

**Voices from Beyond the Grave: Remembering the
Civil War in the Work of Max Aub¹**

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Cuantas iniciativas vayan encaminadas a recuperar la memoria del exilio literario español de 1939 deberían ser saludadas no sólo por contribuir a rescatar del olvido una parcela importante de nuestra cultura, sino porque constituyen un signo saludable de justicia histórica y de normalidad democrática.

—Javier Quiñones, *El País* (n.p)

(The initiatives directed toward the recovery of the memory of Spanish literary exile in 1939 should be welcomed not only for helping to rescue from oblivion an important parcel of our culture, but because they are a healthy sign of historical justice and democratic normality.)

(Re)Discovering Max Aub

In his induction speech into the *Real Academia Española*, Antonio Muñoz Molina stated that literature is the possibility of a wonderful dialogue not only between generations, but also between the living and the dead. Post-Franco culture has been haunted by the reappearance of the dead, or ghosts, who represent not only the repressed memories of the past shut out by the official discourse of the State, but also serve as an incarnation of the past in the present. Their presence is a warning to society that in order to move forward, one must first confront the unresolved issues of the past, for to deny the existence of these ghosts is to deny History. “Literature time,” as Muñoz

**Memory and Its Discontents: Spanish Culture in the Early
Twenty-First Century**
Hispanic Issues On Line 11 (2012)

Molina calls it, embodies a symbolic space that goes beyond the individual, transitory experiences of life, and through memory keeps the past alive. This Unamunian approach, which situates the human condition at the center of a binary opposition between life and death, present and past, places memory at the center of humanity, as man's identity becomes defined by his memory. Within this time continuum in which the future does not exist and the present is impregnated with past memories, the only thing truly alive is death. Life and death, as Max Aub asserted, become one and the same, for one continues to live, albeit posthumously, as long as s/he is remembered: "La gente existe mientras vive. Luego, empieza lentamente a morir en los demás. Desaparece, teñida de sombras, en el olvido" (Soldevila Durante 207) (People exist as long as they are living. Then, they begin to die slowly in everybody else. They disappear, tinged in shadows, in oblivion).

In contemporary Spanish literature, the memory of the dead serves as a topos to rethink the historical memory of the past few decades in relation to its implications in the present. The urgent question that has confronted Spain since the dawn of the twenty-first century is how to do justice and pay homage to the dead. The dead, whose silence has been more prominent than their stories, are the victims of the Spanish Civil War and the repressive Franco regime. Their memory traces account for a large portion of contemporary Spain's historical memory. According to the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory (ARHM), seventy-five years after the end of the Civil War and thirty-six years after Franco's death, 113,000 assassinated victims still remain buried in mass graves.² The recovery of Spain's historical memory in the twenty-first century is an example of memory work that is predicated on the excavation and discovery, both literally and figuratively, of the remains that constitute its traumatic past.

Max Aub died questioning his place in the annals of Spanish literature, fearing that one day his name would also disappear without a trace like countless numbers of other victims of the Civil War. After two years of internment in French concentration camps and jails and thirty years of banishment in Mexico, Aub found himself cut off from the institutions that had previously fostered his literary career prior to the outbreak of the Civil War. Paradoxically, exile was to facilitate Aub's accessibility to the writing of testimony by giving him the freedom to deal with prohibited issues, while simultaneously compelling him to search for an audience beyond a small group of dispersed exiles. Moreover, he was reduced to financing and printing copies of his own texts, as he states in his *Diarios*:

Ni Losada, ni Calpe, ni Porrúa, ni nadie ha querido jamás publicar un solo libro mío . . . Y ahora el Fondo que se niega siquiera a *distribuirlos*. Es decir, para quien no lo sepa, que pagando *yo* . . . se niega a repartirlos en las librerías. La verdad, que no se venden . . . están en la base de la desconfianza que siento por mi obra.³ (*Diarios* 269)

(Neither Losada, nor [Espasa] Calpe, nor Porrúa, nor anyone has ever wanted to publish a single book of mine . . . And now the Fondo [de Cultura Económica] even refuses *to distribute them*. That is, for he who does not know, even though I am paying they refuse to distribute them in bookstores. The truth is that the lack of confidence that I have in my work is based on the fact that they [my books] are not sold.)

The lack of interest in his work shown by established publishers ultimately led Aub to the founding of his own journal *Sala de espera* (1948), which served as a vehicle for publishing and marketing his work in Mexico and Spain until it ended publication in 1951.⁴ Aub explains his decision to create the 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” (Sanz Álvarez 160) (The editorial difficulties and little interest that my work arouses have led me to this method of monthly issues . . . Writing in Spanish has never been good business). Throughout his life, Aub remained disillusioned and saddened by the lack of recognition that his work received.⁵ His disillusion became evident in 1969, when he returned to Spain for the first time in thirty years. As he walked around the streets of Madrid, he not only encountered a country that he no longer recognized, but one that did not recognize him. In his book *La gallina ciega*, which documents this strange encounter, Aub feels misplaced as he refers to himself as a backwards tourist, who comes to see what no longer exists (“Soy un turista al revés; vengo a ver lo que ya no existe,” [20] [I am a backwards tourist; I come to see what no longer exists]). *La gallina ciega* represents Aub’s act of bearing witness to his own erasure from Spanish history and his symbolic return as a ghost from the past.

