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**Stills of Mauthausen: The Photographic Memoirs of
Nazi Camp Survivor Francesc Boix**

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La memoria es hoy la mejor forma de hacer justicia.
-José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero

And photographs of the victims of war are themselves a species of rhetoric.
They reiterate. They simplify. They agitate.
They create the illusion of consensus. . . .
And all photographs wait to be explained or falsified by their captions.
-Susan Sontag

Francisco Boix Campo (a.k.a. Francesc Boix [1920–1950]) was the only Spaniard to testify at the Nuremberg trials following the Second World War and the liberation of Nazi Camps;¹ yet, when he was about to speak to the reality of Spaniards as victims of German national-socialist genocide, the French Republic Delegate Charles Dubost silenced him. As a photographer assigned to the Mauthausen *Erkennungsdienst*, the works he appropriated and concealed, along with those he authored in the days of liberation, document history and testify to reality. The stills capture life at Mauthausen: the momentous and the quotidian, the authorized and the dissident, the façade and the authentic. As a non-voluntary instrument of the Nazi propaganda machine, he performed dark room duties that entailed immortalizing and memorializing grandiose events such as Himmler’s visit in April 1941. As an artist and Republican, he subverted his duties in the Nazi camp’s photography laboratory by poignantly and poetically committing to film the shadow of the Nazi persona. The objectified victims are transformed into articulate subjects that communicate with the viewer. In fact, Boix’s testimony at Nuremberg was based on these photographs. When Dubost questioned Boix as to how he managed to possess the images, he responded, “Debido a mi oficio, en Mauthausen entré en el servicio de indentificación del campo. [. . . Se] podía fotografiar todo lo que ocurría en

el campo para enviarlo al Alto Mando . . . en Berlín” (Bermejo 186) (Due to my profession, in Mauthausen I entered into the camp’s ID service . . . One could photograph everything that took place in the camp to send it to the High Command in Berlin). Little did his superiors in Berlin’s High Command know that these photos would lead to their convictions and sentencing. In the Dachau trials, Boix describes his function in the *Erkennungsdienst* in the following fashion: “Primero trabajé en la cámara oscura, revelaba personalmente todas las películas Leica de aquellas personas que eran fusiladas. Y como no había un Kapo alemán allí me convertí en secretario de la Sección de Identificación y de ese modo me familiaricé más con esos asuntos” (Bermejo 130) (First I worked in the dark room, I personally developed the Leica film of the executed. Since there was not a German Kapo, I became the secretary of the photo ID section and familiarized myself with these matters).

The entirety of Boix’s testimony, based on these photos, told the story of Mauthausen (paradoxically multiple and unique personal hi/stories, as well as collective History). Yet this specific camp, in spite of its magnitude, must be considered a microcosm of the concentrationary universe. Just as a black and white still of a Jew, whose name is unknown to Boix, tells the story of this individual who was brutally beaten and ordered to hang himself within ten minutes, it also tells the story, myriad stories, of countless individuals whose humanity was snatched away by what Joaquim Amat-Piniella, in his memorialistic novel of Mauthausen, *K.L. Reich*, denominates “the spirit of the camp” (Amat 20). Hence, Boix’s stills of Mauthausen, although they are visual, not verbal, and capture the polyvalent, multiple stories of others, not only of himself, must be deemed a memoir, a memorialistic account of lived subjectivity.²

As part of collective history, the repository for approximately five hundred of Boix’s photos, pertaining to the “Fons Fotogràfic de l’Amical de Mauthausen,” is the Museu d’Història de Catalunya (MHC) in Barcelona. This exhibit is designed to be on loan as the MHC eagerly upholds the Amical association’s mission, which perfectly coincides with Boix’s, of making the concentrationary reality known in the fight against institutionalized silence that could have led to collective dismemory. Three hundred of these images can be found in *Mauthausen: Crònica gràfica d’un camp de concentració*, edited by historian Rosa Toran and Margarida Sala of the MHC. Many of these images are also contained within Benito Bermejo’s text *Francisco Boix, el fotógrafo de Mauthausen: Fotografías de Francisco Boix y los archivos capturados a los SS de Mauthausen*. Because of Boix’s efforts, in collaboration with many other members of the underground movement within the Nazi camp, hundreds of images are available for public viewing and scholarship.³ Boix’s intent is not unlike that of Amat-Piniella who, when interviewed in 1963 regarding *K.L. Reich*, stated, “Mi libro no pretende ahondar diferencias, sino unir a la gente frente a la

crueldad” (Espinás 57) (The purpose of my book is not to deepen differences, but rather to unify people in the face of cruelty). Solidarity and unity in the face of totalitarianism are the desired effects of Boix’s photos, evoking in the viewer a sense of pathos, of identification with, rather than objectification of, the subjects. Although the photos may shock, it is precisely pathos, a lasting human emotional connection that encourages the viewer to combat the injustice to which he can no longer turn a blind eye.

