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## “The Shadow of a Past Time”:

### History and Graphic Representation in *Maus*

Hillary Chute

Because I grew up with parents who were always ready to see the world grid crumble, and when it started feeling that that was happening here and now, it wasn't a total surprise. . . . I think the one thing I really learned from my father was how to pack a suitcase. You know? It was the one thing he wanted to make sure I understood, like how to use every available centimeter to get as much stuff packed into a small space as possible. The ice might be thinner than one would like to think.

—Art Spiegelman (qtd. in D'Arcy 3)

In *In the Shadow of No Towers*, his most recent book of comic strips, Art Spiegelman draws connections between his experience of 9/11 and his survivor parents' experience of World War II, suggesting that the horrors of the Holocaust do not feel far removed from his present-day experience in the twenty-first century.<sup>1</sup> “The killer apes learned nothing from the twin towers of Auschwitz and Hiroshima,” Spiegelman writes; 9/11 is the “same old deadly business as usual” (n. pag.). Produced serially, Spiegelman's *No Towers* comic strips were too politically incendiary to find wide release in the United States; they were largely published abroad and in New York's weekly Jewish newspaper the *Forward*. *In the Shadow of No Towers* powerfully asserts that “the shadow of a past time [interweaves] with a present time,” to use Spiegelman's own description of his Pulitzer-prize winning two-volume work *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (Spiegelman qtd. in Silverblatt 35). In one telling panel there the bodies of four Jewish girls hanged in World War II dangle from trees in the Catskills as the Spiegel-



Figure 1. *Maus II* 79.

mans drive to the supermarket in 1979 (figure 1).<sup>2</sup>

The persistence of the past in *Maus*, of course, does figure prominently in analyses of the text's overall representational strategies. We see this, for instance, in Dominick LaCapra's reading of the book's "thematic mode of carnivalization" (175), Andreas Huyssen's theorizing of Adornean mimesis in *Maus*, and Alan Rosen's study of Vladek Spiegelman's broken English.<sup>3</sup> Most readings of how *Maus* represents history approach the issue in terms of ongoing debates about Holocaust representation, in the context of postmodernism, or in relation to theories of traumatic memory. But such readings do not pay much attention to *Maus*'s narrative form:<sup>4</sup> the specificities of reading graphically, of taking individual pages as crucial units of comics grammar. The form of *Maus*, however, is essential to how it represents history. Indeed, *Maus*'s contribution to thinking about the "crisis in representation," I will argue, is precisely in how it proposes that the medium of comics can approach and express serious, even devastating, histories.<sup>5</sup>

"I'm *literally* giving a form to my father's words and narrative," Spiegelman observes about *Maus*, "and that form for me has to do with panel size, panel rhythms, and visual structures of the page" (Interview with Gary Groth 105, emphasis in original). As I hope to show, to claim that comics makes language, ideas, and concepts "literal" is to call attention to how the medium can make the twisting lines of history readable through form.

When critics of *Maus* do examine questions of form, they often focus on the cultural connotations of comics rather than on the form's aesthetic capabilities—its innovations with space and temporality.<sup>6</sup> Paul Buhle, for

instance, claims, “More than a few readers have described [*Maus*] as the most compelling of any [Holocaust] depiction, perhaps because only the caricatured quality of comic art is equal to the seeming unreality of an experience beyond all reason” (16). Where Michael Rothberg contends, “By situating a nonfictional story in a highly mediated, unreal, ‘comic’ space, Spiegelman captures the hyperintensity of Auschwitz” (206), Stephen Tabachnick suggests that *Maus* may work “because it depicts what was all too real, however unbelievable, in a tightly controlled and brutally stark manner. The black and white quality of *Maus*’s graphics reminds one of newsprint” (155). But all such analyses posit too direct a relationship between form and content (unreal form, unreal content; all too real form, all too real content), a directness that Spiegelman explicitly rejects.<sup>7</sup>

