigio returned to Europe that he finally realized and admitted that they lost the war. The fact that the exiles never received any words of appreciation or recognition from the younger generation for their efforts and contributions during the war confirms this notion.

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from the History of Spanish Literature anthologies of the twentieth century, especially after the establishment of democracy. This notion is illustrated by Aub in the *Diarios* when he states: “Al releer hoy en el número IX de *Hora de España* lo que publicó allí Manolo Altolaquirre acerca de “Nuestro teatro” me quedo un poco triste al ver que no está mi nombre entre el de tantos...La mayoría de los citados no han hecho nada valedero para las tablas. Yo sí. Y es que siempre me tuvieron aparte...” (477). A second example comes from a doctoral thesis written by Luis Sierra Ponce de León titled *La novela española de la guerra civil*, in which Aub states that: “Esa tesis da pruebas de cómo durante veinte años nuestros nombres fueron totalmente silenciados y ocultados en España” (*Diarios* 451).

<sup>135</sup> This story has many autobiographical traces of Aub’s own life and the problems that he encountered in exile.

Throughout the story, Remigio and the narrator recount their memories of the Civil War, remembering vividly after twenty-five years the blood-covered land and the dead bodies scattered all around Spain. At one moment in the story the narrator exclaims that he wants to forget (“Lo quiero volver a olvidar. No lo había olvidado,” 482); however, the fact that he is unable to forget shows the continual presence in his mind of the traumatic memory of the Civil War. This statement is contradictory, for the first phrase implies that the narrator *had* forgotten, while the second phrase implies that he *had not* forgotten. This substantiates the cyclical nature of memory as both remembering and forgetting are necessary stages in the process of bearing witness. The narrator’s need to remember and bear witness to the collective trauma of the Civil War occupies the last ten pages of the story as he recounts his experience as a Republican during the Civil War. This includes his testimony of the deaths of many Republicans, which were soon forgotten: “Todos estos muertos han caído en el olvido. Claro estos y millones más” (491). This further substantiates Remigio’s contention that Franco not only won the war, but also succeeded in poisoning History. Many Spanish exiles, including Remigio, believed that their lack of presence in Spain (as a result of their exile) would ultimately cause Spain to sink and remain dormant, but as they observed, that did not happen, for Spain moved forward without them. Due to the Franco regime, Remigio’s twenty-year fight for the Republic in the end turned out to be all for nothing, or as Remigio puts it: “Ahora resulta que trabajaba por algo inexistente” (467). The presence and the memory of the Spanish refugees gradually began to disappear and vanish into thin air until nothing was left (“Qué nos

queda? Cuatro pasos hasta el cementerio y hundirnos en el polvo” 480). This becomes the new paradise of Franco’s Spain: a world where memory did not exist.

Eventually Remigio himself succumbed to that same fate, becoming a victim by committing suicide. Remigio was unable to confront and deal with the reality of Spain and his family, as he, like Aub, was disillusioned by the completely distorted image of Spain of which he learned. Unable to cope with this reality, and with the distance that his son exhibits, Remigio commits suicide by throwing himself into the train tracks in the tunnel that joins Cerbère and Port Bou, and becoming just another forgotten footnote of the past. This fate is characteristic of many of Aub’s protagonists in *The Magical Labyrinth* as none of them succeed in escaping the labyrinth of the concentration-camp world. This is exemplified in *Campo de los almendros* wherein the protagonists spend much of the novel talking about the future and about the moment in which they are going to escape Spain, but in the end as thousands of hopeful exiles are awaiting the arrival of ships at the pier of Alicante, the only place that they end up going to are the concentration camps, a further continuation of the labyrinth.

Remigio’s tragic death is symbolic of the exiles’ journey as he died in the same tunnel through which the mass exodus traveled upon fleeing Spain in 1939. Remigio dies in an in-between place—not in Spain, not in France—after living in an in-between place not really belonging anywhere. As the narrator describes the tragic end to Remigio’s life, he states that he is telling/writing the story of Remigio in order to forget (“Escribo para olvidar,” 491); however, as trauma theory has clearly outlined, to forget necessitates remembering. The narrator’s comment is paradoxical,

for if he really wanted to forget, then he probably would not write. The act of writing is intrinsically one of remembering. The narrator realizes that these pages represent the only hope of preserving Remigio's memory as he proclaims: "Ya pronto no habrá quien se acuerde de ellos, como no sea por los libros" (491). In the final page of the story, the narrator, as he talks with Remigio's son, tells him the final words that Remigio uttered: "A dar una vuelta, una vuelta completa" (492). The narrator's testimony of Remigio's life represents the conclusion (remate) of the journey, a journey that is finally complete and a memory that will no longer fade away, as it is etched in the eternal pages of the story.

The texts examined in this chapter share two common themes: their preoccupation about memory and the use of a non-traditional narrative structure. Aub is worried about the disappearing memory traces of the Civil War and the French concentration camps, and therefore sets out to make the reader a participant in the transference of memory. The use of the diary and the letter allows Aub to create this complicity since both genres involve a second, usually specified, receptor. While the letter is addressed to a specific person, Aub's diary *La gallina ciega* is addressed to a specific group of people. Aub responds to the personal nature of memory and testimony through the creation of a personalized narrative structure. He is not merely lamenting the forgotten memory of the camps or the exiles, but is actively working to tell and transmit those memories so that they will not be forgotten. The constant repetition of this topos underlines Aub's urgency to fight the silence and possible burial of the exiles' traumatic past. It also signals Aub's desire to prevent another Franco victory over the defeated Republicans.

Testing the Limits of Writing about the Camps:

The Use of Theater and Media in *Morir por cerrar los ojos* and *Campo francés*

*What is a camp?*

In his essay “What is a camp?” Giorgio Agamben examines the political-juridical structure of the camps in order to answer the questions: What is a camp? and How could such events have taken place there? He conceptualizes the camp as a place that was not born out of ordinary law, but rather as a state of exception, in which the most absolute *conditio inhumana* ever to appear on Earth was realized. Agamben traces the origins of the juridical foundation of [concentration camp] internment to the *Schutzhaft*. In Nazi Germany, this term referred to the act of taking “suspects” into protective custody regardless of any relevant criminal behavior and to avoid threats to the security of the state. This concept becomes an integral part of the plot of *Morir por cerrar los ojos* and *Campo francés* as the protagonist Julio finds himself caught in the same predicament, unable to escape the labyrinth of the camps. In this sense, as Agamben asserts, the camp is the space that opens up when the state of exception starts to become the rule. This state of exception, which was a temporal suspension of the state of law, acquires a permanent spatial arrangement that constantly remains outside the normal state of law.

The concentration camp assumes a paradoxical status as a permanent space of exception, for it is a piece of territory that is placed outside the normal juridical order. It is only because the camps constitute a space of exception—a space in which the law is completely suspended—that everything is truly possible in them. This accounts for the camp's lack of logic, reason or justice where arbitrariness and uncertainty become the norm. The structure of the camp therefore seeks to permanently realize the exception where the incredible events that took place in them remain entirely unintelligible. Therefore, as Agamben contends, the people who entered the camp moved about in a zone of indistinction between the outside and the inside, the exception and the rule, the licit and the illicit, in which every juridical protection had disappeared. The camp becomes the paradigm of a political space that seeks to propagate the state of exception and the creation of a space for naked life. It is this notion of naked life that characterizes the inhabitants of the camp, who have been stripped of their political status.

The camp signals a break-down in social order where something no longer functions to regulate a sense of order. The camp therefore becomes the sign of the system's inability to function without transforming itself into a lethal machine. The state of exception, which used to be essentially a temporary suspension of the order, becomes now a new and stable spatial arrangement that cannot be inscribed into the order. This forces one, as Agamben points out, to ask, not how it could have been possible to commit such atrocious horrors against other human beings, but rather by what juridical procedures and political devices could human beings have been so completely deprived of their rights and prerogatives to the point that committing any act toward them would no longer appear as a crime. These ideas will be further exemplified in the remainder of

this chapter as they will be applied to Max Aub's two works *Morir por cerrar los ojos* and *Campo francés*. In these works, Aub depicts the concentration-camp world as one that exists outside of normal law, and in order to reflect this reality, Aub is also forced to resort to literary techniques that parallel this structure and go beyond normal conventions of genre.

### *The arbitrariness of the camp*

The section of short stories dealing with the concentration camps in *Enero Sin Nombre* reflects some of the most recurrent questions and vicissitudes surrounding the concentration-camp world. In each of the thirteen stories that constitute this section of the book, Aub examines specific issues and imagery that shed further light on the parameters of the concentration camp and ultimately serve as a platform that enables Aub to bear witness to his own personal trauma as a concentration-camp survivor. From the very first story, *Vernet 1940*,<sup>136</sup> Aub begins to pose one of the most fundamental questions inherent in the concentration-camp world: “¿Por qué estás aquí?” (135). This question becomes a leitmotif among the internees of the camp and ultimately alludes to the uncertainty, bafflement and arbitrariness that underlie the foundational principles that govern the camp, as the detainees find themselves perplexed and searching for answers as to the reason behind their internment. In this story, a detainee of Le Vernet recounts his story of injustice and inexplicable detainment in the camp. The protagonist explains that while he was in a tavern buying “una tarjeta de pan,” several police officers entered and

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<sup>136</sup> Aub wrote this story during his first stay in Vernet in 1940 under the name *Enrique Serrano Piña*.

proceeded to beat and detain him without asking to see documentation. At first, the protagonist believed that the police had confused him with another person, but he was then taken to Le Vernet and condemned to three months. The apparent cause of the detainment was that he refused to reveal the identity of the person that sold him the “tarjeta de pan.”

The same question is posed in the story *El limpiabotas del padre eterno*<sup>137</sup> as the protagonist, *El Málaga*, goes crazy looking for the motive behind his internment, trying to comprehend what it was that he did to deserve such a punishment, for as he reasoned: “[p]ronto iría a dar al calabozo sin saber por qué, ni cómo” (255) and “nadie paga nada sin razón” (314). In the final pages of the story, *El Málaga* continues to look for an explanation as he states: “¿Qué he hecho para que me castiguen?” (314). It is not just the arbitrariness of the camps that is revealed in this recurrent question, but there is also an element of collectivity as the question encompasses all prisoners: “¿Cómo vinimos todos nosotros a parar aquí?” (308); “¿Por qué nos tienen así?” (313); and “¿Qué nos sucede?” (146). As Fernando Degiovanni asserts, the constant and obsessive repetition of these questions “supone desde el comienzo la necesidad de reinstaurar el sentido resbaladizo de una experiencia que se vive como absurda y cuyos orígenes, causas, puntos de partida necesitan ser repetidos para comprenderse” (213). What is evident upon examining these stories is that the protagonists fail to realize that neither reason nor logic work as a means of understanding or explaining the concentration camp, whose laws go beyond any

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<sup>137</sup> What distinguishes the stories under the section titled “Los Campos de Concentración,” particularly *El limpiabotas del Padre Eterno*, is that they begin to enter into more descriptive details of the harsh realities, punishments and sufferings of the French concentration camps. These texts dedicate the bulk of their plot to a discussion of the concentration camp, although there are also references to the Civil War. As Eloisa Nos Alda points out, in *El limpiabotas del Padre Eterno*, coldness and hunger characterize the experience in the camp (246).

formidable mode of comprehension. This point will be further illustrated in the texts examined in this chapter.

### *Aub's Teatro Mayor and Teatro Menor*

In a letter that Max Aub wrote to Ignacio Soldevila Durante on February 21, 1955, he states that his theatrical works can be divided into three categories: teatro mayor, teatro menor and obras en un acto.<sup>138</sup> According to Aub, the primary difference between the teatro menor and the teatro mayor resides in the fact that, whereas the teatro menor grants precedence to individual problems, the teatro mayor gives primacy to collective issues, such as the suffering of an entire group of people. As Aub stated, the works that constitute the Teatro Mayor: “son hijos de la guerra, son hijos de los campos de concentración, son hijos de la represión” (“Introducción,” *Morir por cerrar los ojos* 22). Another principle difference is the length of the play, for the teatro mayor tends to be longer and require separation into different acts. Under the category of teatro mayor, Aub only mentions two works: *San Juan* and *No*, while he classifies *La vida conyugal*, *El rapto de Europa*, *Deseada*, *Cara y cruz* and *Morir por cerrar los ojos* as works of his teatro menor. However, this classification appears to be extremely broad, which has raised many questions regarding a redefinition of Aub's teatro mayor to include other plays that also emphasize the collective trauma. In this light, one could argue that *La vida conyugal*, *El rapto de Europa*, *Morir por cerrar los ojos* and *Cara y cruz* also constitute works of Aub's teatro mayor. Max Aub himself finally came to this same

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<sup>138</sup> Aub would later refer to his “obras en un acto” as *Breve escala teatral para comprender mejor nuestro tiempo*.

realization. In 1968, with the publication of Aub's *Teatro Completo*, Aub reclassifies his Teatro Mayor to include the previously mentioned four plays that were originally excluded from the list. In the prologue to his teatro mayor, Aub states: "Pasé de las obras de un acto a otras de tres o más, sin darme cuenta...de la misma manera en que se cruza el puente del cuento a la novela...Pero generalmente el tamaño mayor coincide con la madurez...Las cárceles y los campos me dieron espacio, si no para escribir, para pensar. Todo lo que sigue es obra de México" (Caudet 2005; 233). This quote explains the camp's influence on Aub's writing, for it provided him space not only to write, but also to think. All of these six works of the teatro mayor were written between 1939 and 1950, in addition to numerous other obras en un acto.