In other words, through the photos he salvaged and those he authored during liberation, Boix transmits to the viewer the same bond he himself felt with his fellow human beings that manifested itself in the desire to work toward the common good, as is evident in his work itinerary. In 1937, while the Civil War raged, seventeen-year-old Boix worked as a photojournalist for *Juliol*, the journal of Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas de Catalunya, the perfect venue to prove himself as a photographer, and to channel his communist beliefs. It is likely that Boix was incorporated into the Republican army by late 1937 or early 1938 (Bermejo 30). Like many ex-combatant male Spaniards following the Civil War, Boix became a militarized refugee in France. May of 1940 marks a turning point for Spanish refugees in France, due to the Wehrmacht’s deep infiltration into French territory. As a result, many Spaniards became Nazi prisoners. By January 27, 1941, Boix, along with 1,506 other Spanish Republicans, was transported to Mauthausen (49). During his concentrationary incarceration, he used his position in the photo lab to carry out the clandestine activity of salvaging what he claimed to be thousands of photos, many of which, following liberation in 1945, he handed over to the French left-wing press. The periodical *Ce Soir* dedicated a special issue to Mauthausen in which Boix’s photos were featured. The journal *Regards* also published a report on Mauthausen.⁴ Only because of Boix’s initiative and proactivism with these journals did the authorities show any interest in having him testify at Nuremberg (Bermejo 181). In the late 1940s, Boix traveled the world as a photojournalist, in spite of being plagued by a recurring illness acquired in the camp that ultimately took his life in July 1950.

Boix refused to passively allow the shared concentrationary reality to fall into oblivion. Because of his commitment, current efforts can give voice to the silenced. Although the first Spanish Republicans arrived in Mauthausen on August 6, 1940, and the vast majority arrived on convoys within the subsequent year, scholarship regarding Spaniards in the Holocaust has only begun evolving over the last decade. One of the items of note is the figure of Spaniards in the camps. The number first stipulated by Montserrat Roig in her ground-breaking *Els Catalans als camps nazis* is that of 7,200 in Mauthausen alone, and a total of 10,000 throughout the concentrationary universe. David Wingate Pike in *Spaniards in the Holocaust: Mauthausen, The Horror of the Danube* substantiates this number, as do Montse Armengou and Ricard Belis in *El convoy de los 927*. David Serrano i

Blanquer in various publications refers to 15,000 and Eduardo Pons Prades in his 2005 *El Holocausto de los republicanos españoles: Vida y muerte en los campos de exterminio alemanes (1940–1945)* claims 25,000 Spaniards arrived in extermination camps as prisoners of war between 1940 and 1941 and as political detainees between 1942 and 1944 (19).

Pons Prades considers that the first reflection of Republican Spaniards in the Holocaust is the 1969 collective testimonial work *Triangle Bleu (Les republicains espagnols à Mauthausen)* by Manuel Razola and Mariano Constante (41, 371). Interestingly, Pons Prades does not make reference to novelized testimonials or testimonial novels by writers Jorge Semprún and Joaquim Amat-Piniella whose respective works *Le grand voyage* and *K.L. Reich* were both written immediately after liberation and published in 1963. Clearly, the first voicings of concentrationary reality were, in fact, viewings if we consider the press coverage. Of particular note are the photos Boix leaked to the French left-wing press in the summer following liberation. His testimony at Nuremberg on the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth of January 1946, complements for the authorities the memorialistic stills he had already shared with the public.

Solidarity with the people and the fight against abuses of power (i.e. injustice) are the underlying tenets that appear to have guided Boix from his adolescence until his early death. Given his active and politically engaged personality, he found a niche within the camp's underground network and the *Kommando Erkennungsdienst* became an ideal locus of resistance and subversion. Although the photo lab purportedly *recorded* history, in actuality, it was a myth-making apparatus. As resisters, Boix and his comrades were iconoclasts that did their part in toppling the Reich.

When questioned regarding his duties, Boix testified, “mi trabajo fue el de fotógrafo: revelar las películas y las fotos que se hacían de todo el campo para seguir el proceso, *la historia del campo*” (Bermejo 206, my emphasis) (my job was that of a photographer: develop the films and the pictures that they made about the camp to document the process, the history of the camp). So he followed procedure, the *history of the camp*. According to Paul Ricken (supervising officer of the *Erkennungsdienst* from the Spring of 1943 until the end of that year or the beginning of 1944) in his trial before the US military (War Crimes Branch) in Dachau 1947, the purposes of the photo lab were to create SS portraits, portraits for identification, photos of various events at the camp, those of medical nature, and various deaths (by firearm, suicide, or accident). Yet, Ricken was accused of posing the cadavers he photographed, which he denies in all but one instance in which he claims to have moved them for better lighting (Bermejo 107–8). Ironically, the photos were not intended to objectively document history, but, rather, to shape it according to an insidious propagandistic slant. The Nazi propaganda machine tightly controlled its image by forbidding any unauthorized snapshots of the camps and by disseminating, via the press, authorized,

select, public relations photographs for several purposes: to present the camps in a positive light as necessary institutions, to conceal their criminality, and to present prisoners as dangerous, thus justifying the existence of the camps (Bermejo 100–101).