As with all cultural production that faces the issue of genocide, Spiegelman’s text turns us to fundamental questions about the function of art and aesthetics (as well as to related questions about the knowability and the transmission of history: as Hayden White asserts, “*Maus* manages to raise all of the crucial issues regarding the ‘limits of representation’ in general” [42]). Adorno famously interrogated the fraught relation of aesthetics and Holocaust representation in two essays from 1949, “Cultural Criticism and Society” and “After Auschwitz”—and later in the enormously valuable “Commitment” (1962), which has been the basis of some recent important meditations on form.<sup>8</sup> In “Cultural Criticism” Adorno charges, “To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric” (34).<sup>9</sup> We may understand what is at stake as a question of betrayal: Adorno worries about how suffering can be given a voice in art “without immediately being betrayed by it” (“Commitment” 312); we must recognize “the possibility of knowing history,” Cathy Caruth writes, “as a deeply ethical dilemma: the unremitting problem of *how not to betray the past*” (27, Caruth’s italics). I argue that *Maus*, far from betraying the past, engages this ethical dilemma through its form. Elaborating tropes like “the presence of the past” through the formal complexities of what Spiegelman calls the “stylistic surface” of a page (*Complete Maus*),<sup>10</sup> I will consider how *Maus* represents history through the time and space of the comics page.

In the hybrid form of comics, two narrative tracks never exactly synthesize or fully explain each other.<sup>11</sup> In “their essence,” Spiegelman says, comics

are about time being made manifest spatially, in that you’ve got all these different chunks of time—each box being a differ-

ent moment of time—and you see them all at once. As a result you're always, in comics, being made aware of different times inhabiting the same space. (qtd. in Silverblatt 35)

Comics are composed in panels—also called frames—and in gutters, the rich empty spaces between the selected moments that direct our interpretation. The effect of the gutter lends to comics its “annotation” of time as space.<sup>12</sup> “Time as space” is a description we hear again and again from theorists of comics. However, it is only when one recognizes how *Maus* is able to effectively approach history through its spatiality that one appreciates the form’s grasp on nuanced political expression. Emphasizing how comics deals in space, as I do here, highlights how this contemporary, dynamic medium both informs and is informed by postmodern politics in a productive, dialogical process. Space, Fredric Jameson contends, is the perceptual modality of postmodernity (*Postmodernism* 154–80); and where the dominant rhetoric of modernism is temporal, Susan Stanford Friedman argues, postmodernism adopts a rhetoric of space—of location, multiplicity, borderlands, and, I would add, boundary crossings.<sup>13</sup>

In the epigraph to this essay, describing how his father taught him to pack a suitcase to “use every available centimeter to get as much stuff packed into a small space as possible,” Spiegelman alludes to his father’s experiences in wartime Poland. Yet the historical lesson also shapes Spiegelman’s formal preoccupations. Throughout *Maus* he represents the complicated entwining of the past and the present by “packing” the tight spaces of panels. He found an “architectonic rigor . . . necessary to understand to compose the pages of *Maus*,” he explains (qtd. in Silverblatt 33), and has commented: “Five or six comics on one piece of paper . . . [I am] my father’s son” (Spiegelman, Address).<sup>14</sup> It is to this effect that *Maus* exploits the spatial form of graphic narrative, with its double-encodings and visual installment of paradoxes, so compellingly, refusing telos and closure even as it narrativizes history. In this light, I will analyze a range of sections of the book: some that have been treated comparatively little in *Maus* criticism, such as the multitemporal panel in the embedded comic strip “Prisoner on the Hell Planet” and the double epitaph of the book’s last page, and some that have not been treated at all, such as the scene that centers on a timeline of Auschwitz.

## Bleeding and rebuilding history

The first volume of *Maus* is subtitled, significantly, *My Father Bleeds History*. The slow, painful effusion of history in this “tale,” the title suggests, is a bloodletting: its enunciation and dissemination are not without cost to Vladek Spiegelman (indeed, it is his headstone that marks, however unstably, the ending of *Maus*). In suggesting that the concept of “history” has become and is excruciating for Vladek, the title also implies an aspect of the testimonial situation we observe over the course of *Maus*’s pages: the fact that, as Spiegelman reports, his father had “no desire to bear witness” (Interview with Joey Cavalieri et al. 192). Indeed, throughout much of the book, Vladek would clearly prefer, we see, to complain about his rocky second marriage. Towards the end of the second volume of *Maus*, Vladek protests to Artie, “All such things of the war, I tried to put out of my mind once and for all. . . . Until you **rebuild** me all this from your questions” (98).<sup>15</sup> Vladek’s bleeding is his son Artie’s textual, visual (as well as emotional) rebuilding. Spiegelman as author is distinctly aware of Artie the character’s shades of vampirism, however well-intentioned. And the idea of “bleeding” history (at the demand of a son) acquires further poignancy when one realizes—as transcripts of the taped interviews between Vladek and Art Spiegelman on the CD-ROM *The Complete Maus* reveal—that Vladek and his wife, Anja Spiegelman, never spoke to each other in detail about their (literally unspeakable) experiences in the camps.<sup>16</sup> This “bleeding” of history is not an easy process; Anja’s diaries, for instance, as Vladek explained, were too full of history to remain extant after her death: “I had to make an order with everything. . . . These papers had too many *memories*. So I **burned** them” (*Maus I*, 158). Art Spiegelman’s narrativization of his parents’ history, then, as many critics have pointed out, is also his *own* making “an order with everything.” He reconstructs history in his own language—comics—in frames and gutters, interpreting and interrupting as he rebuilds.<sup>17</sup> Comics frames provide psychic order; as Spiegelman recently remarked about 9/11: “If I thought in page units, I might live long enough to do another page” (Gussow).