Max Aub composed over fifty plays throughout his life, always considering theater as his forte. His first stage comprised his Avant-garde, experimental theater from 1923–1935. These plays are characterized foremost for the search for simplicity in the expression of their characters. This results in problems of communication between the characters who attempt to surmount these barriers. As Ignacio Soldevila Durante points out, in many of Aub's theatrical works prior to 1935, Aub attempted to return to the great classic themes<sup>139</sup> and to realize them through means of irony, poetical grace and humor, but what was really original was the way in which he situated mythical characters into the present (2003; 120). In 1936, during the first few months of the Spanish Civil War, Aub directed the theatrical group Federación Universitaria Escolar (FUE), *El Búho*, in Valencia. From 1935–1937, Aub changed the direction of his theatrical production and

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<sup>139</sup> Aub's most ambitious classical text is his play *Narciso* published in 1928. In this play Aub attempts to revive the classic tragedy/myth of Narcissus following in the footsteps of the French vanguard theater (Soldevila 2003; 125).

began a new stage of theater, which he called “teatro de circunstancias.”<sup>140</sup> This new stage focused more on a preoccupation with the historical reality and the social and political relationships of the Spaniards. According to Ignacio Soldevila Durante, Aub decided to call this stage “Teatro de circunstancias,” because:

Se le impuso la realidad histórica de su tiempo y, abandonando la problemática personalista por las urgentes necesidades colectivas, Aub saltó del eje intemporal de la creación de caracteres y la revitalización de mitos eternos al muy temporal de las relaciones sociales y políticas de la comunidad española. La ética de las circunstancias colectivas se le impuso como una ineludible responsabilidad personal. (*Epistolario Aub/Soldevila* 56)

The “teatro de circunstancias” eventually gave rise to Aub’s Teatro mayor, and also signaled the first time in Aub’s theatrical work where the collective surpassed the individual. It is through the Teatro mayor that we see men and women that have lived and suffered the Spanish Civil War, the French concentration camps, exile, anti-Semitism and the Franco dictatorship. This reinforces Aub’s ethical commitment to the victims of injustice. As Ricardo Doménech asserts, these characters not only find themselves entangled in political fights, but also in fights for their own lives (175).

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<sup>140</sup> The teatro de circunstancias consists of eight works in one act.

*Morir por cerrar los ojos*

*Morir por cerrar los ojos* is a work from Aub's Teatro Mayor that seeks to transform Aub's own personal experience and memory of detention and internment in the French concentration camps of Roland Garros and Le Vernet d'Ariège into a collective testimony. As Carmen Venegas Grau asserts, this work stems from the meticulous notes that Aub took under difficult conditions in the camps and "bajo el fuego de la acción" (34). From these notes, Aub wrote and rewrote until he had finally found the most adequate form to recount these experiences in front of an audience. This work, along with *Campo francés*, addresses the problematic concerning the concentration-camp experience by reflecting upon both the internal and external dimensions of the camp. Agamben's theory of what is a camp is relevant in both of these works as Aub attempts to examine the political and ideological roots that gave rise to the creation and support of the camps. The concentration camp therefore becomes a place that lies outside natural law as the French turn a blind's eye toward all foreigners. Their paranoia of a communist threat permeates their mindset and closes their eyes to the true reality that they are living.<sup>141</sup> Many of the characters in the play, such as La Portera, Madame Goutte and Luisa, portray this indifference, ignorance (toward the dangers of fascism and Nazism) and passivity that characterized the French's lack of moral vision. This outlook is due in large part to the outbreak of World War II on September 1, 1939, and the French government's fight against fascism and fear of communism. However, France's own blindness to the Nazis is exemplified by Madame Goutte, who states that the French should have allied themselves with Germany and Italy. The relationship between two of

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<sup>141</sup> This metaphor of "closing one's eyes," not only reflects France's decadent state during World War II, but also reinforces the forgotten place of the Spanish exiles that have been forgotten as other nations, in addition to Francoist Spain, have closed their eyes and turned their backs on them.

the principle protagonists, Julio and Juan, illustrates the degree to which this state of exception pervades the concentration-camp world, subverts all natural laws and gives rise to the individual's needs over the collective's. However, in spite of the issues addressed, *Morir por cerrar los ojos* and *Campo francés*, like many of Aub's other works of the Teatro Mayor, do not present a fatalistic view of exile, but rather offer hope in the face of tragedy.

*Morir por cerrar los ojos* was published for the first time in 1944, in Mexico, by the Editorial Tezontle. A second edition was published in 1967 in the collection Voz-Imagen Teatro of the Editorial Aymá. Aub prepared a third edition in 1968, which was included in the volume *Teatro Completo* published by the editorial Aguilar in Mexico. *Morir por cerrar los ojos* was not always considered by Aub as a work of his Teatro Mayor; it was not included in his original classification, although later added by Aub. However, the Franco regime's censure as well as a lack of interest in Mexico, due to "Spanish themes," postponed the debut of the work. This is illustrated in a letter that Ricardo Domenech wrote to Max Aub on January 1, 1965: "*Morir por cerrar los ojos* y *Deseada* se presentaron a censura con gran retraso, debido a una serie de imponderables, derivados de reajustes burocráticos y demás trastornos que ocurren en las casas editoriales y que rompen la marcha normal del trabajo...(a censura hay que presentar ejemplares por duplicado), y esto se llevó su tiempo" (Archivo Max Aub Caja 5-10/1).<sup>142</sup> Antonio Muñoz Molina also comments on this idea: "[Es] una obra teatral que nunca ha sido representada dignamente...No debía de ser desesperante para Aub, en su primer

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<sup>142</sup> In a subsequent letter, Domenech states: "Con todo esto, ya se puede usted imaginar el porvenir previsible para *Morir por cerrar los ojos*. La censura parece haberse endurecido mucho últimamente. De manera que, a mi juicio, lo mejor va a ser que pensemos en otro título, aunque no renunciemos totalmente a *Morir*...y es de suponer que la censura se recrudezca más en los próximos meses" (Archivo Max Aub Caja 5-10/4).

exilio mexicano, escribir sin descanso, por la urgencia de contar lo que había visto, y que su escritura nunca llegara a suceder en voz alta, permaneciera muda...” (Venegas Grau 24). The censure finally approved the publication of the play in 1966 on the condition that some parts be suppressed. According to Ricardo Domench the suppressed content appears relatively benign and as a result Aub accepted the changes.

*Morir por cerrar los ojos* is composed of six acts: the play consists of two parts each containing three acts, while the fifth and sixth acts are each divided into two scenes. Aub breaks away from the traditional unities of place and time in this play as the action transpires during two months. The entire first part of the play takes place on the same day: May 10, 1940, between 7:30 AM and 11:00 PM. In the second part of the play, the unity of time is broken as the first act takes place on June 5, 1940; the second act, first section on June 16, 1940; the second act, second section and the third act, first section on July 10, 1940; while the third act, second section does not reveal any time indication. Regarding unity of place, each act corresponds to a different location: Julio’s house (Paris), Pont-Neuf (Paris), Julio’s house (Paris), Roland Garros stadium (Paris), inside a country house (center of France) and inside the barracks of the concentration camp of Le Vernet d’Ariège. The concentration camp does not enter the scene until the second part of the play, but constitutes the central place of enunciation and action in the final three acts. The most dynamic scenes are those that occur inside the camp. What also characterizes the second part of the play is the fact that all of the scenes take place inside or in closed places, which, as Carmen Venegas Grau affirms, creates a sensation of asphyxia. While the first part of the play takes place in the private sector, each act in the second part takes place in threatening, hostile places created by the State. In the words of

Francie Cate-Arries, those who are most responsible for the atrocious and brutal acts of corruption in the concentration camp are not the individual guards, but rather the official programs sanctioned by the French State (2005; 165).

The main plot of *Morir por cerrar los ojos* centers on the vicissitudes of the three main protagonists, Julio, Juan and María, that expose them to the labyrinth of the French concentration camps and the blindness of the corrupt French government during World War II.<sup>143</sup> However, given Aub's proclivity toward the collectivity, the real protagonist here is the collective voice of the entire group of internees who fought against fascism in the French camps. This is illustrated in the final act as Aub gives voice to the other internees who tell their stories of how they were detained. From the very first act, we find out that Julio and Juan Fernandiz, who are half-brothers from Spain, live in two different worlds and share opposing ideologies. Julio, a thirty-five year old egotistical, self-centered bourgeois individualist and owner of a radio repair store, is married to María and has lived in France for the past thirty years. Julio, like the French, lives in his own enclosed world whose only concern is his business. Juan, who is five years younger than Julio, is married to Emilia, although he once had a relationship with María, and is a rebel that remained in Spain to fight for the Republic and for what he believed in, opting for action rather than passivity. Juan enlisted as a member of the Communist Party in Spain and toward the end of the Civil War was captured and sent to Le Vernet where he was interned for a year. It is the tenuous relationship between Juan and Julio that ultimately sheds light on the parameters of the concentration-camp world as a state of exception that turns brothers against each other. As Max Aub once stated: "¿qué se

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<sup>143</sup> One example of the corruptness of the Vichy government, in addition to the politics of internment in concentration camps, is the stealing of humanitarian aid, such as food, clothes, medicines, by concentration-camp officials.

puede esperar de un mundo así organizado si no es el miedo, el callar, el fingir, la mentira? ¿No te das cuenta de que llegamos a pisar el mismo terreno que aborrecemos, tanto tú como yo, de la vida policiaca, nazi y falangista, donde los hijos denuncian a los padres, los hermanos a los hermanos?” (*Diarios* 181).

Throughout the play, María finds herself caught in the middle of the tension that surrounds the two brothers, and serves as the mediator between the two worlds that they represent. Juan is ultimately the cause of Julio’s demise as Julio, in the first act, is detained by an Inspector and Police Agent that accuse him of being a communist. Although Julio denies having ever been a communist or involved in communist activities, he is taken to the Prefecture. Julio maintains his innocence, stating that this is a bureaucratic error and that they have confused him with his brother Juan. While Julio is taken to the Prefecture, Juan suddenly appears after escaping from Le Vernet. Juan learns that Julio was falsely detained because of mistaken identity and resolves to rectify the situation by turning himself in to the police. However, Juan does not repent for his actions and involvement in the war as he felt a responsibility to fight for progress and to clear the way for the Republicans to achieve freedom. What the second act sets out to establish is the continued romance between Juan and María, which is renewed as a result of their encounter. Juan confesses to María that he continues to love her in spite of his marriage to Emilia and asks María to flee with him to a nearby town where nobody would recognize him. In spite of María’s confession that she does not love Julio, her loyalty impedes her from abandoning him. The act ends as the two walk the streets of Brunete together at night.

In the third act, Julio is released from the Prefecture and returns to his house to find out that María had left with Juan. Julio believes that justice has prevailed and that he was released due to his innocence. He reiterates that his detention was a flagrant injustice and that as soon as the Police learned of the existence of Juan, and that he had escaped from the concentration camp, he would be justly liberated. Julio remains naïve believing that the truth will always prevail and resolve matters because that is the way the world should be. Julio is ultimately blinded by the perception of justice and due process of law that, in a logical, ordinary world, operates in a systematic manner and under normal conditions. This notion touches on one of the central themes in this play and one that, as Agamben's theory states, permeates the concentration-camp world, one that is devoid of justice. Julio reiterates this idea when he tells the Portera:

No tiene usted idea...Una persona decente no puede figurarse estas cosas...Cincuenta, sesenta, setenta hombres metidos en una habitación pequeña con los rateros, matones, sinvergüenzas y dos o tres personas decentes detenidas por equivocación...cosas que no se pueden creer. (133)

Julio's freedom prompts Juan to change his mind about turning himself in since, after Julio's release, that action would no longer be necessary. This decision causes Julio to react with hostility toward his brother, who, as Julio remarks, has never done anything for him. Julio's resentment and distaste for Juan, as he blames Juan for his "accidental" detainment, illustrates the tension that exists between the two brothers and puts in motion a series of events that will ultimately shed light on the repercussions of the concentration-camp world on its victims. Juan becomes fed up with Julio's attitude and leaves with

Emilia. As Julio and María talk about Juan, they hear gunshots outside. María immediately worries that Juan is in danger, but Julio's self-centeredness and passivity impede him from reacting: "pase lo que pase, no podemos hacer nada. Para qué comprometernos?" (141). Juan is detained and taken to jail. The Inspector returns to Julio's house and demands that Julio accompany him again to the Prefecture. Julio is perplexed by the Inspector's request since his "innocence" was already proven three hours earlier. The Inspector informs Julio that this detention has nothing to do with the previous one, for the second detention was on the basis of a denunciation, and refuses to give explanations stating that France had to defend itself against foreigners, which meant detaining them on the basis of any suspicion. Julio protests maintaining his innocence to no avail and is subsequently taken to the stadium of Roland Garros, marking the beginning of his concentration-camp journey.