One could ponder what it would have been like to be Boix in the dark room, not privy to the goings-on of the camp, of “suicides,” executions, and “natural deaths” of the deportees, yet, enshrouded in darkness, inhaling the stench of the developing chemicals, to discern the images taking form. A photo is an image captured through a supposedly impartial lens. Yet what supervisors Ricken and Schinlauer (especially Ricken) did was far from recording events. Many photos were but a spinning of the truth, what Boix refers to as a *comedia* (a comedy, a farce) in his testimony. In other words, reality was manipulated to forge a sculpted, purportedly impartial, but truly doctored History of the great Nazi Empire. Susan Sontag has observed in *Regarding the Pain of Others* that “many of the canonical images of early war photography turn out to have been staged, or to have had their subjects tampered with” (Sontag 53).⁵ Within the genre of war photography, images “of the moment of (or just before) death are among the most celebrated and often reproduced” (59). So, then, when the Nazis expressly defined the ID lab duties to include the documenting of death, they were actually in line with a morbid, yet persistent, trend. The fact that some staging took place was not novel in the very least. What is intuitively alarming is the magnitude of the Nazi enterprise.

The current efforts to recover the past should not be to vindictively demonize the perpetrators, for their actions should speak for themselves. Rather the contemporary fight against dismemory must be aimed at attaining justice—an impartial, objective, Kohlbergian focus that works toward what is universalizable right—and completing history, operating under the premise that history is not objective for it has always been written by the winners. Recent efforts recover the past of the defeated and victimized, those whose voices were silenced by the dominant discourse of the victors. Jorge Semprún, writer, former Minister of Culture, underground activist, and survivor of Buchenwald in his 1995 *La escritura o la vida*, claims that it is not that the “experiencia [concentracinaria] vivida sea indecible. Ha sido invisible Únicamente el artificio de un relato dominado conseguirá transmitir parcialmente la verdad del testimonio” (25) (lived [concentrationary] experience is unspeakable. It has been unlivable Only the artifice of a mastered narration will manage to partially transmit the truth of testimony). History is perceived as more real when narrativized, when a reader’s pathos is awakened and s/he can then identify with the experience, with having lived through and partaken in events. Semprún communicates that only when shocking history is told as a story (*relato*) can it be transmitted, can the destined audience understand it. A specific universal connection is then made between the narrator and the narratee, the

emitter and the receptor because of its human import. By being pulled into a work (be it visual or written) the viewer/reader has a *subjective* experience and awakens to an other's *unique* experience that now becomes a *shared* experience. This is precisely the effect of Boix's photography.

The positives and negatives salvaged and meticulously labeled by Boix have become a narrative. As Toran and Sala state, viewers must learn to *read* the Mauthausen (and other camp) images that have become symbols of deportation and have been incorporated into world iconography. Hence, they caution, "nada es más peligroso que adaptar los símbolos a la manera de naturalezas muertas, sin recurrir a su lectura" (*Mauthausen* 18) (nothing is more dangerous than adapting these symbols as still lifes, without rendering a reading). The viewer or student of history must not become desensitized, but rather must identify—experience pathos—with the human pictorial narrative.

Although many of Boix's captions clearly identify or inform, others editorialize and evince his partiality. It is most likely that Boix labeled these (in French usually, at times in Spanish, but not in Catalan) destined for either liberators or resisters who could make known this evidence of this microcosm of the concentrationary universe. Most labels are journalistic. Even the attribution of authorship and dating, i.e. "Foto SS. Verano 1943" (SS. photo. Summer 1943), are reminiscent of bylines and captions, yet many reflect the collective effort, such as "Fotos SS salvadas por la organización clandestina del PCE y JSU en Mauthausen" (SS photos salvaged by Spanish Communist Underground and Socialist Youth Organization in Mauthausen), and deflect the spotlight from Boix.

One note is particularly poignant and proves Boix's engagement with the photographic subject. The photo is backlit. The image is that of an individual facing away from the viewer, apparently standing by a wall, the upper half of which consists of vertical panels. At first blush, given the backlighting and diffused shadows, it seems the subject is leaning against the wall, tilting his head and is at rest. Upon much closer scrutiny, one can discern a strap among the vertical lines of the paneling and must come to the realization the individual is hanged. From the viewer's vantage point, the human subject has no identity markers. The sex is not even perfectly apparent. His hair is short and dark. His jacket and pants are also dark, yet like his hair, are cast in shadow. In spite of not seeing the face, the viewer is drawn to this image of a solitary figure. Boix's handwritten notation on the back of the photo reads "Judío francés habiendo cumplido amables invitaciones de la SS. Verano 1943. B7.5 [Barraca 7, número 5]. Foto archivo J.S.U. y P.C.E." (Bermejo 73) (French Jew having fulfilled the kind invitation of the SS. Summer 1943. Barrack 7, number 5. Photo Archive [of the] Socialist Youth Organization and Spanish Communist Party). Boix has doubly documented the conclusion to the unnamed individual's life. The photograph is visually poetic. The handwritten note is scathingly accusatory.