*Maus*’s chapter 1, “The Sheik,” zooms into history. In the middle of its second page is a panel packed with signifiers of the past and present, jammed together in a long rectangular frame, only an inch high, that spans the width of the page (figure 2). In a space that was once Artie’s bedroom (a pennant proclaiming “Harpur,” Spiegelman’s college, is still pinned to the wall), Vladek, his camp tattoo visible for the first time, pumps on an



Figure 2. *Maus I* 12.

Exercycle. Not moving forward, he is literally spinning his wheels. This suspension is also indicated by the fact that a full view of his body, locked into position, appears across frames on the page: his head in panel four, his torso in panel five, his foot in panel seven. The wide berth of his arms frames Artie, who sits and smokes, looking small. A framed photo—of the dead Anja Spiegelman, we will later find out—is propped on a desk to the right of both men, representing both an object of desire and a rebuke. In a speech balloon on the left that echoes the photograph and tattoo on the right, as if the past—articulated (spoken), inscribed (tattooed), documented (photographed)—were flanking both men, closing in on them, Vladek proclaims: “It would take **many** books, my life, and no one wants anyway to hear such stories” (12).

From the start, Spiegelman crams his panels with markers of the past (the camp tattoo, prewar photographs) and the ultimate marker of the present: Artie Spiegelman himself, framed by his father’s body, his parents’ postwar child, born in Sweden after the couple lost their first son to the Nazis. And while the horizontally elongated panel implies a stillness—its page-spanning width eliminates any gutter, where the movement of time in comics happens—it yet registers Vladek’s first moments of dipping into the past. While Vladek verbally refuses to offer “such stories,” the panel below, an iris diaphragm depicting his dapper young self (“really a nice, handsome boy” [13]) in the early 1930s, pushes up into the rectangular panel of the present, its curve hitting the handlebars of Vladek’s Exercycle between his grasping hands.<sup>18</sup> This protruding circular frame can be figured as the wheel to Vladek’s Exercycle. Spiegelman points out, “You enter into the past for the first time through that wheel” (*Complete Maus*).

The visual intersection of past and present appears throughout in the architecture of panels. In chapter 3 of *Maus I*, “Prisoner of War,” Artie sprawls across the floor of his father’s Rego Park, Queens, home, pencil in hand, notebook open, soliciting stories (45, figure 3). Artie’s legs span decades. Looking up at his sitting father, facing forward toward the direction of the unfolding narrative, Artie’s legs are yet mired in the past: they conspicuously overlap—indeed, unify—the panel depicting 1939 and the one depicting the conversation in 1978. Artie’s body, then—in the act of writing, of recording—is visually figured as the link between past and present, disrupting any attempt to set apart Vladek’s history from the discursive situation of the present.

The connection between past and present in this chapter is also emphasized by verbal parallels. Vladek, for instance, describes a grueling POW work detail, in which a German soldier demands that a filthy stable be spotless in an hour. Interrupting his own recollection, Vladek suddenly bursts out, “**But look what you do, Artie!** You’re dropping on the carpet cigarette ashes. You want it should be like a stable **here?**” (52). Joshua Brown points out that this incident—which he identifies as one of many “interstices of the testimony”—suggests that “Vladek’s account is not a chronicle of undefiled fact but a constitutive process, that remembering is a construction of the past” (95). And the ways in which the past invades the present recollection, or vice versa, gradually grow more ominous: in the beginning of *Maus* comparisons may involve issues like cleanliness, but by the second volume, Spiegelman will draw Artie’s cigarette smoke as the smoke of human flesh drifting upward from the crematoria of Auschwitz (*Maus II* 69).<sup>19</sup>