Julio's internment exemplifies the state of exception of the concentration camp-world where false denunciations, xenophobia and betrayal become quotidian and common occurrences. As Rosa Martínez Montón contends: "Aub va a denunciar directa e indirectamente una Francia despeñada por el abismo de la iniquidad, donde reina política represiva, se alienta la delación, domina el absurdo burocrático, la corrupción es la ley que mueve la maquinaria del Estado y la cobardía lo impregna todo" (233). A denunciation was enough to detain and intern any person regardless of proof or physical evidence. Amidst this world void of reason, nobody was safe nor out of harm's way, for anybody could be accused or labeled as an enemy at any time. In this world of chaos and arbitrariness, it was impossible to determine accurately who the true enemies were, causing all to be possible suspects. The character El Griego confirms this notion when

he tells Julio in Roland Garros: “Nosotros no llegamos a tanto: ‘detenidos administrativos.’ ¡La Administración! Aquí encerrados en espera del destino, sin que nadie tenga que dar cuenta de nuestra existencia. Como en los buenos tiempos del absolutismo”<sup>144</sup> (157). Julio is not the only detainee in the camp that finds himself in the same predicament. A German Professor, Von Ruhn, was detained in spite of being avidly involved in antifascist propaganda for six years. When the Pintor asks the Professor if one can compare this concentration camp (Le Vernet) with the German camps, he replies: “Esto es peor, porque es imbécil. Nos han encerrado por defender lo que defiende el gobierno que nos aprehende. Se vengan de nosotros de su incertidumbre, de su falta de fe” (203). Luis underscores this illogical notion asserting: “Lo que sucedió es que para ellos [los franceses] ha continuado la no-intervención. Así nos ahogaron y se han ahogado ellos. Si los oficiales eran fascistas y el pueblo veía encarcelar a los antifascistas, ¿qué podías esperar?” (210). The Non-Intervention Pact explains the French’s lack of understanding and concern for the Republicans.

The subject of betrayal also becomes a recurrent theme in the concentration camp, which most forcefully manifests itself between Julio and Juan. When Juan first arrives at Roland Garros, he is told by Luis, another internee, that Julio is an informant. Upon finding out that Juan was interned in the camp, Julio immediately denounces his brother as being responsible for his detention and begs the Sargent to inform the Comander of who the real culprit is. Julio’s individualism causes him to fink on his brother on various occasions in order to save his own skin. Julio shows no sympathy for Juan when Juan

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<sup>144</sup> A second example that illustrates this point comes from another character Pinto, an internee in Roland Garros, who remarked: “Usted lleva casi tantos años como yo en Francia y conoce mi carnicería, ¿no? Pues, al dueño de la casa se le ha antojado para su hijo. Llevo cuarenta años establecido, pero como soy sefardita y con una denuncia basta, aquí estoy: por anarquista” (171).

tells him that they are going to condemn him to six months in jail, affirming that Juan deserves that punishment while exclaiming: “¿Qué he hecho yo?” (172). Juan underlines this notion when he tells María: “Lo mejor es que lo sepas de una vez: Julio se ha convertido en un chivato indecente. Todo lo que le digas lo repetirá al Comandante del Campo. No le domina más que una idea: denunciar, denunciar, denunciar!” (199). Guillermo tells Julio why nobody wants to speak to him: “Ya sé por qué no te hablan los demás...Ellos creen que eso de denunciar es feo...Lo malo son los soplones que no reconocen que lo son y disfrazan su oficio con ideas” (218). It is Julio’s selfishness and individualism that cost him his life at the end of the play, when he is shot and killed as he attempts to escape from Le Vernet. This reinforces Aub’s preoccupation with the collective trauma of the camps wherein the individualists like Julio ultimately perish in the name of the collectivity. The “pintor,” a concentration-camp inmate, reinforces this notion when he tells the lieutenant: “tu sacrificio individual es imbécil” (187).

The fourth act presents a turning point in María’s character as she finally opens her eyes to the “cancer” that is eating away at France. As the lieutenant says: “Francia tenía un cáncer y nadie lo sabía, mejor, nadie se quería dar cuenta” (183). María’s passivity turns into a sense of agency as she begins to take action and assert her voice. María devises a plan of escape and goes to Le Vernet and speaks with two gendarmes about the escape plan for Julio. They agree to participate in the operation provided that María pay them 500 francs. María tells Julio and Juan that she has organized a rescue mission that will take place at 10:00 that night. Julio and Juan will escape by cutting through the barbed-wire fence—the symbol of the concentration camp—and escape on two bicycles that will be awaiting them. However, the price of Julio and Juan’s freedom

becomes more expensive as María is raped by the same Sergeant that she had earlier bribed as a part of the escape plan. As María leaves crying and distraught, the Sergeant tells her: “Creías que te iba a costar lo mismo la libertad de dos que la de uno?” (222). The selfless act of sacrifice by María represents a “prise de conscience” whereby María not only takes action, but also opens her eyes to the reality of France. This is illustrated by María’s comment: “Me duele Francia como si la llevara anudada en el pecho...No me daba cuenta de que, quieras que no, hay que tomar partido” (220). It is this pain that ultimately gives the blind their sight back.

The denouement of the play occurs when Julio is shot and killed while attempting to escape through the barbed-wire fence. Julio’s death presents a sense of poetic justice to the play as he ultimately receives the punishment that he deserved for being a fink. When a doctor approaches Julio’s corpse in an attempt to revive him, a Soldier tells him to back away as they are waiting for the “camp doctor” to arrive. This further illustrates the illogical nature of the concentration camp as doctors are divided into different categories based on whether they are doctors who work for the camp or doctors that do not. With regard to Julio’s death, the Colonel states that all foreigners like Julio should be buried in common graves in the Sahara because they represent a danger to the new order. The only way to restore order to France is: “...purgar todos los residuos indecorosos del Frente Popular barridos y el orden, el trabajo, la familia restaurados con mano de hierro” (227). The play ends with María’s awakening: “Yo también lo creí y me ha costado la vida. He vivido ciega, muerta, por cerrar los ojos...Francia está deshecha de traidores, vendida por avaros, destrozada de cobardes, abatida por ancianos putrefactos, muerta por cerrar los ojos” (228). Now that María has regained her vision

and her voice, she refuses to remain quiet. This is symbolized by the final scene of the play where she defends herself and resists submission by insulting the French and then singing France's national anthem La Marseillaise.<sup>145</sup> As Ricardo Doménech affirms: "El canto de La Marsellesa es una exaltación de la libertad y de la democracia, y un enérgico recordatorio de que esos valores están siendo traicionados por estos militares franceses" (187). María's transformation has come full circle as she now becomes the hero of the play and represents hope for the future. On the contrary, in *Morir por cerrar los ojos* Julio's character does not evolve as he dies with the same egoism that characterized him at the beginning of the play.

### *Campo francés*

After writing *Morir por cerrar los ojos*, Aub affirmed that: "no es lo que yo quiero. Las tablas me limitan y esta vez no he sabido encerrarme entre ellas" (*Diarios* 113). This comment reflects Aub's frustration as he feels limited by the constraints imposed by theater to adequately represent the trauma of the French concentration camps. It is precisely this limitation that *Campo francés* seeks to overcome in order to allow Aub the space and creativity necessary to relate the experience of denunciation and detainment in France. *Campo francés* is the very first text that Aub wrote upon his liberation from the concentration camp of Djelfa, marking the end of the most somber period of his life, and his return to the testimonial literature that he began to compose in Paris before his detainment. As Gérard Malgat asserts, this text "nace de la urgencia de contar...Max Aub una vez salido de los campos de reclusión, quiere dejar constancia inmediatamente

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<sup>145</sup> La Marseillaise became a symbol of antifascism.

de la inaceptable realidad francesa” (2007; 184). As Kellermann states: “The immediate period following a traumatic event is a crucial time in the process of recovery. During this time, a narrative of the trauma is generated and constructed alongside a process of cognitive processing of the traumatic events” (46). Aub wrote *Campo francés* in just twenty-three days while aboard the *Serpa Pinta* as he was traveling from Casablanca to Veracruz in September 1942.

What differentiates *Campo francés* from *Morir por cerrar los ojos* is its Avant-garde, cinematic structure. This makes categorizing the work into a particular genre a problematic task, as it neither fits clearly into the category of novel or play. In fact, the term genre is inaccurate, as a more appropriate term for classifying this work would be media. Given that the work is comprised of various forms of mass communication, newspapers, and radio, it therefore constitutes a type of media as opposed to literary genre. Aub addresses precisely this controversy in the preliminary note to the 1965 edition of *Campo francés*. He begins by citing Galdós, who advocates for the “marriage” or joining of Theater and Novel into a new subgenre. Galdós contends that in literature one should not condemn this new subgenre, but rather welcome it as it will result in the purification and perfection of the literary quality of the work. Aub therefore explains the form of *Campo francés* based on Galdós’s definition of a subgenre, although in this case, Aub substitutes theater for cinematic script.

It is precisely its out-of-place classification that allows *Campo francés* to engage in the type of memory work or working through that *Morir por cerrar los ojos* fails to accomplish via the traditional theatrical model. Antonio Muñoz Molina confirms this idea when he states:

Max Aub sabía demasiado bien, como republicano español y como judío, que de pronto ya no había coherencia en nada y que por lo tanto las formas conocidas apenas podían servirle. Entonces, en *Campo francés* inventa algo que no es novela ni teatro, que sobre todo se parece al cine. Sólo una idea vanguardista de la novela y del cine podía permitirle el grado necesario de velocidad, de cambio y quiebro constante de los puntos de vista, de multiplicación de los personajes. (84)

One must remember that *Campo francés* was written in 1942, two years before *Morir por cerrar los ojos* was written in 1944, although it was not published until 1965. *Campo francés* was originally written as a cinematic script that Aub had intended to make into a movie that he planned on showing in Mexico. However, Aub was unsuccessful in bringing the movie to the screen, lacking the necessary materials for production and economic funding. Aub would later use this script as a base for a theatrical version which became *Morir por cerrar los ojos*. As a result, primarily due to disinterest among publishing houses, the script for *Campo francés* remained in a box until Aub finally succeeded in finding a publisher (Ruedo Ibérico) to publish the work in 1965.<sup>146</sup> As would be the case for many of Aub's works, *Campo francés* attracted little interest as only 1,158 copies were sold during its first seven years.

Although the structure of *Campo francés* was originally designed for the purpose of cinematic production, one cannot help but wonder why Aub turned to such an unconventional method of narrating the collective suffering and dehumanization

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<sup>146</sup> Although *Campo francés* was not published until 1965, there are no clear indications whether Aub rewrote or modified the work upon the completion of the first draft in 1942.

implanted in France during the early 1940s. Aub alludes to this technique, and to the collective nature of the work, when he states:

Auténticos, hecho y escenarios, creo que éstas son las primeras memorias escritas con esta técnica...Los apuntes que tomé, mis recuerdos, se encadenaban en una pantalla...Todos los personajes, menos los protagonistas, son reales. No hay en lo que sigue nada personal, curiosa afirmación para lo que aseguro memorias. Fui ojo, vi lo que doy, pero no me represento; sencillamente: apunto con mi calegre, que no peca de agudo; una vez más, cronista. (*Campo francés* 13)

Aub's words highlight one important characteristic that differentiates the movie script from narrative writing. The phrase "fui ojo," points to an important idea—the way a visual text could perhaps present something that a text made of words could not. According to Rosa Martínez Montón, in *Campo francés* "Abundan ejemplos de imágenes descoyuntadas, discontinuas que se reunirán en la retina para transmitir el miedo hecho carne y el vencimiento visualizado de los que saben que "ya no hay nada que hacer" (226). This importance placed on the visual sets *Campo francés* apart from *Morir por cerrar los ojos*, which suppresses visual elements in favor of more dialogue. This leads to an interesting observation between the literary quality of *Campo francés* and *Morir por cerrar los ojos*. While both works depict similar storylines, they do so in opposing ways. In *Campo francés*, the emphasis on images, with reduced dialogue, forms its primary structure, while in *Morir por cerrar los ojos*, there is a lack of images and an excess of dialogue. Both strategies are effective in transmitting the horrors of the camps, and both

are used at different times that call on the use of particular narrative strategies. The place and time when Aub wrote both texts influenced the techniques and strategies used to convey those experiences.

Considering the fact that the writing of *Campo francés* represents Aub's first attempt—outside of the concentration-camp world—to relate this traumatic experience, it is not a coincidence or whim that the structure of the work parallels the act of working through trauma. The writing of *Campo francés* occurs at a time when Aub is still too close to the trauma, unable to completely recall and separate his memories via normal means. It also occurs during a time when the world is grappling to understand the events and complexities surrounding World War II and the Holocaust. This marks the moment when Aub begins to “act out” his traumatic memories of the camps as he has still not passed through the needed latency period of self realization. This therefore accounts for the fragmented, disjointed structure of the work, which in itself resembles that of traumatic memory. At a time when conventional means of language fails to depict such a reality, Aub must turn to additional means of representation that fall outside those used in novels or plays. This accounts for the reduced dialogue and action, and the incorporation of more visual elements into the script. The cinematic script therefore becomes the most appropriate, and logical, means of bearing witness to an all-too recent traumatic experience.

The evolution of cinema after the postwar period shines new light on what Gilles Deleuze terms a crisis in the action-image, which opens a crack through which repressed time and memory will return. In his study on postwar cinema, Deleuze posits that postwar cinema attests to a paralysis of action as well as to a paranoid sense that

situations not only exceed control, but also delimitation (Ball 146). Deleuze argues that if the war revealed anything, it was that action, when it occurs at all, often occurs too late, that is, after the genocide had already taken place (Ball 148). The annulment of action in postwar film attests to a moral paralysis or inability to act among witnesses that permitted the Nazi mass murders (Ball 157). This lack of action characterizes the storyline of *Campo francés* as the characters remain stagnant and submissive to the orders of the camp officials. The action gives way to reaction as the characters spend their time complaining about the unjust system that has imprisoned them under false pretenses. However, the lack of action also privileges the testimonial voice of the characters as they spend much of the work *telling* rather than *acting*. In light of this crisis, Deleuze places the role of cinema at the center of bearing witness to the traumas of World War II by transforming cinema into a means through which the event can “speak and give voice to history” (Ball 150).