The reappearance of ghosts in post-Franco Spanish culture reminds us of the repressed past imposed by the regime. Repression is defined as the forgetting or ignoring of unresolved conflicts, unadmitted desires, or traumatic past events that are forced out of conscious awareness and enter into the realm of the unconscious. Freud’s theory of repression postulates that coping with trauma by repressing it will always result in the return of the repressed. Aub’s phantasmal presence questions the current state of Spain’s historical memory under the Franco regime, which adopted a policy of collective repression and “memoricidio” of the Republican exile of 1939. The younger generation was not only unaware of Max Aub, but also was ignorant of the history and the reality suffered by the Spanish exiles.⁶ Among Aub’s most prevalent observations are the intellectual mediocrity and the moral and cultural collapse of Spain under Franco.⁷ This is evidenced in his entry for September 29, 1969, in which he states: “Aub llora sobre sí mismo, sobre su propio entierro, sobre la ignorancia en que están todos de su obra desconocida” (*La gallina ciega* 311) (Aub weeps

about himself, about his own burial, about everyone's ignorance toward his unknown work). The fact that Aub references himself in the third person confirms the figurative death of his identity ("yo" [I]), which has now been depersonalized to a more distant voice. Therefore, exile (*des-tierro*) has been a sort of burial ground (*en-tierro*) for Aub, whose work is destined to be posthumous well before his physical death in 1972 (Ferrán 208).

The desire to live after death ("Vivir cuando haya muerto" [*Diarios* 234]), and reach immortality, became an obsession for Aub, whose only viable means of rescuing himself from oblivion was through writing.⁸ One of the most prolific Spanish writers of the twentieth century, Aub's vast collection of works on the Spanish Civil War, exile, and the French concentration camps, reflect his continual need to preserve and keep alive the existence of the past and the historical memory of the tragic experiences that he and many other Spanish exiles endured. Due to censorship and Franco's endeavor to erase the memory of Spanish exile, most of Aub's works never reached Spain until long after his death. Even as late as 1993, twenty years after Aub's death, his narrative works were mostly inaccessible in Spain. In the fifty years that followed the publication of Aub's first work *The Magical Labyrinth, Campo cerrado* in 1943, less than 200 books were published on Max Aub, compared with over 450 books since 1990, not including critical essays and book chapters. This renewed interest in Aub is primarily due to two factors: the creation of the Max Aub Foundation in 1991 and the interest shown by noted novelist and essayist Antonio Muñoz Molina on Aub's literature and life.

The creation of the Max Aub Foundation in 1991 in the small town of Segorbe, Spain, marked the first important endeavor to safeguard and promote the memory of Aub and his works.⁹ Thanks to those efforts, Max Aub, undoubtedly, continues to be an *escritor vivo* (a living writer), who, contrary to his own prediction, has overcome oblivion and has left an indelible mark on contemporary Spanish literature through the creation of memory. In collaboration with several local, state and governmental organizations, especially Spain's Ministry of Culture, the Max Aub Foundation has facilitated access to Aub's works for researchers through a complete electronic digitalization of his library, in addition to sponsoring several academic scholarships and cultural events in his name. In the absence of critical editions or interest from major Spanish publishing houses, in the last ten years, the Foundation has published critical and annotated editions of many of Aub's works, including a recent collection of his personal letters. In 2006, the Foundation also launched a publication on Aub entitled *El Correo de Euclides*.

Two Inaugural Addresses into the *Real Academia Española*

Even before the Max Aub Foundation fully began to operate in 1997, the main landmark of Aub's rebirth was the speech from Antonio Muñoz Molina's induction into the *Real Academia Española* on June 16, 1996. Aub's life and writings have served as an inspiration to Muñoz Molina's own literary creations.¹⁰ For Muñoz Molina, success or failure is not measured by one's induction into the *Real Academia*, for as he says: "El único galardón indudable en literatura es la maestría, y ésta, cuando se alcanza, a veces sucede sin testigos, o es advertida tan tarde que al escritor le llega el reconocimiento cuando ya nada le importa o cuando está muerto" (60) (Mastery is the only unquestionable prize in literature, and this, when it is achieved, sometimes occurs without witnesses, or is noticed so late that the author receives the recognition when nothing else matters to him or when he is dead). Citing Stendhal and Cervantes as examples of posterity's power to grant immortality and authority beyond death, Muñoz Molina seeks to rescue Aub from what he terms a "culture of disdain," and pay homage to an author who—at the writing of his speech—remained without a country and readers. By acknowledging his indebtedness to Aub, Muñoz Molina's speech therefore becomes in itself an act of memory, for as he states: "Agradecimiento es memoria" (68) (Gratitude is memory).