## Inheriting the past, packing a panel

The most striking instance of representing past and present together in *Maus I* is the inclusion of the autobiographical comic strip “Prisoner on the Hell Planet: A Case History” (1972) in the text of *Maus*. Breaking the narrative flow of *Maus*, interrupting its pagination, style, and tone, “Prisoner on the Hell Planet” enters into the story, it would seem, from outside, registering confrontationally—and materially—the presence



Figure 3. *Maus I* 45.

of the past. First published in an underground comic book, *Short Order Comix* 1, it narrates the immediate aftermath of the 1968 suicide of Spiegelman's mother, Auschwitz survivor Anja Spiegelman, at his family's home in Queens.

Readers are introduced to the existence of "Prisoner on the Hell Planet" at the same time that a calendar is first made conspicuous in *Maus*, in the panel in which his stepmother Mala startles Artie by mentioning "that comic strip you once made—the one about your mother" (99). This calendar appears in five of eight panels preceding "Prisoner" and in eight out of the nine panels on the page directly following it, but this representation of the linear movement of time is disrupted by the intrusion of "Prisoner," which does not seamlessly become part of the fabric of the larger narrative but rather maintains its alterity. Featuring human characters, it is clearly distinct from the rest of *Maus* in its basic representational methodology; its heavy German Expressionist style is an unsubtle analog to the angry emotional content of the strip. *Maus*'s page numbers stop while "Prisoner" unfolds; and the older strip's pages are set against a black, unmarked background, forming what Spiegelman calls a "funereal border" that stands out as a thick black line when the book is closed (*Complete Maus*).

"Prisoner" is Artie's earliest testament to what Marianne Hirsch persuasively describes as "postmemory" ("Projected Memory" 8), a now oft-cited term that she first conceived of in relation to *Maus*.<sup>20</sup> And while this visual and narrative rupture of the text suggests what and how the past continually means in the present, I want to focus in particular on one packed panel on "Prisoner"'s last page (figure 4). Like the volume in which it is embedded, "Prisoner" spatially depicts multiple temporalities in single visual-verbal frames. If Spiegelman claims that he feels very much like his "father's son" when he draws five comics on one page, here we see five different moments in one panel, criss-crossed by text that alternates sentiments corresponding with the

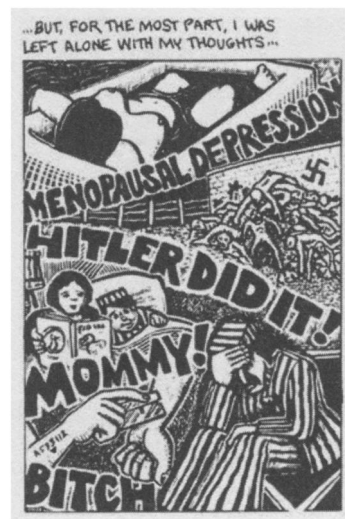


Figure 4. *Maus I* 103.

frame's accreted temporalities: We get "Mommy!" (the past) but we also get "Bitch" (the present); we get "Hitler Did It!" (the past) but we also get "Menopausal Depression" (the present) (103). Approaching the past and the present together is typical for someone considering narratives of causality, but here Spiegelman obsessively layers several temporalities in one tiny frame, understood by the conventions of the comics medium to represent one moment in time. Artie's childhood bedroom is contiguous with a concentration camp; Anja's disembodied arm, readying for her suicide, floats out from the body of the youngster Artie, its thumb just about touching the leg of the adult Artie, who sits in despair on what looks like her casket.

This frame, smaller than 2 inches by 2 inches, depicts several images from different time periods: Anja's dead body in the bathtub; a heap of anonymous dead bodies piled high underneath a brick wall painted with a swastika; Anja reading to the child Artie; Anja cutting her wrist, her tattooed number fully visible on her forearm; the young man Artie in mourning, wearing the same Auschwitz uniform he wears even as a child, happily listening to his mother read. "Prisoner," then, posits that Artie inherited the burden that the uniform represents, in a natural transfer of pain that wasn't consciously accepted or rejected but seamlessly assumed.<sup>21</sup> He earned his stripes at birth.