*Campo francés*, like *Enero Sin Nombre*, begins by relating the horrible conditions that the Spanish refugees encountered in their mass exodus across the French border and into the arms of the French authorities. The thirty-five kilometer walk to the French border was met with severe rain, hunger, filth, and bombs dropped by Nationalist planes. The central plot of *Campo francés* deals with the events that take place in France upon the émigré’s arrival and the French government’s hostility and repression toward all foreigners. What most distinguishes this work from *Morir por cerrar los ojos* is its fragmented nature, as the work is divided into numerous “scenes,” each of which is titled by its place of location. An essential element to this fragmented nature is the insertion of numerous short, intermittent sequences of radio excerpts and newspaper articles that relate

the current events taking place in Europe—during World War II—between January 1939 and July 1940. It is this historical context that differentiates *Campo francés* from *Morir por cerrar los*. While *Morir por cerrar los ojos* centers more on France’s “blindness” toward the exiles’ plight, *Campo francés* goes beyond the situation occurring in France and enters into a more complex discussion of the politics of World War II, which in itself is essential to understanding the complexities surrounding the concentration-camp world. Therefore, the inclusion of news and radio functions as a technique that places the exiles’ trauma in a more collective and global context. The fate of the exiles did not solely depend on France’s government, but was intrinsically tied to the outcome of World War II and especially the Nazi regime. The insertion of the radio and news clips, in addition to the constant changing of scenes, disrupts the flow of the story by creating a series of interruptions that parallel those encountered by working through memory. This provides the reader with a “break” from the action that briefly interrupts and diverts attention from the real trauma.

The collective nature of *Campo francés* is also illustrated in the composition of characters that make up the work. Although the central protagonists are the same as *Morir por cerrar los ojos* (Julio, María and Juan), their relationship to one another and to the other characters is much different, especially their own identity and cultural make-up. Whereas in *Morir por cerrar los ojos*, Julio and Juan Fernandiz are Spanish exiles, in *Campo francés* they are Hungarian natives whose last name is Hoffman. This introduces from the onset a sense of collectivity by presenting this “Spanish” experience as one that was also shared by other nationalities. This enables Aub to focus on the totality of the collective experience rather than a more tradition subjective approach that only portrays

the vantage point of one or a few characters. In addition, while many of the characters in *Morir por cerrar los ojos* are bestowed with French names, *Campo francés* offers a more dynamic view of the French concentration-camp experience by presenting a multitude of foreign characters, many of which have no names. As opposed to many of Aub's other works about the camps that include lists wherein Aub shares the stories of other concentration-camp victims, the list in *Campo francés* becomes the actual dialogue among the different characters. While interned in the camp of Roland Garros and Le Vernet, the characters—of Spanish, Hungarian, Polish, German, Greek and Russian nationalities—tell their stories and reflect upon the reasoning of their internment. It is this dialogue between the detainees that reflects the horrors and injustice suffered in the camp. A second element of collectivity that also appears is the insertion of real characters, such as Antonio Caamaño, Barbena, Ignacio Mantecón and José María Rancaño, who were not only interned in the camps with Aub, but also became close friends with whom Aub remained in contact once in exile.

The triangular relationship between Julio, María and Juan that makes up the storyline of *Morir por cerrar los ojos* gives way to the collective voice of the internees in *Campo francés*. The tense and bitter relationship between Julio and Juan, and the amorous relationship that once existed between Juan and María, disappear from *Campo francés*. The stories told by the detainees constitute the central axis around which plot revolves, providing an up-close, personal view of the illogical nature of the concentration-camp world. It is precisely Julio Hoffman's story which highlights the illusory vision of justice that characterizes the mentality of a country obsessed with and fearful of foreigners. Julio's story parallels to a certain degree that told in *Morir por*

*cerrar los ojos* as his fate is determined by an error of mistaken identity committed by the French police. Julio is taken to the Prefecture, although he staunchly maintains that this is an error, claiming that the person that the police are looking for is his brother Juan, who is interned in Le Vernet. The ride to the Prefecture shows more than just a case of mistaken identity, but underscores the true reality behind the politics of the French government. The detention of prisoners becomes more than an effort to cleanse France of suspicious foreigners, turning into a game of numbers. The French Ministry ordered the detention of 2,000 prisoners, making the hunt more of an obligation to satisfy a certain quota, regardless of one's innocence or guilt. As the character Pedro declares: "Extranjeros no faltan nunca...Lo que importa es el número" (72). Julio therefore becomes just another number in spite of his innocence.

Julio's idealistic vision blinds him from seeing or caring about the true reality of the unjust system in France. For the first half of the work, Julio is indifferent to the plight of the other inmates and their stories. His self-centered vision and confidence in the justice system leads him to utter throughout the work: "Me soltarán enseguida." As Julio boasts to Platonof and Walter (two internees) about his forthcoming release, they reply by sharing their stories of pain and suffering under fascism. While the character Platonof spent eight years imprisoned by Mussolini, another detainee Walter was interned in Dachau, which he labeled as worse than the French concentration camp, although the French camp, in his words, was "mucho más idiota" (140). A falsely positive outlook is also conveyed by the police chief, who repeatedly assures María, even once Juan turns himself in, that it will only be a matter of days before Julio's release. However, Julio's only release comes in the form of his escape from Roland Garros and then his eventual

return to the camp as he arrogantly struts into the Prefecture thinking that the police would not do anything to him due to his “innocence.” When Julio shows the commanding office the letter proving his innocence, the officer responds: “No me dijo su jefe de sección que tenía algo importante y reservado para decirme” (146). Even a French soldier is baffled with the lack of logic in the camp as he utters to Caamaño: “No comprendo por qué estáis aquí. Si detienen a los antifascistas ¿qué guerra es ésta? ¿Contra quién luchamos? La quinta columna no sois vosotros” (111).

Julio’s transformation and realization of his egoism occurs upon being transferred to Le Vernet. Aub poignantly describes this journey as one of pain and suffering as the internees are transported in freight cars and then forced to walk long distances barefoot, carrying heavy objects. Many of them cannot bear the conditions and collapse to the ground, only to be literally dragged by camp officers to the barracks. Even Julio is sympathetic to the plight of his fellow internees as he advocates for a world where there exists respect for man; where this “desprecio con que *nos* tratan sin preocuparse de quiénes somos”<sup>147</sup> disappears. The use of the direct object pronoun “nos” represents a change in Julio’s attitude as he now realizes that he is not the only “exception” and that he is not the only person affected by this unjust system. This is even further exemplified when Julio states: “...ahora me doy cuenta de que no se puede vivir sin pensar en los demás” (206) and “Es que iba perdiendo el miedo porque sentía que no estaba solo, que somos muchos” (233). Julio even goes so far as to thank Juan for everything that Juan has done for him, a gesture that never appears in *Morir por cerrar los ojos*, where Julio blames Juan for his fate. For the first time, Julio dismantles the wall that had been

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<sup>147</sup> My emphasis.

obstructing his vision and blinding him to the true meaning of freedom. Julio now knows what freedom means, learning about it from a place that completely lacks it.

*Campo francés* ends with a repetition of the violence and hostility that occurred at the end of *Morir por cerrar los ojos*. While the camp guards announce that five hundred detainees are going to be transferred to a concentration camp in Africa, María searches for a way to rescue Julio and Juan from the camp. María speaks with a sergeant and reiterates Julio's innocence and even offers the sergeant money in exchange for Julio's release. She is subsequently raped by the sergeant against her will.<sup>148</sup> When the detainees are near the river, Julio attempts to escape by diving into the river and swimming to the opposite shore. His life tragically comes to an end when a guard shoots and kills Julio. María then takes out a gun and shoots at the officer but misses. She is then taken prisoner to a concentration camp for women where she cries out: "Ahora se los llevan a África, para matarlos de calor y trabajo. Basta! Basta! No podemos perder más de lo que hemos perdido!...No más! No más!...Coged colchones y mantas! A las alambradas!" Se ve que las mujeres van a allanar el campo" (255). María finally acquires agency as she leads the women's escape from the camp and then the invasion of the men's camp. Once the women succeed in penetrating the men's camp, the police chief decides to suspend the sending of the detainees to Africa. The work ends similarly to *Morir por cerrar los ojos* when both the men and women begin to sing La Marseillaise.

While many studies of *Morir por cerrar los ojos* and *Campo francés* focus on a comparative analysis of the plot structure and character development, little attention has been given to aesthetic form of *Campo francés* as representing a hybrid text. By hybrid, I

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<sup>148</sup> María was also raped by a concentration-camp officer in *Morir por cerrar los ojos*.

am referring to a text that does not neatly fit into a specific genre and one that incorporates numerous genres and other non-literary techniques into one comprehensive work. *Campo francés* is an example of an Avant-garde, hybrid text that includes elements from narrative, theater, film, radio, newspaper, and even songs. This explains the difficulty of classifying *Campo francés* into a particular genre (while *Morir por cerrar los ojos* is undoubtedly a theatrical play). Although both *Campo francés* and *Morir por cerrar los ojos* successfully bear witness to the trauma of the French concentration camps, there is something unique about the hybrid nature of *Campo francés* that relates to the function memory and bearing witness. It is not merely the fragmentation of *Campo francés* that resembles the process of working through traumatic memory, for many narratives also possess this quality, but rather the importance of visually showing this unthinkable event to an audience. Aub's first decision upon his liberation from Djelfa was not to document his experiences of internment in France through narrative form; instead he chose to show this event by creating a cinematic script. The production of *Sierra de Teruel* was probably still fresh in Aub's mind as he began to think about strategies for representing *Campo francés*. This experience, in addition to his passion for film, undoubtedly gave Aub the necessary tools for constructing a new hybrid text that would endeavor to represent the "unrepresentable."

## Representing the Camps in Non-Literary Texts:

*Hablo Como Hombre and Los Diarios**A new way of looking at trauma*

The preceding chapters of this dissertation closely examine works whose subject matter deals directly with the representation and collective memory of the French concentration camps or the historical events surrounding that phenomenon. In each one of these works, with the exception of *La gallina ciega* and *El remate* the presence of the concentration camp becomes the focal point and principal place of memory, or trauma site, around which the discussion and dialogue about the traumatic memory revolves. In these texts, Aub follows the traditional psychoanalytical concept of bearing witness by turning directly to the camps and making them the central point of analysis. However, this strategy may also lead one to reflect upon the role of bearing witness to trauma and ask: Is it possible to bear witness to a trauma without actually making the trauma the focal point of discussion? In other words, is it possible to create a text that is not about a particular traumatic event, but yet in some way deals with that trauma? Does bearing witness essentially implicate a return to the trauma, or can the presence of the trauma also be manipulated through other “hidden,” indirect forms? Also, can one write testimony through fiction? These are the questions that Aub poses and deals with in his narrative,

ultimately proposing a new way of looking at trauma. On the one hand, this dissertation attempts to use trauma theory as a tool to better analyze and understand Max Aub's works that deal with the trauma of the camps. On the other hand, one of the objectives of this study is to illustrate how Aub sheds light on a new and different way of looking at trauma that goes beyond the traditional psychoanalytical methods.

The focus of this chapter is to explore precisely these issues and to show an alternative avenue through which Aub bears witness to the trauma of the camps through a discursive strategy that does not deal directly with the problematic of the camps. This chapter also attempts to look at how Max Aub approaches the memory of the camps in non-literary texts. Instead, Aub succeeds in approaching this trauma through a meta-narrative discourse that is hidden behind and forms part of his testimony. As Cathy Caruth states: "We do not remember a traumatic event so much as we 'take leave of it,' though it leaves an indelible mark on everything we say, including the subject of the narrative of the event" (qtd. in Bernard-Donals and Glejzer 7). Aub's works confirm the notion that the act of writing in itself is a traumatic event wherein the ghosts of the past continually influence one's perception of and attitude toward other, separate issues. Therefore, the trauma is present even when one is not talking about it, as the consequences of the trauma continue to lie embedded in one's thinking. Aub illustrates that one does not have to address directly the trauma in order for the trauma to have presence, as it finds ways of appearing, even in subtle ways, in one's daily rhetoric. This idea is best exemplified by Aub himself, who once stated: "Lo que más me ha gustado es escribir; seguramente para que se supiera cómo soy, *sin decirlo*"<sup>149</sup> (*Hablo Como Hombre* 12). In his study of Aub's concentration-camp universe, José María Naharro-

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<sup>149</sup> My emphasis.

Calderón conceptualizes this world as a symptom of a universe that goes beyond Aub's personal concentration-camp experiences. For Naharro-Calderón, this universe is a perception of a reality that functions in accordance with a series of arbitrary codes that compel the author to establish discursive strategies that reflect these paradoxes, as is illustrated by Aub's usage of multiple points of view and genres that he develops in his work (100). The essays in *Hablo Como Hombre* illustrate once again that the concentration-camp world is not defined by the parameters of the barbed-wire fence of the concentration camps, but rather extends outside of the camp and makes its presence known in the daily lives of its victims through a vast array of different discursive forms.

As Dominick LaCapra states in his analysis of trauma: "In cases of trauma, the past and its phantasmal modifications undeniably have possessive force, and acting out may not only be necessary, but perhaps never fully overcome" (LaCapra 1998; 185). As LaCapra also notes, what differentiates memory from history is that memory continues to point to problems that are still alive or invested with emotion and value, a past that has not passed away (LaCapra 1998: 8). Although historically an event may be relegated to a specific, demarcated period in the past, memory does not function on such divisionary premises; one's memories of the past continue to influence one's thinking in the present and oftentimes unconsciously form an integral part of one's attitude. Therefore, although Max Aub may be addressing issues that are disconnected from his trauma and experience in the camps, he is unable to block out those traumatic memories as isolated events in his past, as they inherently form part of his discourse. Perhaps better than any other work, Aub's book *Hablo Como Hombre* illustrates precisely this point.