The expression “amables invitaciones” parodies, satirizes, criticizes, euphemizes, and facilitates coping. It is certain that the SS did not kindly “invite” or encourage this unnamed individual, nor would they have been agreeable or pleasant. What Boix does not explicitly state is that this human being was forced to take his own life. Even the dignity of choosing one’s final moment was snatched away. Although the term suicide of Latin origin can be broken into two lexemes “sui” (self) and “cide” (kill), the SS methodology ironically subverted the significance of the term. Such a death is more demeaning than fatal complications from torture or a brutal beating. Nothing belonged to this victim, not even the most personal form of death. This sentiment of welcoming death is present in various concentrationary works, the most touching, in my estimation, is Mercè Rodoreda’s short story, “Nit i boira,” in which the unnamed protagonist likens death to a uterine space. If, as survivor Lope Massaguer recounted, in Nazi camps, death was a constant companion, a friend and a means of escaping, then, the anonymous, solitary subject of this photo was truly alone, severed from biophile humanity.⁶

Boix’s testimony at Nuremberg with respect to what is termed Photo 10 also communicates his connection with another fellow prisoner and photographic subject:

Boix: Esta foto representa un judío en 1941, cuando se construyó el llamado ‘campo ruso,’ convertido después en campo sanitario. Está colgado con la cuerda que utilizaba para sujetar el pantalón.

Dubost: ¿Es un suicidio?

Boix: Pretendidamente. Es un hombre que ya no podía imaginar la posibilidad de salir adelante; había llegado al límite por los trabajos y las torturas. (Bermejo 194)

(Boix: This photo depicts a Jew in 1941, when the so-called Russian camp was built, [which was] later converted to an infirmary. He is hanged with a rope that was used to tie pants. **Dubost** [French prosecutor]: Is it a suicide?

Boix: Supposedly. He is a man who could not imagine the possibility of going forward; he was at his limit because of the works and the torture.)

It is curious to consider various aspects of Boix’s testimony four years after the incident. He did not (we believe) take the photo, yet he claims to be aware of the circumstances surrounding it. Of note is his empathy. The two clauses, “ya no podía imaginar la posibilidad de salir adelante” ([he] could not imagine the possibility of going forward), and “había llegado al límite” (he was at his limit), could have been objected to as “speculation” by the defense. Yet the statement proves most revealing for it appears to

communicate a deportee's—any inmate's, Boix's—fears in Mauthausen and, paradoxically, the universality of the unique experience.

Photography unites two contradictory features: purported objectivity and a point of view (Sontag 26). Referring to hybridity in “serious Peninsular fiction,” Mary Vásquez writes “The hybrid form permits the use of historical material in open subjectivity, in contrast with those often more covert subjectivities of the journalist or the historian” (51). Applied to Boix, although a journalist (a profession whose members are purportedly objective, yet, as Vásquez acknowledges, covertly subjective), this young photojournalist's first-hand experience renders him at once a subject *and* a bystander; hence, he is a hybrid, as is his product.

The artistic and photographic depiction of war has been paradoxical since its inception, fusing purported objectivity with personal or political ideology, be it of the photographer or of the powers that be that commissioned the work. Sontag traces the ontology and trajectory of reproducible pictorial representation of war to Jacques Collot's *Les Misères et les malheurs de la guerre*, eighteen etchings (of atrocities against civilians in Lorraine by French troops) published in 1633 (Sontag 43). Also of note are German artist Hans Ulrich Franck's seventeenth-century etchings of soldiers killing peasants in the Thirty Years War, as well as Francisco de Goya y Lucientes' *Los desastres de la guerra*, eighty-three etchings created between 1810 and 1820, published in 1863 (three and a half decades after the artist's death). Sontag asserts that with Goya, “a new standard for responsiveness to suffering enters art,” given that his “images move the viewer close to the horror. All the trappings of the spectacular have been eliminated . . . War is not a spectacle [E]ach image, captioned with a brief phrase lamenting the wickedness of the invaders and the monstrousness of the suffering they inflicted, stands, independently of the others. The cumulative effect is devastating” (44–45).