## *Maus II: Making an order*

In *Maus II: And Here My Troubles Began* Spiegelman's self-reflexivity is a strategy specific to representing the Holocaust. By explicitly centering portions of the text on its own enunciative context, he offers his doubts as to his adequacy to represent the Holocaust, as a secondary witness and as a cartoonist. He assiduously explores his feelings about *Maus I* in *Maus II*, whose subtitle, after all, refers not only to Vladek's statement made after he left Auschwitz ("Here, in Dachau, my troubles began" [91]), but also to Spiegelman's own success with *Maus I* ("things couldn't be going better with my 'career,' or at home, but mostly I feel like crying" [43]). The most metafictional section in the volume is the "Time flies" episode (41–46). While "Prisoner" represents a retextualization and resignification of a past narrative into a newer, yet still provisional one, "Time flies" works as a projection forward, a meditation on the viability of the present project.<sup>22</sup>

The double voicing of *Maus*—Artie’s voice and his father’s—presents a view of narrative generally and testimony specifically as a polyvalent weave.<sup>23</sup> Testimony and memory here are collaborative procedures generated by both speaker and listener. Further, the play of voices in *Maus* is complicated in light of Spiegelman’s position that comics provides a “visual voice in the artist’s hand” (qtd. in D’Arcy 2). In this Holocaust representation, the artist’s hand is the visibilized link between the personal voice of the primary witness and its translation, the voice of the secondary witness: as such, Spiegelman’s hands are frequently pictured in *Maus*, and his “artistic hands” are the subject of conspicuous conversation between him and his father. The comics medium, as Spiegelman makes us aware, is not only *dialogic*—able to represent the competing voices of autobiography and biography in one layered text—but cross-discursive, as when Spiegelman draws against his father’s verbal narration, turning what he calls the “cognitive dissonance” between the two of them into representational collision (Silverblatt 32). (One prominent example of the son battling his father’s verbal testimony with his own visual medium is Spiegelman’s drawing of an only just visible orchestra playing as prisoners march out of the gates of Auschwitz, contradicting Vladek’s firm vocal insistence that no orchestra was present.)<sup>24</sup>

Both Artie and Vladek want to order historical narrative. But Vladek’s order—poignantly, understandably—involves a *degridding*. He wants to dismantle, to destroy in order to forget (“I had to make an order with everything . . . These papers had too many *memories*. So I **burned** them” [*Maus I* 159]), even as his account is teased out by his son over a period of years. While Vladek’s order is a defenestration, Artie wants to build windows, to resurrect; Spiegelman’s language is that he “materializes” Vladek’s words and descriptions in *Maus* (qtd. in Brown 98). In the introduction to his 1977 collection *Breakdowns*, which contains the three-page prototype for *Maus*, Spiegelman attaches the concept of narrative to the spatial, “materializing” work of comics:

My dictionary defines COMIC STRIP as ‘a narrative series of cartoons. . .’ A NARRATIVE is defined as ‘a story.’ Most definitions of STORY leave me cold. . . Except for the one that says ‘A complete horizontal division of a building. . . [From Medieval Latin HISTORIA. . . a row of windows with pictures on them]’”  
(n. pag.; Spiegelman’s brackets)

And Spiegelman speaks of the act of ordering a comics narrative in frames as a kind of necessary reckoning: “The parts that are in the book are now in neat little boxes. I know what happened by having assimilated it that fully. And that’s part of my reason for this project, in fact” (qtd. in Witek 101). Working with his father’s slippery, strange, non-linear, incomplete testimony, Spiegelman is drawn to the concept of imposing formal order.<sup>25</sup> It comes as no surprise, then, that at one point he was drawn to a high modernist ethic of representation for *Maus*; he thought he should compose the book “in a more Joycean way” (qtd. in Brown 94). Yet finally, Spiegelman ceded the structure of a *Ulysses* for the mere structural containment of “neat little boxes,” a description that evokes both a hopeful (if impossible) burial of the past in coffin-panels, and the full, packed suitcases that are his father’s history lesson for the present.