*The return of the trauma in “Hablo Como Hombre”*

In the very first words of *Hablo Como Hombre*, Aub states that this book is composed of a mixture of letters, essays, articles and speeches, whose only connection binding them is himself.<sup>150</sup> What differentiates this work from the other works examined in this dissertation resides in the first-person point of view that characterizes the narrative voice, for as Aub himself asserts: “En estos textos, hablo de mí” (11). Whereas in the works of *The Magical Labyrinth* Aub tends to distance himself from the autobiographical voice (“I”) by giving priority to the collective voice in the third person,<sup>151</sup> *Hablo Como Hombre*, as the title clearly suggests, represents Aub’s opportunity to speak his mind and to vent his frustrations with respect to a series of traumatic and disconcerting events that have plagued his life. Therefore, Aub speaks openly and seriously, without distancing himself or resorting to humor or other narrative games. Although Aub shares his own personal experiences in this compilation of works, he does not abandon his need to speak and advocate for the collective community of Spanish exiles. This point is evidenced as Aub repeatedly invokes the use of the plural registry (nosotros) throughout the work. In effect, he goes out on a limb by challenging the omnipresent political power that continues to enforce censure and punishment toward those that dare to speak the “truth.”

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<sup>150</sup> Ignacio Soldevila Durante states that *Hablo Como Hombre* is a volume that gathers an important series of written texts by Aub—some that had already been published, and others that remained unedited—in critical circumstances during Aub’s life and time (Soldevila Durante 2003; 154).

<sup>151</sup> As Antonio Muñoz Molina points out, having such an urgent need to tell his stories, Aub shys away from talking about himself and narrating from his own vantage point as a witness and survivor, and therefore he rejects testimony in the first person (83). Aub himself reiterates this notion in a letter that he wrote to a friend where he confessed that: “Nunca he hablado en primera persona cuando se trata de exponer lo que, con tanta facilidad, proclaman sus personajes” (*Hablo como Hombre* 33).

In the first section of the book titled “Explicación,” Aub sets out to explain and justify the reasoning behind these texts. Aub declares that this book is the result of his indignation toward man and his endeavor to silence his critics, for as he states: “las indignaciones, que las muy variadas circunstancias de mi vida hicieron motor de tantas páginas [...] [Dan] pasto del bueno a tanto ladrido, idiotez, falsedad y malsinería” (9). Aub also admits that the publishing of this book does have to a certain degree a moral justification in showing that “moralmente, los hombres no valen gran cosa” (11). What ultimately characterizes the tone of these pages is Aub’s cynicism and outright critical and negative attitude towards the behavior of man, which he attributes as the primary source of his suffering. This diatribe against the human condition represents an avenue through which Aub symbolically remits back to his traumatic experience in the French concentration camps and exile. One of the prominent questions that has surrounded the historical debate of the Shoah is what Hannah Arendt termed the “banality of evil,” that is, how “normal” human beings could be capable of such evil and engage in the murderous acts committed by the Nazi SS officers during the Holocaust. The systematic structure of the concentration-camp world brings to the surface the low state and condition of man who perpetuates the continuity of torture, hunger and slavery that continue to exist in all forms beyond the parameters of the camp. Aub exemplifies this precise notion in an essay titled *El Nuevo Tratado de París*, in which he states:

Cerraron los ojos [los ministros] para no ver los restos de los campos de concentración, y [cerraron] los oídos, y [cerraron] la mente, si es que no la tienen

ya tan tapiada que algo se les alcanza para estrechar las manos de quienes provocaron tanta muerte, tanta desolación y tanto horror. (126)

In addition, Aub mentions the police, denunciation, censure, lies, and deception that continue to have free reign, or as he calls it “*campo libre*,” throughout society. This ultimately transforms the world into into what Aub calls “un inmenso cuartel policiaco,” where espionage becomes a normal facet of reality and governs ones’ daily life. These allusions directly remit back to Aub’s experience in the camps as he reaffirms their continual presence in his memory. One must therefore attribute Aub’s rancor and negativity towards man as stemming in large part from his two plus years of internment in the concentration-camp world, along with the subsequent thirty years of exile, which shined light on this darker side to human nature. In this respect, Aub does not need to directly refer to the camps, for the trauma of the camps has ultimately ingrained itself into Aub’s perception and way of thinking about man.

Aub recalls one of the most recurrent themes in his narrative by highlighting the ignorance that continues to reign and characterize human nature. He illustrates this upon asserting that: “España ya no es nuestra España sino otra. Otra que ha crecido con la ignorancia, en la hediondez de lo retrógado...España, tal y como está, no sirve” (112). Aub denounces the time period as one in which half the world is unaware of what is going on in the other half of the world, ironically at a time when there has been an explosive development in mass communication. This connects with Aub’s preoccupation with the obscurity and oblivion that the memory of the camp has fallen into and evokes resonances of the exiles’ forgotten identity and place in history. This notion is

exemplified by the following statement: “Nunca, sabiendo tanto, se ha procurado que se sepa menos” (10). Aub’s traumatic memory of the camp is present here as he invokes implicitly both the Spanish and French’s propensity to close their eyes at the true reality that the exiles were facing. As Aub attempts to tell his stories as they really were, he cannot help but feel sorry and ashamed, not for himself, but rather for the rest of those that are forced to live in this world of ignorance and malevolence that has been shaped by the experiences that Aub has lived. However, in light of the magnitude of a concentration-camp experience, as Aub himself admits, maybe everyone to a certain degree closes their eyes in the face of the absurd.

Aub concludes this first section by making an interesting reference to the continual act of “andar dando vueltas alrededor de mí mismo” (12). This statement alludes to the recurrent symbol of the magical labyrinth that pervades Aub’s works wherein exile represents an unending journey through concentration camps and jails, through uncertainty and obscurity and from one country to another in search of one’s lost identity. However, this remark also touches upon one of the essential tenants of trauma theory in its proclivity to cause the victim of trauma to wander in circles in his quest to bear witness. Bearing witness to trauma is essentially a journey consisting of “dar vueltas,” in which the act of “dar vueltas” represents the fundamental base behind the process of acting out. At its core, the psychoanalytical process of acting out is defined by the tendency to compulsively repeat, relive or be possessed by the repressed or denied traumatic scenes of the past in an uncontrolled manner as if they were still alive and fully present. The constant reliving and repetition of the trauma through flashbacks, hallucinations and nightmares parallels the continuous act of “dando vueltas,” and

wandering aimlessly in a circular, repetitive motion without ever reaching a complete resolution. The notion of “dar vueltas” therefore becomes an allegory for Aub that describes his journey through exile and the concentration camps and the subsequent reconstruction process of his shattered identity, which did not happen overnight.

Perhaps the one essay in *Hablo Como Hombre* that most closely deals with Aub’s trauma of the French concentration camps, although any direct mention of the camps never appears, is the essay titled *Carta al Presidente Vicente Auriol*.<sup>152</sup> Upset and frustrated with the arbitrariness surrounding the denial of Aub’s petition for a visa to travel to France, Aub decides to write a letter directly to the French president,<sup>153</sup> where he expresses his indignation regarding the negative publicity surrounding his name. Aub makes clear in the very first sentence the difficulty that speaking of this subject matter has caused him: “Nunca escribí nada más en contra de mi gusto que estas líneas que le dirijo...porque tengo que hablarle de mí” (59). Aub then expresses to the President his desire and need to overcome his repugnance in order to continue his fight against: “esa asquerosa mancha creciente que hunde nuestro tiempo al nivel de lo más bajo que conocieron ciertas épocas de la historia: la supremacía policíaca y el reino de los delatores...” (59). This statement clearly remits to Aub’s experience in the camps, which not only represents a “dark stain” (trauma) in the lives and memory of the Spanish exiles

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<sup>152</sup> Aub also wrote a letter to the President of Mexico Adolfo Ruiz Cortines (1952–58) on June 9, 1953, reacting to a newspaper article from *Excelsior* mentioning Aub’s name in reference to being involved in Communist activities. In the letter, Aub sets out to clarify the information and erase the “false rumor” based on ignorance. Aub affirms that: “No soy, ni fui comunista. Pertenezco a esta enorme multitud que no quiere sufrir dictadura alguna, sea la que sea. Por eso estoy en México y México es mi patria, aun siendo español...Tanto Enrique Rodríguez Cano como Roberto Amorós...podrán decirle de mi filiación democrática sin tapujos ni claudicaciones, que me llevó a servir el Gobierno pasado, la campaña presidencial de Usted y el régimen de derecho que tan dignamente encabeza...” (*Epistolario Aub/Ayala* 35).

<sup>153</sup> Vicente Auriol was the first President of the Fourth French Republic between 1947 and 1954.

that continues to persist and grow, but also symbolizes the “low point” of humanity, as one begins to question, as Aub does, What is man? and How is man capable of creating and making possible this concentration-camp world? In addition, the concentration-camp world for Aub is often defined in many of his works as a place where finks and police detectives rule the land searching for “suspects.”

Aub then proceeds to retell the story of his denied visa from the French Consul in Mexico. It is the retelling of this story—a story that continues to reappear throughout Aub’s narrative—that symbolizes the continual presence of the trauma and signals Aub’s endeavor to work through the trauma by way of its repetition. Testimonial writing about the concentration camps for Aub is therefore an inherent process defined by repetition, retelling and rewriting. The constant rewriting and retelling allows Aub to search for answers to his own personal questions and to attempt to make sense out of this indiscernible reality. Each time that Aub retells and rewrites his testimony he is engaging in the process of working through the trauma. Aub mentions that he did not want to petition for the visa at the French Consulate in Mexico because he thought that by requesting that the visa be granted to him by France, this would represent, to a certain extent, an act of remorse for their wrongdoing due to, as Aub states, “por las injustas penalidades que allí tuve que sufrir de 1940 a 1942” (59). Needless to say, there was no remorse as Aub was denied the visa. This prompted him to continue to retell the tragic saga that initiated his exodus into the labyrinth of the French concentration camps:

En marzo de 1940, por una denuncia, posiblemente anónima, fui detenido, a lo que supe después, por comunista. Conocí campos de concentración—París, Le

Vernet, Djelfa—cárceles—Marseilles, Niza, Argel—, fui conducido esposado a través de Toulouse para ser transportado, en las bodegas de un barco ganadero, a trabajar en el Sahara...Fue el premio de muchos españoles defensores de la legitimidad de su gobierno. Gracias a México logré, tras muchos avatares, embarcar en Casablanca, en septiembre de 1942. (60)

Aub attempts to justify and clarify to the President that the only thing that matters is that the denunciation was false. He then condemns the denunciation, uttering: “Todo esto no importa, sino el hecho de que una denuncia puede más que una vida, y la palabra de cuatro hombres” (60). Aub states that in 1951 the French Consulate in Mexico requested three letters supporting his petition for a visa. All three of the people that wrote letters for Aub—each one of them holding prominent positions—corroborated that Aub had never belonged to the Communist Party.<sup>154</sup> However, the testimony of these prominent figures weighed little in comparison to the “true” motive that determined Aub’s “administrative internment,” which was a letter from Juan Negrín that was found on Aub’s table, regarding a publication on Spanish classics that they were going to undertake. This resulted in what appeared to be an eternal damnation as the police would now have a file created on Aub that would contain the denunciation. In the letter, Aub reacts to this incident by stating:

Estoy *fichado*, y que esto es lo que cuenta, lo que vale...que lo que diga la ficha sea verdad o no...la verdad es lo que está escrito...lo que vive de verdad son los

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<sup>154</sup> The three signatories were: Alfonso Reyes, Bernardo Giner de los Ríos and De Tremoya.

personajes y no las personas... Yo, Max Aub, no existo: el que vive es el peligroso comunista que un soplón denunció un día. (61)

Max Aub has now entered into his own labyrinth and literary world of fiction by becoming a fictional character created by other authors, one whose reality is as arbitrary as that of his own fictional characters. As a result, Aub tells the President, with evident sarcasm, that he is writing these lines so that: “este Max Aub de papel que le presento, pueda vencer al otro de cartoncillo que tiene fichado la policía” (61).<sup>155</sup> Aub’s task ironically now becomes that for which he has so ardently fought against: the erasure of his “paper” identity. Upon attempting to undo the “other” marked Max Aub, Aub states that the only way to superimpose one police file on another is to fight against the first police file by any means possible. While he was imprisoned in Nice, Aub wrote the following: “Aquí basta que haga 50 años que se le condenara a una multa para que no se borre. Aunque haya habido cien indultos. A Ud. lo denunciaron por hombre peligroso, aunque luego se demostrara que no, pues ahí sigue la denuncia” (qtd. in Naharro-Calderón 105). Aub emphatically emphasizes that his case is different: “yo era socialista y sigo siendo socialista fui denunciado como comunista...Pero yo no soy comunista...soy un liberal, un socialista liberal que fue falsamente acusado de ser comunista. Sin embargo, debido a esa ficha (falsa) la administración dice que no” (62). In spite of this, Aub finds himself in a position in which he must now ask for forgiveness for something that he never did. What most baffles Aub is the complete lack of evidence exhibited against him for this crime, but as Aub states, in this case “basta el aire.” Aub

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<sup>155</sup> This letter was written to President Auriol on February 22, 1951, and in 1957 Aub’s police file containing the false denunciation as a dangerous Communist was officially exonerated.

sees that the world is still governed under the rule of the police, denunciation, finks, and falseness.<sup>156</sup> In other words, the world that Aub is describing is the same concentration-camp world that Aub describes in many of his works. The fact that the archives of the fascist police still have any sort of relevance and meaning illustrates the upside-down-world that Aub is portraying as he exemplifies in the following statement:

Primero son los archivos, primero es la ficha, y no importa que lo que se asienta en ella sea mentira. En el mundo de hoy la mentira es más fuerte que la verdad...Hay que enfrentarse con esa monstruosa manera de entender policiacamente al mundo...es una falta de confianza. (63)

Nevertheless, in spite of this uphill battle, Aub has not given up on the matter and refuses to remain silent (like the French who closed their eyes on the exiles), as he concludes: “Que no es bueno callar ante tanta ofensa...No me doy por vencido, y estas líneas son la prueba” (64). His inability to remain silent is proof of Aub’s obsession with the memory of the camps, which, as these texts illustrate, is unable to escape him. The texts in *Hablo Como Hombre* show that trauma may reappear in various forms, whether directly or indirectly. It also illustrates that the expression of trauma does not confine itself to any particular mode of representation, but rather almost requires a variety of different narrative structures in order to successfully represent it. The memories that are a product of a traumatic event become so eternally engrained in the survivor’s mind that

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<sup>156</sup> Aub reiterates the same idea in the *Diarios*: “Así es el mundo: no le juzgan a uno por lo que es, sino por lo que los demás determinan sin remedio” (173).

he/she is unable to detach those memories from normal thought. They become a fixed part of one's subconscious and often reappear when least expected.