The first “official” war photographer, Robert Fenton, was sent by the British government to cover the Crimean War beginning in early 1855 (nineteen years after the invention of the camera) and was instructed to avoid photographing the dead and wounded (45). By 1924, Ernst Friedrich's *Krieg dem Kriegen* (shock therapy photographic album of nearly two hundred photos) makes a strong statement against war. The turning point for war photography is without question the 1930s and 1940s. Photographic equipment (light weight cameras such as the Leica, 35mm film of thirty-six exposures before reloading) revolutionized war coverage. Hence, the Spanish Civil War was the first war to be “covered” in the modern sense (Sontag 20–21). War photography, as a genre, was legitimized at the end of the Second World War. Yet 1945, with the images of the Nazi camps and US incineration of the populations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, marks the year, states Sontag, when the power of photographs “define[s], not merely

record[s], the most abominable realities [that] trumped all the complex narratives” (25).

Visual representation of war as relating particularly to Spaniards also has somewhat of a lengthy tradition—depending on how one wishes to perceive the origin of said genre. Of course, Goya’s heart-wrenching paintings—as well as his etchings—of the War of Independence must be viewed ontologically.⁷ With them, began the denunciation of tyrannical violence and commemoration of popular resistance, in spite of certain death. These concepts are ever so clear in Goya’s *El tres de mayo de 1808 o Los fusilamientos de la Moncloa* (1814) where the central figure, brightly lit moments before his execution at the hands of a faceless Napoleonic firing squad, outstretches his arms in unmistakable Christian symbolism reminiscent of the sacrificial founding myth of the crucifixion. The viewer identifies and is moved by the panic and resignation etched in the innocent victim’s gaping eyes. The viewer also must acknowledge that the recently executed and the soon to be executed are abandoned, alone, and bereft of hope. The solitary church in the distance and the desperate, hunched over monk articulate that even God and his representatives have forsaken these common martyrs. Goya’s war works are a far cry from, for example, Velázquez’s *La rendición de Breda o Las lanzas* (1635) that depicts war as optimistic—for the victorious party, that is. This pictorial narrative is based on Calderón’s *comedia* in which Spain’s triumph—at a historical moment when the Holy Roman Empire was losing territory and in a state of decline—attested to and propagandized the nation’s grandeur, magnitude, and self-importance.

Seen in this light of the Spanish pictorial tradition (of Spain’s masters), the photos salvaged and taken by Boix take on a richer meaning. By documenting great visits by high ranking officials such as Himmler and Speer, and orchestrating “good treatment” photos of Russian inmates, or capturing on film all deaths, the Nazi intent is strikingly parallel to that of Velázquez’s *La rendición de Breda* for the images were to be utilized as “proof” of Nazi importance, political superiority: in other words, to kindle the propaganda machine. The Mauthausen SS, by association with high rank visitors, affirmed their value. By portraying the excellent carcelary conditions, they diffused rumors of German cruelty. By recording death (after having orchestrated it) they asserted supreme power, for in a violent hierarchy, control over life and the impending threat of causing death affirm maximum superiority.

Nonetheless, the photos retained and shot by Boix perpetuate the artistic engagement begun with Goya. Boix’s photos subvert hegemonic, totalitarian power. To study a text (be it written or graphic), one must consider both the intratextual—the elements within the work—as well as the extratextual—the factors outside of the work, or as Theodor Adorno termed, the *immanence* and *ideology*. Adorno asserts “art cannot be understood when its social

essence has not been understood As a consequence the allegedly privileged status of aesthetic experience is annulled, owing to the dynamic contradiction which lies in the fact that the aesthetic domain is at once necessarily immanent and ideological. It retains both its philosophical intent, however modified, and its social moment” (478–79). The same collection of photos in Nazi hands, versus in Boix’s, is perfectly transformed, not because the images have been modified, but because the intent, the ideology, of the disseminator and the social moment of the audience have shifted. While the former wished to assert themselves as the maximum power on earth, Boix (as one individual who considered himself part of a collective) resisted, subverted, and denounced totalitarianism while making its horrors known to the authorities, and, more importantly, to the people.

If there can be no unified “we” when regarding images⁸—in other words there is no universal or uniform viewer response—and we take into account the intentions of the creator and the disseminator of the images (who often times can be one and the same), then, although pictorial narratives use a universal visual language,⁹ we can say that a set image—while static and unchanging—is truly polyvalent and, in a sense, fluid beyond its essence. To be specific, the photos taken by Paul Ricken of Himmler’s visits to Mauthausen are exactly that: photos of Himmler at Mauthausen. Ricken was fulfilling his mission of documenting all that would further aggrandize the Nazis, Germany, the Reich, and Aryans to be used for historical and propagandistic journalistic purposes and personal mementos (for many SS who requested duplicates). Those same photos—as part of the vast collection salvaged by Boix that had been part of a much larger collection ordered destroyed prior to liberation—with a different intent and context served to incriminate all SS and Nazis, highlight the abysmal working conditions, call into question the justifiability of the deportation and imprisonment of inmates, and simply expose the absurdity of institutionalized genocide and the conditions leading up to it.