This endeavor to remember a symbol of Republican/exiled Spain came at an apropos moment in the wake of the Post-Franco period in which forgetting the past became the predominant political strategy. The euphoria following Franco's death in 1975 and the transition to democracy promised new hope for recovering Spain's fragmented historical memory. In the late 1970s and 1980s, the country experienced a surge of cultural works that sought to recover the memory of the Civil War. The latter is depicted in these novels as a dialectic tension between myth (forgetting) and trauma (remembering). The underlying duality here paralleled the political and cultural climate of the time between the State's mythical discourse of collective amnesia and literature's newfound place as a vehicle to replace this increasingly lost memory.¹¹ 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.¹² Spain focused on a dehistoricized present to eliminate a past that placed Spain in a position of inferiority with respect to the rest of the world. The Socialist Party's (PSOE) rhetoric was founded on consensus and reconciliation between Spaniards, alleging that both Republicans and Nationalists were responsible for atrocious crimes during the Civil War. Instead of bringing to justice those accused of war crimes and human rights violations, the Socialist government sought to repress any traces of the trauma and replace them with silence,

therefore closing off any form of debate or dialogue between different memories.¹³ In addition, the early democratic period witnessed the emergence of new social freedoms that gave rise to a new cultural movement—la Movida—that would distance even further the younger generation’s preoccupations with the past as they became consumed in a culture of image and appearance. A new generation of writers also emerged, known as the Generation X. The adolescents portrayed in these novels illustrate the expression of a new model of identification with the world of consumption and spectacle. They are mostly apathetic and insensitive to History, consumed in the happenings of the present moment and incapable of critical reflection or narration of the past. They detached themselves from the traumatic past inherited from their parents through a world of consumption, vice and addiction. Self-medication, rather than silence, became their way of repressing the past.

When the Popular Party won the elections in 1996, they continued the Socialist’s policy of collective amnesia and eliminated historical memory as a topic of discussion in political debates. Ironically, under the auspices of the Popular Party government, the Ministry of Culture financed the recovery of the Nationalist soldiers killed as part of the Blue Division (División Azul) during World War II, while continuing to deny funds for the excavation of mass graves that contained the bodies of thousands of nameless. When confronted about this controversy, President Aznar’s response was: “Había que dejar atrás los fantasmas del pasado, porque los españoles querían mirar hacia el futuro” (Silva 114) (The ghosts of the past needed to be left behind because Spaniards wanted to look toward the future). In the face of public scrutiny and pressure, Aznar would later change his rhetoric, promising to use all means necessary to open the mass graves and deal with the past, but in the end the Popular Party government failed to deliver on its promise.¹⁴

In light of Spain’s inability to properly deal with its traumatic past, it is only appropriate that Muñoz Molina invoke Max Aub. While written decades ago, Aub’s works deal with the same unanswered questions that continue to haunt Spain more than sixty years later. Muñoz Molina begins his induction speech by referring to an apocryphal one written forty years earlier, when Aub, dismayed by his exclusion from the *Real Academia*, invented his own mythical induction speech entitled *El teatro español sacado a luz de las tinieblas de nuestro tiempo*.¹⁵ Presented on December 12, 1956,¹⁶ in front of forty-four members—some real and some fictitious, some dead and some alive—of the *Real Academia*, Aub, the director of Spain’s Teatro Nacional since 1940, reflects on the state of Spanish theater during the previous two decades. Like many of Aub’s works, his discourse transgresses the boundaries of space/time and history/fiction, by positing an alternative account of Spain’s history as if the Civil War or the Franco dictatorship had never occurred. Aub presents an idealized Spain void of censorship, where poetry, novel, theater and essay reflect reality and where

the State acts as a tolerant and embracing agent to literary creativity thanks to the freedoms it offers. Theater, rather than Franco, represents the ultimate expression and dissemination of Spanish culture, in large part due to the numerous theaters created in Madrid, Valencia and Barcelona with performances in Spanish and Catalan. Aub credits this resurgence in large part to Federico García Lorca and Rafael Alberti, both of whom were in attendance. Anyone familiar with contemporary Spanish history would discern the sarcasm and irony behind Aub's depiction, for the reality that he describes contradicts what had actually occurred: García Lorca had been assassinated during the Civil War in 1936 and Alberti had fled into exile in 1939. The unreality of Aub's discourse takes shape as he intercalates a *mélange* of real/unreal and dead/alive characters all of whom were impacted by the Civil War and Franco. Aub's objective here was to imagine what Spain might have looked like had those intellectuals not succumbed to the events of history.

The counterpoint between history and fiction, between testimony and imagination that characterizes Aub's narrative corresponds with the dialectic between possibilities and impossibilities. From this double-sided literary strategy, 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 imaginative, and those that combine these two elements. 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, while simultaneously creating the distance or estrangement needed to bear witness.¹⁷ However, the distinction between the real and the fantastic or the lived and the imagined is oftentimes difficult to discern in Aub's work. As pointed out by Eugenia Meyer, 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). In spite of Aub's use of fiction and fantasy, he always endeavors to reproduce historical information as accurately and faithfully as possible, granting a richer value to his testimonial discourse.¹⁸ As Muñoz Molina states in his address:

Al mezclar siempre, sistemáticamente, historia y ficción, personajes inventados con personas reales, Max Aub nos permite percibir lo histórico en los términos de una experiencia personal, y nos enseña que la historia, que sólo sucedió de una manera ya cerrada, pudo suceder de otro modo, contuvo posibilidades luego abolidas, hechos que estuvieron a punto de ocurrir, que pudieron o debieron haber sido reales. (75)

(By always mixing, systematically, history and fiction, invented characters with real ones, Max Aub allows us to perceive the historical in terms of a personal experience, and teaches us that history could have

occurred in another way; it contained possibilities that were later abolished, facts that were about to transpire, which could have or should have been real.)