### *The Presence of the Camps in "Los Diarios"*

Among Max Aub's vast collection of literary, testimonial writings, one can also find a more non-literary collection of writings that encompass his diaries and letters. It was Aub's propensity for writing that not only accounted for his longevity and success as a writer, but also led to the creation of a personal diary that would document and chronicle his thoughts, experiences and observations over a period of thirty-three years. These diaries have been organized by Manuel Aznar Soler into the book titled *Diarios (1939–1972)*. However, as Aznar Soler underlines in the introduction to this book, the edition of these unedited diaries only represents a selection of texts that date from Aub's initial moments in exile until a few weeks before his death.<sup>157</sup> Among the thousands of pages of Aub's diary that exist, Aznar Soler justifies his (subjective) selection by choosing those entries that exhibit a higher literary quality and testimonial interest. What ultimately differentiates the content of Aub's diaries, as seen in *Hablo como Hombre*, is Aub's usage of the first-person narrator to express his own personal sentiments, allowing the reader direct access into his mind and thoughts. *Diarios* therefore presents a first-hand, up close glance at how Max Aub's life was directly affected by his internment in the camps at various difficult junctures throughout his life in exile up until his death, and more importantly how Aub translated those thoughts onto paper.

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<sup>157</sup> The entire collection of Max Aub's diaries is archived at the Max Aub Foundation in Segorbe, Spain.

A second aspect that differentiates the *Diarios* from other diaries that Aub also wrote is the fact that only fragments of the *Diarios* were ever published. This contrasts with other diaries that Aub intended to publish, such as *La gallina ciega*, *Enero en Cuba* and *Diario de Djelfa*, which were all edited and published in separate books before Aub's death. Although Max Aub had no intention of publishing the content of these diaries,<sup>158</sup> he assumed that eventually they would be published, although he reiterates the fact that he was not writing for a future generation, but rather for the past:

...[P]ara cuando salgan impresas estas palabras...No se puede cortar de un tajo el tiempo (ni alcanzarlo por un atajo): esto que escribo, en el momento en que lo hago, deja de ser mío y su ser no es todavía de los demás; si se publica lo han de juzgar a la luz del día en que el lector lo haga. Sólo se juzga el ayer a la luz de cuando sea y con un conocimiento de causa del que carecía el autor. No es justo. Escribir hoy para mañana es una artimaña de Dios. Deberíamos escribir para el ayer...No hay justicia posible si hablamos hoy a la luz del futuro. Es pedir demasiado...El tiempo nos tiene encadenados. (*Diarios* 351)

Aub expresses his concern for the force that time exerts on a writer, who loses some control over his text the moment that the text leaves his hands. He cautions against writing for the future, fearing that the text will be misinterpreted and judged based on the beliefs and ideologies that are present at that moment instead of those that were existent at the time of writing. Aub's concern is not for future generations, but rather for the past

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<sup>158</sup> Aub was asked by many publishing houses to write a book of memoirs, but Aub reiterated on many occasions that he never intended nor had any desires of doing so.

generations that either experienced personally or understood the historical time. To expect future generations, which are essentially disconnected from the events that he experienced, to understand what he is relating, is simply to ask too much. Aub is thus writing for the past, especially for those that either directly or indirectly experienced the tragic events to which he is bearing witness.

In spite of the fragmentary nature of the *Diarios* and Aub's reluctance to neatly edit them for publication, one cannot dismiss the literary quality that emerges from these pages. One can divide the *Diarios* into two main parts: the concentration-camp years (1940–1942) and Aub's exile in Mexico (1942–1972). Each part contains a different narrative structure wherein Aub's style of writing becomes an effect or consequence of his circumstance. This relates to Ortega's famous saying: "Yo soy yo y mi circunstancia," whereby Aub's circumstance, that is, whether he is writing from the concentration camp or from Mexico, determines to a great extent the literary strategies he employs in his diary. In this respect, although on the surface it may appear that the *Diarios* lacks a certain literary quality that his other diaries or writing possess, in reality Aub harnesses all of his literary talents to create a well-written series of deep reflections that bring to life his artistic and literary talents. For instance, the *Diarios* possesses many elaborate, realist descriptions, insertion of dialogue and the creation of characters, all characteristics that form an integral part of his narrative work. On that note, when analyzing the two distinctive parts of the *Diarios*, one must not only pay attention to *what* Max Aub says, but also to *how* he says it and what strategies he uses to say it. This section examines how the memory of the concentration camp appears throughout the *Diarios*.

Aub's first journal entry is dated on August 24, 1939, eight months before his initial detainment and internment in the camps. This is followed by four other entries that were written prior to Aub's internment. What characterizes these "pre-camp" notes is Aub's reflection on the Second Republic and the aftermath of the Civil War. He lashes out at the exiles for their lack of criticism against the Franco dictatorship that has destroyed and unraveled a Spain that has been drained of its very lifeblood. He remembers the departure of the *Winnipeg*, which set sail on August 3, 1939, carrying more than two thousand Republican refugees to Valparaíso, Chile, and remembers the chant "Viva la República!" as the ship sailed away. The Republicans never lost hope as they continued to support the Republic in exile. These five brief journal entries reflect the presence of the trauma of the Civil War during the early moments of Aub's exile. The difficulty of life in exile is manifested when Aub states: "Duele lo que no se tiene" (40).

The concentration-camp years are marked by a period of complexity in Aub's diary writing. He finds himself caught between the imperative need to write and document his experience and the impossibility of writing as the concentration camp sought to eliminate his voice. Aub underlines the difficulty of the concentration-camp years when he states: "Qué infinitamente más largos, más llenos, fueron para mí los años de 1936 a 1942, que de 1942 hasta hoy!" (217). Aub's first journal entry differs from the remainder due to its extension. This could be due to the fact that Aub was not transferred to the concentration camp of Roland Garros until April 7, as he remained in the Prefecture for two days. Aub documents his detainment on April 5, 1940, vividly in his diary: "A las doce, volviendo del hospital, me llevan a la prefectura. Regresamos para el

registro. Los papeles: abren la cómoda, el cajón de arriba, el cajón de abajo; no tocan el de en medio, que es el que contenía mis originales. Recogen una carta a Negrín referente a la publicación de “Los Clásicos Españoles” por Gallimard” (*Diarios* 45). It is this letter to Negrín that ultimately cements Aub’s culpability as the Prefecture states: “Guárdenlo [la carta de Aub]” (46). Aub recounts that in the Prefecture there were twenty other detainees, and, like in *Manuscrito Cuervo*, he describes the entire collectivity of detainees: el pordiosero, el egipcio, el metalúrgico, el yugoslavo, el zapatero, el rufián inglés, el polaco ingenuo, el Bookmaker, el austríaco, el planchador polaco, el peón italiano, and el holandés (46).

The Holocaust sought to eliminate the internal witness by eliminating his voice. This finality is manifested in Aub’s diary, which is characterized by a lack of words and a distorted sentence structure during the concentration-camp years. All of the journal entries that Aub wrote for the year 1940 are brief and simple, but yet effective in relaying the sequence of Aub’s trauma in the camps. Some of them consist of only one sentence, while others are composed of an unorthodox syntax structure, being only one or two words in length, lacking a true grammatical structure. For example, Aub’s entry for April 16, 1940: “Martes. Salen quince. Los guardias. Tocan la corneta. El ataque epiléptico” (47); and May 4, 1940: “Traen a Antonio Caamaño” (48). Aub indicates with precision the date and time in which he left Roland Garros (May 29 at 10:45) and entered and left Le Vernet (May 30 at 8:00PM) and (November 21). The first word that he writes in his entry for November 21 is “libre,” referring to his release from Le Vernet.

This poetic and even cryptic language reflects one’s inability or lack of freedom to speak inside the parameters of the concentration camp. At one point in the *Diarios*,

Aub refers to the principle function of poetry as he sees it: “El arte de expresión indirecta de la poesía” (74). This premise confirms that the use of poetic language favored Aub upon writing his diary by allowing him to use a more indirect language to talk about forbidden and dangerous subject matters. The camp has succeeded in limiting the prisoner’s voice, forcing him to turn to more abstract, occult and abbreviated language as writing was prohibited inside the camp. Aub does not choose to resort to such unconventional language, but rather it is the condition of the camp that forces Aub to deviate from his traditional literary style. This contrasts from Aub’s diary entries that were written after 1942 when Aub was outside the camp, which are much more ample, detailed and explicative than his writings inside the camp. In this respect, during the camp years, what Aub does not say is just as important as what he does say, for it is that void, that absence of words which best describes the concentration-camp world.

Aub’s writing about the camp intensifies in 1941 as Aub’s situation also intensifies. There are thirty diary entries for that year, eight of which deal specifically with the camps. Aub spent the first six months of 1941 free, outside of the camps, although on two occasions he refers to them. The first reference is on March 17, where Aub alludes to the exiles’ endless journey through the camps. Here again we see the brevity of the concentration-camp reference as it consists of a fictitious dialogue, in a train, of only four short lines:

-¿Dónde vas?

- Al Vernet

- ¿De dónde vienes?

- De Argèles. (65)

In this dialogue, we see the presence of two of the principle French concentration camps (Le Vernet and Argèles-sur-mer) and the journey that many exiles, such as Aub, took through these camps. Aub, like Semprún, uses the train as a metaphor for the extension of the concentration camp that ultimately confines the prisoner and strips him of his freedom. Aub's second entry during his freedom comes as a reaction to the news of the escape of Nazi Rudolph Hess to Scotland. This reminds Aub of the true face behind fascist and totalitarian regimes as he states:

La traición, los delatores, los espías: la policía por todas partes...Imposibilidad de tener confianza en quien sea. El más pintado puede ser del servicio de informes enemigo. La quinta columna es ya lo normal, la traición arma natural. Confianza imposible en la rectitud moral de nadie...La traición ha llegado a ser una cosa natural...Una cosa cierta: las dictaduras engendran policías. (72)

As illustrated in the last chapter, this description of the concentration-camp world as a place of betrayal, finks, spies and police becomes one of the central themes of *Morir por cerrar los ojos* and *Campo francés*. This shows that many of the themes and ideas that emanate from Aub's literary production are derived from his *Diarios*. Aub's notes on the camps represent a springboard of ideas that Aub further develops in future narrative works.

Aub's return to the labyrinth of camps and jails occurred on June 2, 1941, when Aub was detained again and taken to the jail in Nice.<sup>159</sup> He references this in his *Diarios* on June 5, 1941: "Detención. La denunciadora" (74). On June 12, Aub writes in jail:

*Soy lo que seré*

*Lo que seré soy*

*Tanto importa morir mañana*

*como morirme hoy. (75)*

This poetic description possesses existential overtones as Aub defines his identity based upon his circumstances. The concept of time becomes irrelevant when immersed in the traumatic reality of the camp as the future and the present become one and the same. In the same letter that he wrote to Prats Rivelles, Aub states that everything that he wrote while in the jail in Nice disappeared in a suitcase that contained all of his original texts. During his first several days in jail, Aub had ample time to write as he was completely isolated and alone. He would later share a "horrendous prison cell" for fifteen days with six thieves and assassins. Aub had never shared those details with anyone until that moment, not because he did not want to, but rather because he never had the time. Aub's release from jail on June 21, 1941, is described as following: "A las siete, la calle" (75).<sup>160</sup> On September 3, 1941, Aub would be detained again on another denunciation and taken back to Le Vernet. He reflects on this event and on the symbolic importance of

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<sup>159</sup> In a letter that Aub wrote to Rafael Prats Rivelles on August 12, 1970, Aub elaborates on his detainment and imprisonment in Nice. He remembers vividly the date, for it also coincided with his birthday. That day, Aub went to eat with Gide in Cabris, and then to drink tea with Matisse in Cimiez. He was detained at 5:00AM.