The Nazis used the images of the dead to reify, to objectify, to affirm otherness. Whereas “appropriate concealment” of one’s own dead war victims—friendly dead, “our” dead—is done “in the name of propriety or of patriotism,” seeing the dead enemy has historically boosted morale and “proven” victory. When a war photograph is taken by a photographer who identifies with the defunct subject and destines the photo for that same in-group shared by all three parties—photographer, subject, viewer—faces are concealed. Sontag observes, “This is a dignity not thought necessary to accord to others” (Sontag 70). To posit suffering as pertaining to an other facilitates dissociation and leads to the justification of debasement for one might consider, “He is not like us.” Thus, difference, according to this line of thinking, equals inferiority, entailing that the other is not worthy of the rights and respect accorded those in the superior group. The other, as an object, is viewed as someone to be seen, not one (like “us”) who sees

(Sontag 72). What this thinking presupposes is partisanship—taking one side versus another. This mentality is altogether different from a human, empathetic, or universalistic approach that would identify and sympathize with each individual example of suffering as well as that of an entire people. Here the link would be the human bond, not an allegiance based on nationality or race.

So, then, is the point of images of violence—and the study of such—to communicate, to inspire understanding, to foster sympathy, to intellectualize the visual, to take action, or to truly empathize, to *feel* what another has felt and identify with him or her, not to objectify or dissociate, but to feel a bond? We must question the relevance of studying visual representation of cruelty, images of the Holocaust, and, particularly, those pertaining to Spanish Republicans. Barbie Zelizer, in *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*, asserts that “Western epistemology has always been ocular-centric or vision-based with ‘the seen’ taken as a primary ground of knowledge; [. . .] ‘seeing’ has become in many cases a metaphor for perspective. In this sense, the ways in which the Holocaust is visually represented have become a concrete corollary for our sense of how the Holocaust means” (1–2). In *El Holocausto de los republicanos españoles*, Eduardo Pons Prades highlights both the particular and global impact: “Rememorar el holocausto de los españoles en los campos de exterminio alemanes tiene una doble vertiente: la de informar a las jóvenes generaciones de unos hechos que se desarrollaron en el corazón de Europa, y la de ponerlas en guardia contra una posible reproducción de las circunstancias históricas que generaron unos planes de exterminación” (19) (Remembering the Spanish Republican Holocaust has a double purpose: to inform younger generations of events that developed in the heart of Europe, and to put them on notice against the possible reproduction of the historical circumstances that generated plans for extermination). Josep Fontana universalizes the significance of studying the past and writes, “Hay demasiados signos que muestran que la brutalidad de los campos puede repetirse si se dan las condiciones adecuadas, que la gente se acostumbra a la violencia y al crimen si se plantea desde arriba como una obligación patriótica, racial o religiosa” (12) (There are too many signs indicating that the brutality of the camps can be repeated if given the right circumstances, if people become accustomed to violence and crime and it is spun from above as a patriotic, racial, or religious obligation). If violence is glorified in the abstract, it will be justified in the concrete.

Rosa Toran pragmatically introduces her study *Los campos de concentración nazis: Palabras contra el olvido*, by questioning the pretentiousness of claiming that research, study, and dissemination of knowledge on the Holocaust will, in effect, fulfill the declaration *Never Again*. If the student or scholar ponders the reason for Holocaust studies in its vast permutations, s/he comes to the conclusion that, regarding the post-catastrophic future, the purpose is always *Never Again*. One studies the past

not as a linear equation of causes whose sum is a simplified effect ($A + B = C$), but rather as a multi-prismatic and three-dimensional constellation of elements that led to, created, and culminated in the history-making event being studied. This latter description both denies and upholds the historical uniqueness of the event. I must clarify. The Holocaust was carried out specifically by a particular group, in a particular place, at a particular time, yet the essential factors (ethnic supremacy, great military strength, cold pragmatism that subordinates feeling to following orders, disdain for other human groups, the desire to rule a vast section of the earth, and the providential prophecy that “we are the great few destined to rule over our inferiors”) can and have been repeated myriad times throughout history and most especially in the twentieth century.

What stands out about the Holocaust is that it was *systematically*¹⁰ barbaric, yet the barbarism did not start with the first brick laid at the first camp; it began years before the Wannsee conference in which the group of high-ranking Nazi greats agreed to implement the final solution to the Jewish problem. It began when rights were systematically stripped from a sector of the population by a government who only had its own interests in mind, not that of its constituency. So, is it fair to say that the Holocaust and its constellation of factors were not unique, but they could and have been repeated in myriad permuted forms? This constellation theory is simply archetypal; yet instead of referring to literary archetypes, let us consider historical ones. In their intents (perhaps even their methodologies if not their material means), how different are Hitler, Franco, Mussolini, Milosevic, and Pinochet from each other?