For Aub, to invent is synonymous with redoing and restoring the world to the plenitude of the real or plausible, for as Muñoz Molina contends, the imagination can correct the things that have been irreparable and predict those that still have yet to come, making them less impossible (86). Coming from the Latin word *invenire*, meaning *to find* or *to encounter*, Aub, a disciple of the Spanish Avant-garde, resorts to inventing as a means of finding meaning or making sense of the traumatic reality that he and other exiles experienced. Writing becomes Aub's way of understanding the world, as he evinces on two occasions in his *Diarios*: "Tengo que librarme, de una vez, de ese peso. Escribiendo, escribiendo. Ponerse en la piel de un chivato y escribir, escribir, para saber lo que no sé" (185) (I have to free myself, at once, of this weight. Writing, writing. To step into the shoes of an informer and write, write, in order to know what I do not know); and "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" (*Diarios* 197) (I do not feel the pleasure of writing, I think that I never felt it, but yes [I do feel] the pleasure of trying to see more clearly . . . to try *to explain and explain to myself* the time in which I lived . . . and to explain to myself how I see things while waiting to see how things see me).¹⁹ This quote becomes essential to understanding Aub's need to write as it reflects the dynamic of trauma and testimony in terms of being a cathartic experience that becomes Aub's way of preserving his existence beyond death. While the use of the verb *explicar* (to explain) invokes the notion of testimony, the incorporation of the indirect object pronoun *me* to the verb now places the emphasis directly on the trauma as it implies bearing witness. 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.

Aub demystifies history's preeminent place as the official bearer of "truth" under the Franco regime by illustrating that there is no single way to relate historical events and that the past is not forever closed. Muñoz Molina reaffirms this notion in his discourse: "En la literatura, a diferencia de en la vida, no hay pasados obligatorios. Contra el pasado que fabricaba la cultura franquista uno quería elegir otro . . . ¿Y no es siempre la mejor literatura una vindicación de la palabra y del sueño, un disentir de las versiones obligatorias y unánimes de lo real?" (69, 78) (In literature, unlike in life, there are no obligatory pasts. Against the past that the Francoist culture constructed one wanted to choose another . . . And isn't the best literature

always a vindication of the word and of dreams, an opposition to the mandatory and unanimous versions of the real?)

Aub's body of testimonial works suggests that relating traumatic historical events often requires alternative narrative strategies that break from conventional literary norms. 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). Literature becomes a privileged vehicle for revisiting the past and for restoring fiction's role as a recreation of reality. The works of *The Magical Labyrinth* seek to fill in the missing gaps excluded by Francoist historiography and give voice to the silenced victims of Republican Spain. This point will be addressed later as I look at certain texts that invoke the notion of collective/historical trauma that characterizes Aub's testimonial narrative. While history in itself cannot be changed, the creation of "mundos posibles" (possible worlds) or counter-memories enables the author to restore a sense of justice to those who were affected by imagining what deserved to happen.²⁰ The study of collective memory represents an alternative to the official historiographies by addressing traditionally excluded issues of oppressed, subaltern groups whose voice has been silenced. Writing and remembering therefore become for Aub acts of rebellion and cultural resistance against time and rectification of the past, for memory plays an important role in the construction of alternative cultural identities excluded by the official narratives of post-authoritarian regimes. As Charles Chaplin once stated, time is the best author because it always finds an adequate end. The recent work on revisiting Spain's historical memory illustrates that the past continues to be part of the present (pasado presente) as many novelists continue to turn to the Civil War and Franco regime in search of answers and a proper, just ending to an unfinished story.

Max Aub: A Witness of the Twentieth Century, a Writer for the Twenty-First

Since the dawn of the twenty-first century, historical memory has become an object of veneration and debate in Spain, from a historical, political, and legal perspective, that is present in almost every facet of daily life. The Spanish Civil War and Franco remain an issue of public concern as they make headlines in many Spanish newspapers today while Spain continues to address unresolved issues from the past. The increasing amnesia that has pervaded Post-Franco Spain has paradoxically also given rise to an increasing obsession with the past. From the excavation of mass graves, the removal of statues or monuments celebrating Franco or the Nationalist's victory in the war, to the launch of a new virtual portal by the University of

Alicante in 2011—in which one can listen to clandestine stories of Spanish exiles—these acts are not attempts to seek vengeance or to reopen wounds, but rather to close them and afford justice.²¹ Confronted with the challenges brought upon by a globalized world dominated by mass culture, and especially in a new technological, multimedia age of the Internet, representations of memory have considerably changed from their traditional forms. New memory spaces have replaced history as the traditional means of representing memory by designating certain landmarks as the embodiment of memory (Nora). Monuments, museums, memorials, commemorations, documentaries and books all constitute places of memory. As Pierre Nora contends, memory attaches itself to sites, whereas history attaches itself to events of what is no longer. By attaching historical memory to these “sacred places,” memory not only acquires a new system of signifiers, but also functions as an enclave that defines in a symbolic manner the collective identities within a community.