The difference in the way Vladek and Artie each “order” history registers clearly in a crucial scene in which Artie’s attempt to chronologically account for Vladek’s time in Auschwitz provides the basis for disagreement. While Artie emphasizes Vladek’s *time* there, Vladek insists on the *space* of his Auschwitz experience. Appropriately, then, in the chapter “Auschwitz (time flies),” *Maus* presents a timeline of 1944 which is the only explanatory diagram not part of the authorial purview of Vladek (figure 5). (Diagrams are a recurring subject, a mode of representation, and a collaborative textual practice in *Maus*, where, with this exception, they are organic to Vladek’s narrative thread.) This diagram represents a disagreement; the son is “imposing order” while the survivor, caught up in his testimony, resists that historiographic impulse.

Artie wants to present a lucid and chronological narrative of his father’s months in 1944, but Vladek resists Artie’s accounting: “In Auschwitz we didn’t wear watches” (68). When Artie draws a diagram for *Maus*, then, he draws it as the site of a father-son battle. Spiegelman presents his own desire for linear order and Vladek’s resistance to that kind of order in an especially complex fashion. The diagram pierces three rows of frames. It begins at the end of the page’s first tier, where it blocks a corner of Vladek’s speech balloon, interrupting a first-person sentence. “I—” Vladek starts, before our eyes run up against a black-rimmed timeline, its corners sharp (68).

The timeline begins in March 1944 and continues down vertically, representing Vladek’s Auschwitz activity: quarantine, tin shop, shoe shop, black work. It does not occupy the furthestmost space of the page,



Figure 5. *Maus II* 68.

however, but is recontextualized, if only teasingly, by the shrubs poking messily out from its right margin. Moreover, while the diagram cuts off Vladek's speech in the first tier and his shoulder in the second tier, in the third tier it is itself interrupted by Artie's wife Françoise's speech balloon—"YOOHOO! I was *looking* for you." We have, then, the present layered thickly by the past, framed tentatively by the present, layered again by the past, and interrupted by a present-day exclamation, a burst of the banal: lunch time. Directly under the timeline, Françoise calls attention to the tangle of temporalities in a comment as applicable, in the haunting abstract, to Vladek's months in Auschwitz as it is to the length of Artie's stroll around the bungalows: "I was worried. You were gone a long time" (68).

Superimposed over the frames, the timeline makes the sort of historiographic gesture that the overall narrative, shuttling rapidly back and forth from past to present, does not attempt, and that Vladek cannot offer. As Spiegelman puts it: "The number of layers between an event and somebody trying to apprehend that event through time and intermediaries is like working with flickering shadows" (qtd. in Brown 98). He thus represents the accreted, shifting "layers" of historical apprehension not only through language but also through the literal, spatial layering of comics, enabling the presence of the past to become radically legible on the page.

## The question of closure

Pointing to *Maus's* specific argument about temporality and the representation of history, one anecdote is particularly telling about the political work *Maus* accomplishes. Spiegelman acted as a catalyst to get a show about Bosnia at the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C.—"a show which, to me, was a justification of that museum's existence," he says. (Spiegelman had rejected the idea of having a show about *Maus* there: "The Holocaust Museum didn't need *Maus*, and *Maus* didn't need the authority of the Holocaust Museum to make itself understood") (Interview with Andrea Juno 16).<sup>26</sup> Spiegelman wanted to call the Bosnia show "Genocide Now." The museum drew back. As Spiegelman narrates the museum's objection:

"Does it have to be called Genocide Now? Got a better one? Can't we just talk about the atrocities in former Yugo-

slavia?” Well, if the situation looks and smells like genocide, it probably is. They were still against the title, and the best alternative I could come up with was: ‘Never Again and Again and Again.’ They didn’t like that title either, and that was about the time I checked out. (Interview with Andrea Juno 16)