If we consider, then, the study of the genocidal past as purporting to have one purpose that veers in two temporal directions, it becomes clear that the past matters for two interconnected reasons: 1) to understand how the past came to be, and 2) to see how the use, perception, and perpetuation of the past shape the present, and more importantly, the future.¹¹ By studying the constellation of essential factors that made horror possible, perhaps peaceful solutions can be found.

If looking at the heinous past is a vital step in preventing injustice in the future, one might also view the study, in part, as a denunciation of institutionalized malfeasance and a vindication of sacrificed scapegoats. Here I use the term in its anthropological sense: that of a living being viewed as a symbol, onto which society projected its fears and evils, that, once slaughtered, alleviated society, appeased its fears and seemingly restored a previous (ontological) order or inaugurated a new order. This bent on denunciation of the perpetrator and vindication of the victim is clearly the fight for justice, perhaps the struggle for retrospective social justice. Let us consider also a leap in psychology: moral psychology. Precisely to comprehend the factual yet unimaginable reality of institutionalized mass extermination, Lawrence Kohlberg developed his moral psychology theories

and scale based on one impartial, universalizable concept: justice. The key to morality, according to this line of thought, is that a decision is right (that is, moral) if one can objectively reason that it is applicable to any/all human being/s. One cannot discuss the Holocaust without understanding the need for justice.

So the present drive to study the past has been established, but what of the movement, activism, and resistance to survive genocide and make it known? Here we find the catalyst for Francisco Boix's actions. Justice, as Boix himself proclaimed in Nuremberg, is the motivating force behind his subversive and clandestine resistance to the ugliness he witnessed. Yet, could one so close, so intimate with transgressions against dignity and decency be objective and dispassionate? Absolutely not. In spite of being so active, Boix was a witness to the horrors. This dual role of victim yet observer, straddling subjectivity with objectivity, made him a perfect resistant during the SS rule, a documenter of history during the month of liberation, and a voice for the voiceless during the Nuremberg and Dachau trials. At each of these three stages, he sought one thing: justice. Although, he recounted the plight of various mistreated collectives and individuals representative of such (Russians, Poles, Jews of diverse nationalities, among countless others), he doggedly underscored one reality that until recently has received little serious scholarly and historical attention, having been eclipsed by other historical realities of the late 1930s to mid 1940s. I am referring to the 10,000–15,000 Spaniards in Nazi camps. Perhaps Boix could be considered the first voice of deported Republican Spaniards. This assertion can be upheld not only by his testimony at Nuremberg and Dachau based on the photos he confiscated, but also the photos he shot during the liberation and distributed to the French press. History will recall Boix eternally as a young man whose greatest plight, adventure, and fight were all one: standing up for the people (Republicans, Catalonians, Spaniards, refugees, deportees, inmates) against fascism (both Spanish nationalism and German national-socialism). Boix left history his voice and images that attest to Spaniards in the Holocaust, that ensured that this shared reality cannot be omitted from the annals of humanity.

For the deportee, refugee, or exile, instead of asking "*where* is home?", should not the question posed be "*when* is home?", thus referring to a lost time and the hope of regaining it? Yet home is not a space; rather it is a sense of belonging attached to a time and space, that when lost, survives only as memory. Boix's photos, then, record, commemorate, document, and denounce the loss of home, a sense of home that was snatched away from particular individuals and diverse collectives by myriad institutions, parties, and governments through premeditated and systematic dehumanization as well as through neglect. To apply Mary Vásquez's term, Boix's stills articulate the "poetics of loss." Boix's photos eloquently articulate the unstated: the memory of a previous time and space when and where the

photographic subjects had once belonged. The collection of photographs taken before liberation on May 5, 1945, depict inmates not fought for, not protected, but rather neglected or considered disposable by their own governments, societies, and fellow citizens. Those clad in the vertical stripe pajamas were deemed inconsequential by their “homelands”—that either neglectfully allowed them to fall into Nazi hands or actively placed them there. If seen in this light, Boix’s photos bear a striking resemblance to Goya’s war paintings and etchings that depict an orphaned populous slaughtered by the supreme military of a tyrannical government.¹²

But it was liberation that bore the promise of home, of regaining Spain from the Francoist Regime. The Spanish Republicans, now ex-prisoners, were jubilant, as reflected the two banners (painted by Boix’s comrade Ramon Milà) that respectively read “K.L. Mauthausen JSU” (K.L. Mauthausen Spanish Socialist Youth), and “JSU K.L. Mauthausen Unidos! [sic] en juventud combatiente para aplastar a Franco!” (Spanish Socialist Youth [within a five-point star] K.L. Mauthausen United! [sic] youth in combat to crush Franco!). Both slogans are within a five-point star. In the spring of 1945, twenty-four year old Boix’s and his young comrades firmly and fervently believed that they had resisted, subverted, and overcome Nazi fascism and that Francoism was next in line to be toppled. They were probably giddy with youthful idealism as is also indicated in a photo taken by Boix of several of his friends, colleagues, and compatriots, Miguel García San Martín, Jesús Tello, Jesús Grau, and Rafael Sivera holding machine guns and rifles on the fifth or sixth of May between the arrival of the first allied patrols and the installation of US troops (Toran and Sala 229). These young men appear empowered, two of them with machine guns. In fact, they are seated on (one leaning against) a short wall next to what appears to be a guard tower. *They* were the new guardians of order (Pike 255). They had triumphed in their resistance. The photos by Boix in these days show, of course, in journalistic style, the concentrationary conditions. Having lived in Mauthausen for four and a half years he knew the images to capture. Yet, among the most striking photos are those of Boix himself and of his comrades—young men evincing their newly found power as they posed with dangerous props; previously these fire arms had been used to keep them in order, yet now they were in possession of them and wielded them as the arbiters of order and stability in the tides of change.