While many initiatives have been undertaken to restore justice, such as the creation of the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory in 2000 or the Law of Historical Memory in 2007, the need to overcome the past can also be traced back to the writings of the postwar period. From the social realist novels that appeared in the 1940s to the “rebirth” of civil war novels in the 1980s and 1990s, few contemporary Spanish novelists have eluded the topic of the Civil War.²² This is especially true for the Spanish exiles, who remained loyal to the Second Republic, and for whom Spain continued to remain a constant preoccupation and source of inspiration in their literary works. The narratives of memory and collective identity have experienced tremendous growth in all disciplines in recent years (Colmeiro 19), resulting in a new wave of best-sellers, cinematic productions and documentaries that have gained national and international attention. The emergence of collective memory and cultural identity in social media and public discourse have centered on the construction of historical and cultural memories. Recovering the past has become an essential element of collective identity and historical memory as it entails a rereading of the past sixty years in Spain in relation to the collective consciousness shared by those who lived through such experience. 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 support for both recall and preservation. Memories, even individual memories, are therefore always social since individual identity cannot exist outside of the collectivities to which it belongs. In the case of traumatic memory, the process of working-through trauma necessitates the participation of an outside agent or second-hand witness who becomes what one might call the epitome of witnessing in that s/he makes possible the very

process of testimony and in turn keeps those memories social. It is this collective identity that Aub and many other Spanish Republicans looked to restore in their testimonial writing about the Civil War and the concentration camps.

A witness of the twentieth century, Aub spent his entire life obsessed with writing. Even under the most difficult circumstances, in concentration camps, jails, and in the cellar of a ship, Aub felt impelled to document what he witnessed.²³ 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) (I think that I do not have the right to silence what I saw in order to write what I imagine).²⁴ 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). Lacking the support of official institutions or organizations that seek to restore historical justice and provide a sense of reconciliation to the victims of such atrocities and violations, Aub turns to writing as his only means of defense. The constant repetition of this topos underlines Aub’s urgency to fight the silence and possible burial of the exiles’ traumatic past, which he underscores in *Hablo como hombre*: “Que no es bueno callar ante tanta ofensa . . . No me doy por vencido, y estas líneas son la prueba” (*Obras incompletas* 64) (For it is not good to remain silent before so much injury . . . I do not give up, and these lines are the proof). This obsession with re-writing, remembering, and archiving ultimately became a way of surviving by converting traumatic memory into narrative memory as he reconstructs the bits and pieces of this shattered reality throughout his narratives. Aub sought to possess History by narrating it.

Aub’s testimonial literature attempts to exceed the traditional framework 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 and collective memory out of its remembrance.²⁵ The 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 group 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). The traditional

autobiographical voice in Max Aub's texts is transformed into a plural collective voice through the continual usage of victimized and marginalized narrators in the third person and the insertion of lists that pay tribute to the dead. In the fight against oblivion, the victim cannot survive alone nor can his memory live on without the links to that group which hold the memory in place. The act of placing emphasis on the "other" rather than the "self," restores the group's place as a body of collective consciousness. As Muñoz Molina points out, having such an urgent need to tell his stories, Aub shies away from talking about himself and narrating from his own vantage point as a witness and survivor, rejecting testimony in the first person (83). Aub himself reiterates this notion in a letter that he wrote to a friend: "Nunca he hablado en primera persona cuando se trata de exponer lo que, con tanta facilidad, proclaman sus personajes" (*Hablo como hombre* 33) (I have never spoken in the first person when it is a matter of showing what, so easily, his characters proclaim). Aub's double condition as an exile and a concentration-camp survivor marks his testimony as both an act of collective memory and as a cult to the dead. Faithfulness to the dead becomes a common burden on traumatized survivors given that no one is able to report about his own death to others. Here, the survivor takes it upon himself to restore a proper name to those who perished in the camps and guarantee that the group's collective memory will not become extinct. In *Manuscrito cuervo* and *El cementerio de Djelfa*, Aub remembers the deceased victims of the camps by including a list of their names and a brief description of why they were interned. These lists, which contain some eulogistic overtones, ultimately serves as a medium for recuperating the lost identity of the many victims of the camps by giving them life again and telling their story. Even in his apocryphal discourse, Aub includes a list of fifty-one names and the date of their entry into the *Real Academia Española* as a way of rescuing them from oblivion and anonymity.