This insistence, “Genocide Now,” is a refusal to see “the past” as past—which is an adamant, ethical argument that *Maus* undertakes through the temporal and spatial experimentation that the narrative movement of comics offers. “Genocide Now” is blunt, grim, unflinching. But even its lesser incarnation, “Never Again and Again and Again,” expresses the continuousness of history as “what hurts” (as Jameson puts it), as our non-divorce from the traumatic events of the past, the impossibility of rejecting horror as ever completely “behind us” (102). This title strongly recalls Spiegelman’s own choice of an internally repetitive title for his recent collection of work, *From Maus to Now to Maus to Now*, which itself posits the historical trauma represented in *Maus* as unending. Spiegelman insists on the persistence of trauma—in his choices of titles, in his textual practice of spatial intrusion, overlaying, and overlapping—in order to show how memory can be treated as an ongoing creative learning process, rather than something anchored in insuperable trauma. On the pages of *Maus*, Spiegelman shows us the violation and breaking of the “world grid” in both senses of the term—phenomenologically and literally on the page. Spiegelman’s overtly political suggestion—which he registers in literal, graphic frame-breaking—is that the past is present, again and again and again: *Maus* questions the framework of everyday life that is taken for granted. As Robert Storr asserts of the obscene mouse-head corpses “piled like crumpled wastepaper” under Artie’s feet in the section “Time flies” while he sits at his drawing board, contemplating his project: “this is not a sick joke but evidence of the heartsickness that motivates and pervades the book: it is the gallows humor of a generation that has not faced annihilation but believes utterly in its past reality and future possibility” (28). *Maus*’s enmeshed temporalities suggest a line of thinking that indeed stems from such a worldview. In his latest work, Spiegelman admits to having an “existential conviction that I might not live long enough to see [*In the Shadow of No Towers*] published” (np).

The effect of visually, spatially linking the past and the present as *Maus* does is to urgently insist on history as an “untranscendable horizon” (Jameson 102). “Instead of making comics into a narcotic, I’m trying to

make comics that can wake you up, like caffeine comics that get you back in touch with things that are happening around you,” says Spiegelman (qtd. in Silverblatt 31). Indeed, *Maus*’s challenging multivocality, cross-discursivity, and the thick surface texture of its pages demand a reading process that engages the reader in an act of consumption that is explicitly anti-diversionary.

In “Collateral Damage,” a *PMLA* editor’s column introducing an issue that explores visuality and literary studies, Marianne Hirsch focuses crucial attention on *In the Shadow of No Towers* and on the form of comics generally.<sup>27</sup> She asks: “What kind of visual-verbal literacy can respond to the needs of the present moment?” (1212). As Hirsch shows in her analysis of *No Towers*, certainly Spiegelman’s work is one important place to go. Spiegelman himself expresses strong views about the literacy that comics require and hone: “It seems to me that comics have already shifted from being an icon of illiteracy to becoming one of the last bastions of literacy,” he has said (Interview with Gary Groth 61). “If comics have any problem now, it’s that people don’t even have the patience to decode comics at this point. . . . I don’t know if we’re the vanguard of another culture or if we’re the last blacksmiths.”

Historical graphic narratives today draw on a popular form once considered solely distracting in order to engage serious political questions. We see in *Maus* faith in “making hopeful use of popular forms,” to use a phrase of Neil Nehring’s (36)—the (post)utopian impulse evident in Spiegelman’s earlier work such as *Raw*, the magazine that declared it had “lost its faith in nihilism” (*Raw* 3, July 1981). Charles Bukowski wrote Spiegelman in the late 1970s, “Ah, you guys are all ministers in Popeye suits” (qtd. in Silverblatt 36). To the allegation of masking high moral seriousness with “the popular,” Spiegelman responded, “Most of the artists in *Raw*—I won’t say every single one of them—are moving forward from a moral center. As a result, it seemed to me to be interesting to be able to make ethics hip.”

Indeed, the graphic narrative is a contemporary form that is helping to expand the cultural map of historical representation. Its expansive visual-verbal grammar can offer a space for ethical representation without problematic closure. *Maus* is a text inspired with an intense desire to represent politically and ethically. But it is not a didactic text pushing moral interpretations or solutions.<sup>28</sup> An author “moving forward from a moral center” is not the same as an author presenting an authoritative morality

tale of history—a concept that Spiegelman’s text vehemently rejects.<sup>29</sup> *Maus* defines itself against morality tales as Gertrud Koch describes them: narratives that “endeavor to convince us of their own moral qualifications and blur the dark and destructive future the past often presents to its victims” (406). As its stunning last page makes apparent, *Maus* eschews the closure implied by the concept of a moral text, offering instead multiple layers representing time as space; an unstable interplay of presence and absence; and productive, cross-discursive collisions.<sup>30</sup>

As Spiegelman notes, *Maus*’s last page “just keeps ending” (*Complete Maus*). It both suggests the ethical value of narrative and insists that no voice could or should have the last word, thus suggesting the work of memory as a public process.<sup>31</sup> Through a form that “folds in on itself in order to get out,” the ending of *Maus* moves beyond the particularity of its “tale,” inviting the reader to join in a collective project of meaning-making (*Complete Maus*).