Group of Spanish Republican survivors posing with Republican flag in the Mauthausen *Appellplatz*, May 1945. Photo by Francesc Boix. Courtesy Museu d'Història de Catalunya (Fons Amical de Mauthausen).

Francisco Boix's stills poignantly articulate not only History (capitalized) but also history as in personal experiences. The photographic subjects "tell" both a unique and shared haunted tale of one and all—in myriad permutations—who crossed the threshold into the vast Nazi concentrationary universe. They beg the question: In what do we find our humanity? Is it in the particular? A name? A face? Is it in a collective identity marker? A nationality? A place of origin? A shared ideology? Or is it something both particular *and* universal? Choice. A human being's ability to choose, be it identity, geography, political beliefs. Boix's photos attest to survival of life, of human beings, but also survival of ideas, traditions, and belief systems of those intended for annihilation.

In spite of the horrors Boix developed on film or photographed himself during liberation, these black and white stills are beautiful in a poignant, exquisite, melancholy way. By combating his fellow deportees' anonymity, by documenting with images and notes, by capturing and salvaging from oblivion glimpses into everyday existence at Mauthausen, Francesc Boix pays homage to those disappeared and those present. His photos eliminate the possibility of dismemory. These images, human stories captured on film, tell his story and that of so many others with whom he identified. Through his testimony at Nuremberg and Dachau, and through the salvaged and authored photos, he sought to awaken in others (both viewers and listeners) a

sense of pathos, to feel for his subjects, his fellow campmates, comrades, and compatriots, and to join him in combating injustice.

Notes

1. Boix's testimony in the Nuremberg trials (January 28–29, 1946) did not relate at all to the Spaniards in the camps; rather he was there to prove the case against Ernst Kaltenbrunner, head of the Gestapo, and Albert Speer.
2. By 1950, Boix had written a book (which was never published) about his experience in Mauthausen. When Bermejo published *Francisco Boix el fotógrafo de Mauthausen*, he had been unable to track it. The title of the unpublished book, *Spaniaker* (a denigrating German term for Spaniards), had been in the hands of his friends Joaquim López Raimundo, André Wurmser, and Pierre Courtade.
3. As Roig, Pike, and Bermejo, among others, have noted, the salvaging of photos was a collective endeavor. Antoni García, Boix's fellow photographer in the Mauthausen ID service; Jacinto Cortés García, who traveled and worked between the camp and the town of Mauthausen; Anna Poitner, resident of the town of Mauthausen; Jesús Grau and Manuel San Martín who, along with Boix, retrieved the photos after liberation, and Joaquim López-Raimundo who stored the photos for many years.
4. Issue 12, July, 1945. *Regards*, dedicated to the Republican cause, had also shown photos of the Spanish Civil War taken by Robert Capa and Gerda Taro.
5. It is not until the Vietnam War that it is "virtually certain that none of the best known photographs were set ups" (Sontag 57).
6. Lope Massaguer states in *Mauthausen fin de trayecto*, "convivíamos con la muerte. La temíamos mucho menos que al dolor, a las humillaciones, era nuestra compañera, nuestra amiga y, a veces, nuestra única posibilidad de escapar" (86). (*Mauthausen fin de trayecto* 86, qtd in Bermejo 73) (we lived with death. We feared it much less than the pain, than the humiliations; it was our companion, our friend and, at times, our only possibility of escape).
7. Napoleonic invasion and ensuing popular uprising and war.
8. "No 'we' should be taken for granted when the subject is looking at other people's pain" (Sontag 7).
9. "In contrast to a written account . . . a photograph has only one language and is destined for all" (Sontag 20).
10. Here the term "systematically" is utilized with two meaning in mind: as "methodical" and as "sanctioned by a system."
11. This concept was discussed by David Herzberger following his plenary speech at the May 2007 International Conference on Spanishness in the Cinema and Novel of the Twentieth and Twenty-first-Century Spain that took place at the University of North Texas (Denton, TX).
12. Because of the Napoleonic invasion, Charles IV had attempted to flee and, in so doing, he literally attempted to and symbolically did abandon his country and people, leaving them in the hands of the French tyrant's troops.

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