What characterizes the works of *The Magical Labyrinth* resides in their lack of a clear plot structure and real protagonists where the narrative structure is primarily composed of a myriad of fleeting characters and passing voices that randomly appear and disappear in a disjointed and fragmentary manner, much like the structure of memory, with many different storylines intermixed. These characters ultimately serve as witnesses that give testimony of their experiences during the Civil War. Each protagonist, even those who are non-human or "unusual" narrators, succeeds in delineating different dimensions of trauma.²⁶ *The Magical Labyrinth* 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 works included in this series 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 twentieth-century

Spanish history, beginning with the novel *Campo cerrado* (1943) and ending with *Campo de los almendros* (1968). 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. *The Magical Labyrinth* arguably constitutes the most complete collection of works on the Spanish Civil War of any contemporary Spanish author.²⁷

Aub's obsession with the past does not confine itself only to the works of *The Magical Labyrinth*, but rather the trauma is embedded in *all* of his works, not merely those that directly address it.²⁸ This is evidenced in many of Aub's non-literary texts in which the memory of the Civil War and the concentration camps reappears through a meta-narrative discourse that is hidden behind his account and forms part of his testimony. This is in line with Cathy Caruth's idea that "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" (Bernard-Donals and Glejzer 7). Aub's works confirm this notion as the ghosts of the past continually influence one's perception of reality as the trauma finds ways of appearing, even in subtle ways, in one's daily rhetoric. In his study of Aub's concentration-camp universe, José María Naharro-Calderón conceptualizes this world as a symptom of a universe that goes beyond Aub's personal concentration-camp experiences, one which 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 Dominick 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 (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.

The source of collective trauma and cultural identity in Aub's works is rooted in the Civil War, but also in the French concentration camps. Arguably one of the most forgotten chapters of all Civil War exile history belongs to the Spanish Republicans who were interned in French and later Nazi concentration camps upon crossing the Pyrenees in January and February of 1939. The concentration camps constitute a place of memory where a significant portion of the marginalized memory of post-Spanish Civil War history belongs.²⁹ While numerous testimonial and narrative texts began to emerge almost immediately following the mass internment of Spanish exiles, their resonance has only recently been felt and studied by historians and literary scholars who seek to recover this lost episode of Spain's past. Authors such as Max Aub, Jorge Semprún, Eulalio Ferrer, Celso Amieva, José Herrera Petere, Manuel Andújar, Agustí Bartra, Manuel

García Gerpe and Mariano Constante have all written on the horrors and injustices of camp life, while at the same time reclaiming their dehumanized identity and lost voice as survivors of this systematic destruction. Their texts depict the massive hunger, stringent and unsanitary working and living conditions, cold temperatures, diseases, tortures, subordination and death that abounded in the camps. While many historians refuse to label the French camps as concentration camps per se, resorting to an endless number of euphemisms such as: *centre de séjour surveillé* (supervised living center), *centre d'hébergement* (shelter), *centre de regroupement familial* (family grouping center), *centre d'internement* (internment facility), and *centres d'accueil* (home centers), to hide and minimize the true reality that lay behind the barbed-wire fence, one could argue that with the exception of the gas chamber, the French camps were indeed concentration camps that contained all of the ingredients and seeds of extermination.

In the wake of such atrocities, acts of mass destruction, terrorism or genocide, endeavors are often undertaken to remember and commemorate the victims through the creation of institutions that seek to restore historical justice and reexamine the past. In the decades following the Holocaust or the aftermath of the September 11 attacks numerous initiatives were put in place to commemorate the victims. The Spanish government's failure to adequately undertake such initiatives has led to alternative measures of seeking justice. The rediscovery and rereading of previously "forgotten" authors like Max Aub offers healing for those who continue to live in the shadows of the disaster. Max Aub's extensive literary production becomes a model of a collective narrative practice that serves to restore the historical memory of the exile community, while rethinking the parameters of post-trauma writing. Aub's obsession with writing led to an aesthetic creativity and originality that created a new paradigm for writing in the aftermath of a traumatic event. The need to find new ways of recovering Spain's historical memory has led us back to a writer who shows us that not only is the origin traumatic, but that trauma is also present in the act of writing.

Conclusion: The Fear of "Re-Writing" History

In the wake of the Popular Party's recent victory in the 2011 general elections, many Spaniards are anxious about how Mariano Rajoy and his new government will approach the debate between Spain's historical memory and its discontents. This polemical issue has led to an apparent fear among Spaniards toward the possible rewriting of History. The supporters of the recovery of historical memory fear that the Popular Party will attempt to again rewrite History from the Right, further reburying the past into oblivion, as evidenced by one supporter: "Espero y deseo que no se intente