<sup>160</sup> Aub was released from jail thanks to the help of Gilberto Bosques.

the fifth day of the month in his diary entry on September 5, 1941. The memory of the concentration camp is vividly present in this entry as Aub remembers that all of his detentions occurred on the fifth of every month: he was first detained on April 5, 1940 (Le Vernet); then on June 5, 1941 (Nice); and finally on September 5, 1941 (Le Vernet). Aub's return to Le Vernet also produces a return to his abbreviated language and distorted sentence structure:

A las ocho. Detención. Evêché. La caserna. Los del Vernet: Segulis, Aronoff, el judío que ahora se deja perilla. El tuerto de Olivenza—raya de Portugal—. De la quinta del 21. Tranviario. Guardia de Asalto. CNT. Quince días antes de entrar en Francia una bomba de mano le quita el ojo. Al Cher. Llegan los alemanes. Huye. Marseilles. Roba unas patatas. Tres meses... (76)

In this depiction, Aub not only remembers his [second] detention in Le Vernet, but also recalls, in a collective sense, other traumatic memories of the past (Guardia de Asalto, CNT, bombas, Marseilles). Aub's lack of verbs and his refusal to resort to a first-person narration places the traumatic memory in the collective hands of all of those that also experienced the same fate. In this sense, Aub links his memory of the camps to the sequence of additional traumas that many exiles suffered and uses the camp as a place that enables him to engage in a discussion and remembrance of other traumas. His diary entry for November 2, 1941, substantiates this notion. In this entry, which is titled *Campo del Vernet*, Aub remembers Madrid during the early stages of the Civil War in November 1936. The cold temperatures that the internees suffered in Le Vernet remind

Aub of the bitter temperatures of Madrid during the war, although as he states, it was colder in Le Vernet. What this illustrates is that even while he was interned in the concentration camps, Aub never forgot about Spain. His memory (and trauma) of the Civil War were still fresh wounds in his mind, and the concentration camp ironically provided Aub with the space to reflect on those memories and to begin to place those memories into narrative memory.

What is evident in Aub's diary entries written in the camps is that he does not exclusively focus on his experience in the camps. As already observed, his writings about the camps are brief and disjointed. This is because Aub is unable to fully process or comprehend the magnitude of the trauma while he is still experiencing it. At this juncture, Aub has still not passed through the latency period that he needs in order to make sense of the trauma. Therefore, he avoids dealing directly with it in his *Diarios* because it is still too painful and confusing. This accounts for the lack of deep reflections about the camp during the concentration-camp years. Aub's last diary entry for 1941 is written aboard the *Sidi-Aicha* as he is being transported to the concentration camp of Djelfa. The only explicit reference that Aub makes to his captivity is the following, which he places in parenthesis: "Me llevan prisionero los franceses a través de aguas de España" (82).

There is a period of ten months where Aub ceases to write in his *Diarios* while interned in Djelfa.<sup>161</sup> This is due to the poems that Aub wrote in his *Diario de Djelfa*, which relate these experiences.<sup>162</sup> Also, it is due to the strict control of the camp, which

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<sup>161</sup> This period is from November 27, 1941 to September 10, 1942.

<sup>162</sup> Aub did not write in his *Diario* during that time because he was dedicated to writing the poems for *Diario de Djelfa*.

limited one's ability to write.<sup>163</sup> His first journal entry for 1942 comes on September 10, the same day that he leaves Casablanca aboard the *Serpa Pinto* for Mexico.<sup>164</sup> Aub notes this in his diary: "A las cinco y cuarto desatracamos de Casablanca (Djelfa por el medio, maldito desierto)" (95). After stops in Bermuda and La Habana,<sup>165</sup> which Aub briefly describes in his *Diarios*, he arrives in Veracruz on October 1, 1942. He describes this arrival with one word: "Veracruz" (96). He then mentions José Rancaño and Carlos Gaos, fellow concentration-camp survivors and exiles, who were waiting for him in Veracruz. In the final journal entry for 1942, Aub reflects on his fate as an exile and on the long road that he has taken: "La guerra de España fue desencadenada por razones económicas y sociales, y aquí he venido a parar por ellas. Todo decanta de ellas: ¿cómo escribir una historia del teatro sin referirse a ellas?" (97).

The concentration-camp years show how Max Aub addresses the trauma of the concentration camps in his *Diarios* while still immersed in the camps. Although the literal trauma has already ended upon his arrival in Mexico, the realization and understanding of it are just beginning. This section seeks to examine how Aub approaches the trauma of the camps in his *Diarios* once in Mexico and to show the continual presence of this trauma in various forms throughout his *Diarios*. However, it is not merely the presence of the camp that is of interest in this part, but also how Aub's diary transforms as a result of his freedom from the camps. Aub's first diary entry for

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<sup>163</sup> The entire *Diario de Djelfa* was written on the front and back of an 8.5cm x 13.4cm note card. What stands out is the complete illegibility of the document to the naked eye, as the handwriting is so minute that it is impossible to discern any words. Aub was prohibited from writing in the concentration camp of Djelfa, which forced him to turn to these measures in order to conceal his writing. This reinforces the trauma of the camp as it sought to eliminate one's voice. The content of these poems was first deciphered by digitally amplifying the original document with a computer until words could finally be read. It is theorized that the handwriting of the document is not Aub's, but rather Aub probably—because of his myopia—dictated the poems to another inmate who subsequently wrote them down.

<sup>164</sup> There are only seven journal entries for 1942.

<sup>165</sup> Aub describes his stop in La Habana on September 27, 1942, in the following terms: "La Habana" (96).

1943 illustrates a change in his writing style as compared with the concentration-camp years. Aub's freedom and protection not only translates into longer, more elaborate annotations, but also Aub's frequency of writing in his diary increases.<sup>166</sup> This entry is a lengthy three-page reflection on Aub's first year in Mexico. It is clear that after a year of exile in Mexico, Aub is still suffering and struggling to find his place in his new adopted homeland. Exile continues to weigh heavily on Aub's conscience. This pain is exemplified when Aub states: "Espero que aquí me duela menos el estómago, que no me ha dejado últimamente dos horas de verdadero reposo" (102). Aub's first direct reference to the camps comes on October 3, 1943, when he states: "Recuerdos de Djelfa" (106). It was on that same day seventeen years ago that Aub got married, but he describes that period as being "another world," and proceeds to say: "Duele más, si se da uno en los dedos, y por los años idos" (106). Aub laments the time that has passed, which has now been replaced with the memories of Djelfa and the camps. He continues to search for immortality through writing, but now the intensity has increased as a result of this new time: "con el mismo deseo de inmortalidad; entonces procuraba cogerla por los pelos y ahora intento amarrarla a martillazos" (106).

What is characteristic of Aub's writing about the camps, whether inside or outside the camp, is its abbreviated form. In spite of the longer, more elaborate journal entries written in Mexico, Aub's references to the camps continue in large part to be brief and enigmatic. This is illustrated in his entry for January 1, 1945, which consists of nothing more than a list of events. Aub titles this entry "*Las vueltas que da el mundo*," and enumerates a list of thirteen events of the "vueltas" that have formed part of his trauma:

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<sup>166</sup> There are a few exceptions in the *Diarios* where Aub stops writing for an extended period of time. This is often illustrated by Aub when he states: "Tanto tiempo sin escribir."

“Port-Bou, Argelès, Paris, El pacto germánico-soviético, las detenciones y la prefectura, Roland Garros, Le Vernet, Marseilles (la cárcel), viaje (Argel), Djelfa, Uxda, Casablanca and el embarque (Bermuda, Veracruz)” (121). Aub defines his concentration-camp experience based on each one of these events. The title of the entry clarifies the nature of the experience in terms of “vueltas,” wherein the victim continues to be a prisoner of the labyrinthine nature of the trauma. Aub does not need to elaborate on each of these events; the mere utterance of each word evokes his traumatic experience. Aub returns to this idea of “vueltas” later in his *Diarios* when he states:

Yo sé lo que digo, y si escribo ‘cama con tubos de cobre retorcidos,’ sé exactamente qué vueltas y revueltas daba—y no puedo no puedo ponerme a describir exactamente qué vueltas y revueltas daba porque para mí basta ‘escribir cama de tubos de latón,’ y recordarla, verla como era—. (186)

Aub here alludes to the difficulty that many survivors of trauma face when attempting to bear witness. As seen in *Manuscrito Cuervo*, Aub reiterates the impossibility of narrating that which he experienced to an outside reader, although he knows exactly what he wants to say. This forms part of the “vueltas” that the survivor goes through when converting traumatic memory to narrative memory. It also explains Aub’s necessity to write continuously outside of the camp, for as he states: “Por primera vez en mi vida puedo sentarme a escribir pensando sólo en escribir” (188). This alludes directly to the camps, which deprived him of the freedom to write without the constant reminder of his internment.

Aub's writing of the camps is often metaphorical in the *Diarios*. In his entry for September 22, 1958, Aub remembers Persignan and Cerbère: "Por ahí, por ese camino, salí. El mar, las rocas. Me siento tres horas, mirando. Al túnel! Al túnel!, nos mandaban. No hemos salido" (296). The descriptive word tunnel serves two functions: it is a metaphorical reference to the camps as it represents the fate that awaited the exiles upon crossing the tunnel; it also symbolizes the eternal labyrinth through exile. Just as Aub's protagonists failed to escape the labyrinth, Aub himself, after sixteen years of exile, still finds himself psychologically and physically trapped in the tunnel.

The image of "las vueltas" becomes symbolic for describing Aub's continuous return to the camps throughout his *Diarios*. It is clear that the memory of the camps never disappears in *Diarios* as it returns and returns in a circular motion as if Aub were still lost trying to find his way out of the camps. The concept of "dar vueltas," as it also appears all through Aub's narrative work, possesses connotations that denote one's working through trauma. Perhaps this expression best describes Aub's journey through life as he never quite felt satisfied with himself or with his accomplishments. This is the journey that all survivors must take before freeing themselves from the grips of trauma. Unfortunately, there are no road maps that will direct one to his final destination, one that involves wrong turns, getting lost, and perhaps total disappearance.

## Conclusion:

## Writing about the Camps as a Practice of Human Rights

The texts examined in this dissertation all point to one enduring concern that continues to plague Spain: a persistent obsession with memory, especially that of the recent past. Memory is present in virtually every facet of daily life in Spain—exemplified by the recent ratification of the Law of Historical Memory in 2007<sup>167</sup>—although ironically there still remain few public cultural spaces dedicated to the preservation of Spain’s Republican memory. As José Colmeiro points out, there are still hardly any museums devoted to the Civil War, nor monuments to the mothers or fathers of the Republic, the fallen Republicans or even the exiles. While these issues continue to be a present concern in Spain during the writing of this dissertation, it is important to note that new discussions and actions are continuing to take place. The Zapatero government has addressed these questions and has proposed a further plan of action to deal with Spain’s historical and collective memory, something that the Aznar government in large part refused to undertake. In fact, for Zapatero himself this has become a personal issue as his grandfather was a victim of the Franco regime and currently buried in a mass grave. It is now only a matter of time and waiting patiently to see if the Zapatero government succeeds in restoring justice to the Republicans and their families.

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<sup>167</sup> For a complete description of this Law, visit [http://www.lainsignia.org/2007/noviembre/cul\\_002.htm](http://www.lainsignia.org/2007/noviembre/cul_002.htm).

What these issues bring to mind is the growing debate on human rights and its relation to literary discourse. Literature has become an active practice in the struggle for human rights and the demand for truth and justice. As Amy Kaminsky asserts: “Literature itself is a site of authorization and confirmation of the human. To write is to make a claim of humanity, to exercise the voice and the power of speech” (forthcoming). To write is also to act. While the field of human rights began to develop rapidly after World War II in response to the Holocaust, by the dawn of the twenty-first century it has now established itself as a powerful political and cultural tool. Although the practice of human rights is much more vibrant now than at the time Max Aub wrote his testimonial literature, there is little doubt that Aub’s narrative of the camps represents a direct call against the increased human rights violations that preceded and followed World War II. Max Aub’s concentration-camp literature seeks to make a contribution to the field of human rights by illustrating the complete absence of any form of human rights in the camps and the subsequent failure of authoritarian regimes to acknowledge those who were victimized. One could argue that a large portion of Aub’s post-Civil War literary production focuses on the systematic violation of human rights by both the Spanish (Franco) and French (Vichy) States, and subsequently questions the present and future state of the human condition. This places the issue of human rights in the realm of Cultural Studies as it encompasses not merely the political sphere, but also becomes a new form of cultural practice. Aub writes about his concentration-camp experiences not only to make the public aware of the tragic conditions that thousands of forgotten Spanish exiles faced in the camps, but his writing also to provide a warning and lesson for future generations.

In the case of this dissertation, the issue of human rights goes beyond the realm of the camps as it also explores questions concerning exile. Political exile is often defined by the urgent need of a group to escape, for reasons of personal safety, from a political force, usually authoritarian or totalitarian, that has infringed upon the group's rights to remain peacefully in their homeland. In the particular case of the Spanish Republicans, exile involved the flight from further human rights violations and repression that awaited them if they chose to remain in Spain. Chapter two of this dissertation explains the origin and the ensuing systematic implementation of human rights violations against those that opposed the Franco regime's authority. These violations began during the Civil War and continued throughout the dictatorship and even into the democratic period. If it had not been for the political asylum offered by President Cárdenas to the exiles, providing them with a safe haven for escaping human rights violations, many exiled intellectuals such as Max Aub would have been unable to decry these acts and advocate for a more just world. While exile protected the banished individuals from further immediate human rights violations, as Aub's vast literary and testimonial production illustrates, it also became a dead-end and an inescapable labyrinth.