reescribir la historia por la derecha; es una ley que sólo intenta pasar página de una etapa tétrica de la historia española” (Donaire) (I hope and desire that the Right does not try to rewrite history; it is a law that only tries to turn the page of a gloomy stage of Spanish history). This fear stems from the Popular Party’s unyielding attitude of opposition toward issues of historical memory. Under José María Aznar’s administration (1996–2004) little progress was made toward any form of reconciling the past as the government continuously denied support and funds to initiatives undertaken to restore historical memory. This includes the PP’s refusal to provide information for the map of mass graves of the Franco regime. While Germany and Italy apologized years ago for their dictatorial regimes, Spanish governments—with the exception of José Luis Zapatero’s (2004–2012)—have chosen to hide from the past. This political ploy was uttered by then President Aznar: “Los españoles hemos decidido mirar adelante y eso es muy importante. Todo el mundo tiene sus responsabilidades” (Silva and Macías 128) (We Spaniards have decided to look ahead and that is very important. Everyone has its [share of] responsibilities). Popular Party supporters argue that the Socialist Party (PSOE) has used the issue of historical memory to divert attention to what “really” worries citizens as part of its political campaign. Ironically, in April 2011, eighty years after the proclamation of the Second Republic, the Spanish Parliament paid tribute to Republicans persecuted by Franco. In the absence of representatives of the Partido Popular, this act undoubtedly illustrates the Civil War’s lingering presence among Spaniards.

Emilio Silva, the president of the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory, has voiced his opposition to the PP’s position, claiming: “Nunca hemos visto la más mínima comprensión en el PP hacia este asunto. Al contrario, sólo hemos oído frases despectivas del tipo ‘esto no le importa a nadie’” (Junquera) (We have never seen the slightest understanding in the PP toward this issue. On the contrary, we have only heard derogatory phrases like “this does not matter to anyone”). Many family members of the victims of Francoist terror fear that the PP will apply severe budget cuts and reduce subsidies toward the “politics of memory,” especially in light of the current economic crisis and Rajoy’s fervent opposition to the Law of Historical Memory, about which he declared: “No sirve absolutamente para nada. No tengo ningún interés en que esté en vigor” (Junquera) (It is absolutely of no use. I have no interest that it remains in effect).³⁰ 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 accountability. This explains why a figure like Max Aub is still of interest today, as his entire body of work seeks to address these issues and pay homage to Spain's silenced past. As Max Aub's works illustrate, rewriting the past is a necessary step to reclaiming one's identity and overcoming trauma because the more one writes, the more one reconstructs his/her life and regains his/her memory.

Notes

1. I would like to express my gratitude to the editors of this volume, Nicholas Spadaccini and Luis Martín-Estudillo, for reading previous drafts of this essay and giving me many suggestions to improve it.
2. The ARMH was cofounded by Emilio Silva and Santiago Macías, who began 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 the citizens' desire to take the initiative to confront Spain's traumatic past, something that the Spanish government has been reluctant to do. This organization has created greater public awareness of horrors committed by the Franco regime and the imperative need to deal with the past.
3. 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 Fund 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) (You saw that a lot with the Cultural Fund, what the people do not know is that I pay for the books and that the Economic Cultural Fund only distributes them. And that thanks to my friendship with all of those who worked there). Aub then turned to other publishing houses, but they too rejected him.
4. *Sala de Espera* appeared throughout a period of thirty months (1948–1951). 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 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*" (13) (*Manuscrito cuervo* was written by Max Aub at the same time he found himself immersed in the writing of *The Magical Labyrinth* and appeared for the first time in 1952, in the third and last volume of *Sala de espera*).
5. On many occasions, Ignacio Soldevila Durante related to Max Aub that his books were scarce and difficult to obtain in Spain. On one occasion, Soldevila wrote: "Aquí no hay manera de conseguir las" (*Epistolario* 53) (Here there is no way to obtain them), 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" (Lluch Prats 271) (In the end I had to put my own copies in the library so that they could be read. Because your entire

work is not in this library). Aub himself was also distraught at his lack of importance as a “serious” author, as he once stated that Quiroga, Chabás and Enrique Díez-Canedo were the only ones that truly believed in his importance as an author. Nevertheless, Aub never doubted his ability stating: “Con seguridad tardarán todavía muchos años en darse cuenta de que soy un gran escritor” (*Diarios* 248) (Surely it will take many more years to realize that I am a great writer).

6. Aub laments this reality when he states in *La gallina ciega*: “Me presentan a los jóvenes. Ninguna reacción, jamás oyeron el santo de mi apellido” (127) (I am introduced to the young people. There is no reaction, they never heard of my blessed surname).
7. In a letter to Juan Fernández Figuerola, 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) (Moral misery and public shame, herons that unite you with the most rotten of the world, obstacle that sinks Spain lower than it ever was, abject intolerance). 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) (The reign of General Franco in Spain re-imposed the policy of Fernando VII. Intellectually Spain returned to the dug grave).
8. Jorge Semprún also expresses writing’s power to rediscover repressed memories in his novel *La escritura o la vida*, “con el dolor tonificante de una memoria inagotable, de la que cada línea escrita me descubría tesoros ocultos, obliterados” (247) (with the invigorating pain of an inexhaustible memory, of which each written line I discovered hidden treasures, obliterated).
9. Before the Foundation’s inception, several initiatives were undertaken by the local government in Segorbe to commemorate Max Aub. The first initiative took place in 1985 when a street name was dedicated to Aub in Segorbe. Subsequently, in 1987, an international contest of short stories was created in Aub’s name. Held annually, this contest garnered great prestige among writers and scholars and especially Aub’s family, who began to show interest in Segorbe’s endeavors to invoke Aub’s memory. On November 11, 1988, the city council in Segorbe approved the acquisition of Max Aub’s personal library and the letters that Aub had diligently preserved while in exile. With the cooperation and approval of Elena Aub, Max Aub’s only surviving daughter, the complete collection of his works arrived in Segorbe in October of 1990, followed by the inauguration of the Max Aub Foundation in May of 1991. However, due to various legal procedures, the Max Aub Foundation did not officially become a reality until August 25, 1997. This event, covered by several Spanish newspapers, signaled the importance of Max Aub’s legacy and the growing interest of scholars, who saw Aub not as a deceased writer of the past, but as a writer of the twenty-first century whose works continue to have a strong resonance today for issues dealing with Spain’s historical memory.
10. This is evidenced in Muñoz Molina’s first novel *Beatus Ille*, which is about a forgotten writer from the Generation of 1927, who is a Republican, Avant-garde novelist, born the same year as Aub.
11. Among some of the literary works that emerged during the Transition were Manuel Vázquez Montalbán’s *Los mares del Sur*; Carmen Martín Gaité’s *El cuarto de atrás*; Juan Marsé’s *Si te dicen que caí* and Jorgé Semprun’s *Autobiografía de Federico Sanchez*. These works not only became popular best-sellers, receiving the most important literary awards in Spain, but have now become part of the Civil War literature canon.

12. The year 1992 was a significant year for Spain's preeminence as it celebrated the summer Olympic Games in Barcelona, while Madrid was also named the European cultural capital.
13. The Law of Amnesty of 1977 illustrates the government's refusal to punish those responsible for human rights violations during the Franco dictatorship by granting impunity to those who had participated in the violations.
14. One of the reasons the PP did not support these initiatives was due to Aznar's personal ties with the Franco regime and the many Franco supporters who still formed part of the Government.
15. In spite of its fictitious nature, as Muñoz Molina recognizes, the literary quality and resemblance of Aub's discourse to other inductee's speeches is almost identical and indistinguishable when compared to an authentic discourse. Aub not only wrote his discourse with precision, but had it printed and edited with the same typography, binding and paper as those published by the *Real Academia*. It is this fictitious speech of entry into an imaginary *Real Academia* that inspired Antonio Muñoz Molina to write his (real) speech, due in large part to the fictitious speech's inventiveness and literary quality, in addition to its relevance with Spain's past.
16. Although written in 1956, Aub's discourse was not published until 1972.
17. Among such historically based texts that use distancing and estrangement are *Manuscrito cuervo*, *Enero sin nombre*, and *El limpiabotas del Padre Eterno*. In each one of these texts, Aub turns to an unusual, depersonalized narrator to relate and bear witness to life in the French concentration camps. In other texts, many characters are based on real people that Aub encountered, but were given fictitious names, oftentimes to protect their identity and safeguard them from reprisals.
18. In a letter written to Anthony G. Lo Ré on February 11, 1960, Aub reiterates once again these same sentiments stating: "No tuve 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) (My only objective in this series of novels and short stories was to give faith and testimony to the truth).
19. My emphasis.
20. Aub's short story *La historia de la verdadera muerte de Francisco Franco*, represents another example of this attempt to modify Spain's past. Written in Mexico in 1960, this account 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.
21. This project can be accessed at the following website: <www.devuelvemelavoz.ua.es>.
22. As Carmen Moreno-Nuño affirms: "Desde los años ochenta la literatura ha ido representando cada vez con más frecuencia la Guerra Civil como un evento traumático y como una herida en la memoria que no ha sido completamente curada por el paso del tiempo" (110) (Since the eighties the Spanish Civil War has been represented in literature with increased frequency as a traumatic event and as a wound in the memory that has not been completely cured by the passage of time).
23. Many of the notes that Aub took while in the camps represent a springboard of ideas that he further developed in future narrative works.
24. 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) (Why are we silent? I tell my truth and will continue telling it as long as I can and however I can).
25. Aub stated that what he was searching for was to "dejar constancia de nuestro tiempo" (*Diarios* 207) (record our time).

26. 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).
27. According to Ignacio Soldevila Durante, *The Magical Labyrinth* “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” (Soldevila Durante 101–2) (It is the most extensive and impressive document that has been published to date about the Spanish Civil War, and at the same time it is the most successful *saga* of contemporary Spanish literature . . . In Max Aub’s *Magical Labyrinth*, the Spanish Civil War has perhaps found its most true and creative witness.)
28. Aub defines *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* (Spanish Labyrinth) to refer specifically to Aub’s novels of the Civil War.
29. As Francie Cate-Arries contends in her study on the French camps: “The camps are inscribed in the history of Spanish exile as the first terrain of collective memory, the commemorative grounds for national regeneration . . . and a place where the survivors of the Civil War begin to inscribe a new national history and cultural identity in exile” (52, 16).
30. José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero’s government granted twenty million Euros to finance and promote these initiatives, with twenty-nine percent of the money earmarked for the excavation of the mass graves.

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