In light of the discussion and application of human rights to literature, Aub's approach to testimonial writing must be situated in a larger context that questions the possibility of telling, writing, and even thinking in the aftermath of a concentration-camp experience. No matter the magnitude of trauma or the degree of atrocity that an individual, group or community face, there will always be efforts and initiatives to respond to the situation. Whether the response comes in the form of an oral testimony or a written account, it itself becomes its own event that has a profound impact on the

listener/reader. As someone who knew very little about the existence of French concentration camps before researching the topic, I have found myself in awe and overwhelmed by the tragic tales told by Aub, and perplexed by their anonymity, feeling my own sense of ethic and moral responsibility to keep this reality from fading into oblivion. However, what has enabled me to continue reading in the face of such horrific accounts without myself becoming traumatized in the process is the strikingly varied literary styles featured in Aub's narrative that create a separation between reader and victim. Aub's use of various narrative strategies, genres and approaches to representing atrocity adds to the rich quality of his literature by constantly diversifying his representation of the camps. Although many stories deal with the same issues, no two stories are alike. The vast array of protagonists, each with his own different story to tell and his own way of telling it, endows Aub's narrative with a rich diversity of different faces and characters that not only paints a broader picture of the collective trauma, but also grants each work its own autonomy. Each different genre adds a new dimension and form to the construction of a series of meta-narratives about the process of expressing unrepresentable experiences. Aub is not simply writing about atrocity, but is writing about attempts to represent atrocity in an ethical way.

In the introduction to this dissertation, I posed several questions concerning the symbolic value of the concentration camp in Aub's narrative, namely whether it embodies one or many interrelated symbols. While the camp represents a series of interrelated, although contradictory, symbols such as, dehumanization, death, and rebirth, it also embodies what for Aub may be the most important symbol, writing. The symbolic value of the concentration camp lies in the writing about it. It is through writing that one

actually discovers the camp, that is, the hidden meaning behind its existence. Therefore, the concentration-camp experience cannot be delimited by any particular form of writing or literary genre. In fact, I argue, based on Aub's narrative that a paradigmatic representation of the camp must consist of multiple narrative strategies, genres and symbols. When dealing with a phenomenon of such magnitude, there is not one particular genre or narrative strategy that in itself is capable of successfully accomplishing this task on its own. This explains what prompted Aub, and many other survivors of the camps, to continuously write about the camps, rather than stopping after one text. If Aub had been satisfied or "healed" by his writing of *Campo francés* (his first true text written about the camps), then he never would have touched the topic again. This shows that the camp becomes its own protagonist, and just like the other characters of *The Magical Labyrinth*, the camp tries to find its way out through its constant appearance and repetition in various forms. With each successive narrative about the camps, Aub comes closer and closer to finding his way out of the labyrinth. What is important in this quest is not necessarily reaching the end or escaping the maze, but rather the entire process of getting there. Although Aub may never have succeeded in escaping the labyrinth before his death, his writing is not fatalistic. On the contrary, Aub's testimonies provide a model for writing about trauma and ultimately hope for future generations and victims of trauma that find themselves caught in the labyrinth and need to look for help and guidance in finding their way out.

The texts analyzed in this dissertation look at different genres and point to the camp's presence as not being defined by its location in space or time as a fixed symbol. The concentration camp for Aub is intimately tied to the memory associated with the

camp. How the camp functions as a place of memory therefore depends on where and under what circumstances the memory is reconstructed in addition to whose memory is related. With each genre and narrative strategy, the camp is transformed and provides varying access points to the trauma. Given that we are essentially dealing with the memory of the camp, the symbolic value of the camp is in a constant state of change as the memories of the camp evolve. What remains constant in Aub's entire collection of testimonial works of the camps are the horrible, inhumane conditions endured by those interned in the camps. As societies attempt to push memories of trauma out of the public consciousness fearing that they will project a negative image of society, further distance-building from the traumatic event occurs, causing people to act as if nothing happened. They subsequently become desensitized to images of horror and lose their capacity to empathize with the victims. The objective of testimony is not to close lines of communication, but to reopen the discussion and memory traces and to make the unknown reality known in an effort to prevent it from happening again.

Enrique Díez-Canedo once stated that "Max Aub me da la sensación de un hombre múltiple." It is not only this characterization that defines Aub's life as an exile, but it is also what defines and distinguishes his literary work from that of his contemporaries. This dissertation has illustrated this point by highlighting the complexities of Aub's narrative, which breaks down the difference between history and fiction, reality and invention, and between the real and fictitious/literary characters. What emanates from this is the construction of Aub's own, authentic and unique model for writing about the camps. This becomes Aub's own trademark as his testimonial writing about the camps poses a new way of looking at trauma. This points to three

contributions that my dissertation makes to the existing body of scholarship about Max Aub and his concentration-camp literature. The first point is that Max Aub's testimonial work must be considered in terms of speaking in the plural, collective voice. Although Aub's own personal experiences form the backdrop of his narratives, they never constitute the central axis of narration as they always exist within a larger context of collectivity. Not only does Aub's concentration-camp narrative turn to fiction as a means of granting testimony and bearing witness, but it also centers on a rather new, collective means of expressing trauma. Bearing witness, as Aub has presented it, does not have to be merely an individual experience, but can also be collective. In fact, when dealing with such a large phenomenon as the mass exodus of 1939, perhaps the best approach is to speak in the plural and recognize all of those that also endured the same conditions. This assertion could be contested, for someone could respond with the question: What right does Aub have to talk for anyone else? This poses an important question regarding testimony authority and bearing witness for others. While individual experiences and memories belong to those that experienced them, testimony is by definition collective. Testimony is not so much concerned with individual stories as with the problematic regarding the collective group. Testimony thus stands for the experience of the entire group. Max Aub does not intend to usurp the memories of other exiles and make them his own, but rather he is relating the experience of a collective group of exiles in which he participated.

A second aspect that distinguishes this dissertation from the existing scholarship on Aub's concentration-camp narrative is my approach to the representation of traumatic memory through non-literary texts and texts do not explicitly mention the camps, yet can

still be seen to be about the camps. While current scholarship on Max Aub lacks an in-depth study of trauma theory and its application to Aub's testimonial narrative, this dissertation not only attempts to contextualize these works around a theoretical framework centered on trauma, but also I propose how Aub sheds light on a new way of looking at trauma via non-testimonial texts. The common line of thought on trauma and testimony has traditionally placed their enunciation within the context of the actual telling of the events themselves. However, I propose, in light of many of Aub's non-literary and non-testimonial texts, that one can indeed address trauma although it may not be at the heart of the discourse. This premise represents a first scholarly attempt (within the field of Max Aub scholarship) to link testimony to non-testimonial texts. Chapter six of this dissertation looks at two of Aub's primary non-literary, non-testimonial texts and shows the constant appearance of the trauma throughout Aub's discourse. What this means is that serious trauma permeates an individual's language to such an extent that it takes over one's capacity to differentiate between the actual tragic event and unrelated, everyday speech. Aub does not need to speak directly about the camps in order for the camps to metaphorically reappear in other discursive forms. Even when one has succeeded in working through tragedy and integrating traumatic memory into narrative memory, what Aub's testimonial narrative illustrates is that it will always be ingrained in one's perception and thought-making process. Aub's non-literary texts illustrate this point as Aub uses images and language that stem from the trauma to now relate to other issues. The traumatic language has now become an integral part of the survivor's vocabulary that he uses to describe other experiences. In this sense, not only can testimony be fiction, but addressing the trauma does not imply talking about it directly.

This dissertation does not attempt to be exhaustive in its analysis of Max Aub's concentration-camp narrative, but rather seeks to find common themes that reappear in his works in addition to looking at particularly interesting narrative strategies, utilized by Aub. As a result, I have excluded works about the camps that do not reflect these themes or strategies that nonetheless deserve to be revisited and deserve more initial attention in the future. One major topic of future study is Aub's representation of the camps via poetry. While interned in the concentration camp of Djelfa, Aub wrote numerous poems that depicted the cruelty and overwhelming conditions endured in Algeria. In 1944, the 47 poems that relate this experience were published in Aub's *Diario de Djelfa*. A complete and accurate study of the memory of the concentration camp in Aub's work therefore requires an in-depth analysis of these poems and a careful examination of how the genre of poetry reveals a new dimension of representation of the camps that perhaps differs from that expressed in Aub's narrative. It is not only the use of poetry that is of interest, but also the way in which Aub wrote these poems. Due to the restrictions of the camp and the prohibition of writing, Aub was forced to originally write these poems within an almost undecipherable and illegible print on a small note card that Aub carefully hid. The writing of these poems therefore presents a reflection on traumatic writing in the camps and the writer's refusal to allow the camp to silence him.

The future of Max Aub scholarship will be intimately tied to and depend in large part on the ongoing debate surrounding Spain's historical memory. The Proclamation of the Law of Historical Memory in December 2007 has proven to be a large step toward providing justice to those who have waited many years for answers. This motion follows the proclamation of 2006 as the Year of Historical Memory in Spain. However, these

new laws do not come without much debate between the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) and Partido Popular (PP), who have battled with opposing ideologies over the proper way of handling Spain's historical memory. While the PSOE has supported legislation to remove Francoist symbols from public places in addition to the proclamation of the Law of Historical Memory, the Partido Popular continues to evade responsibility by hiding behind the motto "Franco ya ha muerto."<sup>168</sup> Although the central Government has shown signs over the past few years of making efforts to foster and support the recuperation of Spain's historical memory, there still remain many controversies, contradictions and questions to answer.

The Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory continues to pressure the central Government, demanding that it assume a more active role. As Emilio Silva has affirmed, only 10% of the 9.9 million euros that the Ministerio de la Presidencia has allocated in subsidies for the recovery of historical memory has actually been designated for that cause. In spite of the approximately 4,000 bodies that have been recovered from the mass graves since 2000, thousands of bodies still remain buried. What has happened in the case of Spain is that this issue of human rights has now acquired a more political dimension that also implicates the participation of the Autonomous Communities, the local governments and the Court system. According to the central Government, what has deterred further progress is the lack of support from the Autonomous Communities in the

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<sup>168</sup> The Law of Historical Memory mandates that all francoist symbols be removed from all streets, public, and State buildings in addition to any commemorative reference exalting the Civil War or the Franco regime. According to the ARHM, it is incomprehensible that those who destroyed democracy for forty years continue to receive honors and recognition from the State, while those that defended democracy still remained buried in mass graves. However, Article 15, Section 2 of the Law of Historical Memory protects the removal of public symbols or monuments that possess a certain artistic or architectural value. This raises further polemical issues regarding what determines artistic value in the face of controversial symbols. The PP has continuously made efforts to impede the removal of symbols or names related to Franco, further illustrating the party's refusal to properly deal with the wounds of the past.

excavation of the mass graves. On December 3, 2008, the Government requested that the Autonomous Communities sign an agreement that would put in motion a specific protocol for excavating the mass graves established by the central Government. However, only the Basque Country and the Canary Islands have displayed willingness to cooperate, while the rest of the Autonomous Communities maintain that the excavations and their financing are the State's obligation.

The political crisis that has arisen as a result of the tension between the State, the Autonomous Communities, local governments and the courts has overshadowed the real human rights issues that remain buried. The Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory is preparing a political demonstration consisting of the family members of the victims of the Civil War and the Franco regime against "la falta de sensibilidad humanitaria del Gobierno," (Junquera 4/29/2009) which has relegated the opening of the mass graves to a purely political sphere. The ARHM is urging the Government to use whatever means necessary in order to "resolver un problema de una dimensión humana estremecedora," (Junquera 4/29/2009) as thousands of people have died waiting for the Government to find their lost relatives. The resolution of the problem is now in the hands of the court system as the court determines who should take charge of the excavation. Emilo Silva and the ARMH turned to Judge Baltasar Garzón to investigate the disappeared in the mass graves, but Garzón's competency to arbitrate this process has recently been the subject of question and debate. However, in May 2009, the Supreme Court declared Garzón to be incompetent to execute on his own the demands of the Law of Historical Memory. As the court system continues to debate and prolong the issue, families continue to anxiously wait for justice. Silva describes the court's decision as "la

justicia al revés” and an attempt to “socavar la independencia y el prestigio de Garzón” that “carece de todo fundamento jurídico” (Junquera 5/28/2009). Ironically, in spite of this juridical debate, as of November 18, 2008, of the 62 court districts where there currently exist mass graves, not one judge volunteered to continue with the investigations.

What ultimately happens to Spain’s historical memory and the institutions that govern those memory traces will continue to be the subject of conversation. How to “properly” deal with the past is a controversial issue that perhaps has no immediate solution. While various organizations have expressed different demands for justice and reparations, it is difficult to determine what constitutes a complete and official recognition. Is it the State’s role to bring closure to this issue and define the parameters of the reparations, or do the Spaniards have a voice in the decision-making process? No matter what the government does, there will always exist a demand for more, as people ask “what’s next?” Maybe what Spain needs is not the erection of more monuments commemorating the fallen Republicans, but rather a continual discussion of their memory. This explains why a figure like Max Aub is still of interest today because his entire body of works seeks to address these issues and pay homage to Spain’s silenced past. What we are left with is a question concerning the state of literature versus the authority of Law. While laws are limiting by nature and often enacted by a small, select group of powerful individuals, literature provides a creative form of expression that has no boundaries and offers something valuable that rules and regulations fail to achieve. Nevertheless, there is still a lot of work to be done, for as Toni Pastor, whose two grandfathers were assassinated by the Nationalists in 1940, states: “Yo lo que quiero es

reivindicar la memoria de mis familiares, por eso me extraña que en el PP se diga que queremos abrir heridas. Lo que ocurre es que las nuestras no se han cerrado” (S.V. 4/17/2009).

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