As its grim ending so clearly reveals, *Maus* does not offer—with sincerity—the narrative closure that would seal a traditionally moral story. *Maus*’s last page breaks the frame because it is innovative in its *spacing*, ontologically suggesting that there is no closure, no “ending,” no telos.<sup>32</sup> Unsurprisingly, the last page of *Maus* does not have a page number; it is not stamped with a linear logic of progression. In a way, *Maus* does end the most traditional way a narrative can: with a literal claim of “happy ever after.” And it ends the most literal way a biography can: with the death of its subject. But like so much postmodern fiction, *Maus* offers, exploits, and undercuts the most traditional of happy endings (romantic reunion; family romance). And, like so much biography, it offers and undercuts that most traditional of structural principles: life dates.

The last page of *Maus* is charged with movement: the narrative accelerates and *decelerates*—if one can call it that—rapidly (figure 6). The page offers six panels, two on each row, and each pair of frames works off of an opposition. The first tier moves from outside to inside, from the open Sosnowiec street to a close view of the Jewish Organization building (a speech balloon juts out from its closed window). The second tier moves from a position of graphically stark apartness (Vladek, dressed in white, and Anja, dressed in black, face each other disbelievably across a room) to a position of dramatic togetherness (Vladek and Anja embrace in front of an iris diaphragm). In the third tier’s first panel, Artie sits as if anchored to his father’s bed, and in the second panel, Artie stands, leaving; in the first



Figure 6. *Maus II* 136.

panel Artie is Art, and in the second, his father names him Richieu (the name of his long dead brother, who did not survive the war); in the first panel Vladek faces Artie—and the reader—and in the second he rolls over and turns away, bending his arm over his face. Essentially, for the readers of *Maus*, in that last moment he dies, for the next image Spiegelman presents is his tombstone, balanced exactly in the middle of the two last frames, its Star of David shooting up the gutter. The Spiegelman tombstone rises up into this bottommost tier of frames, splitting the two panels symmetrically. The literally central presence of the tombstone's Star of David on the last page of *Maus*, then, is a key affirmation of Judaism, for this prominently placed symbol resignifies: Spiegelman recalls the Star as a mark of hatred and oppression on the Nazi-enforced badges that are so prevalent in the first volume of *Maus*, reversing the "mark" to attest to the enduring survival of Judaism and Jews.<sup>33</sup>

Immediately we notice that balanced below the headstone, marked with the uppercase "SPIEGELMAN," is a lowercase echo, a reply to this death—Art Spiegelman's signature, and the dates he worked on *Maus*: "art spiegelman 1978–1991." The narrative argument of this page is in its spacing, its echoes and replies, its gulfs and repetitions, what it buries and what it at once engenders. Narrative closure (death, marriage) is often, especially in postmodern fiction, questioned by epilogues.<sup>34</sup> Spiegelman's signature—shaggy, stylized, undercase—and the tombstone that he places exactly in the center of a symmetrical page, is that very questioning "epilogue." As ever, Spiegelman competes with his father's narrative while at the same time faithfully representing it. Spiegelman's signature—not an extra-narrative detail or flourish but part of the (post-plot) narrative itself, does not represent closure or finality. The Spiegelman signature, echoing the engraving on the Spiegelman parental tombstone, marks the narrative's awareness of the falsity of *Maus*'s patently unhappy "happy ending." Vladek and Anja did not live "happy, happy, ever after," as Vladek claims in the narrative voiceover that accompanies their reunion embrace. The doubled inscriptions, epitaphic and autographic, *show* us that Spiegelman does not intend to let his father have the "last word" (even as he might desire the incredible delusion behind the inaccurate "happy ever after"). The last *spoken* words in *Maus* are Vladek's: "It's *enough* stories for now. . ." (emphasis and ellipses in original). The "story" suggested by the tombstone, though, is one that Vladek does not himself narrate (Anja's suicide), but of which readers of *Maus* are aware. The traumatic stories, *Maus* implies, go on after

its last image and will continue to come in the future; in this way, *Maus*, while a “survivor’s tale,” is not a morality tale. *Maus* rather exploits and resists the happy ending that punctuates a morality tale.

In *Maus*’s last page, Vladek and Anja reunite after Auschwitz, and *Maus* completes its family romance. “V-Vladek!” cries Anja. “Gasp,” manages Vladek. In his narrative voiceover to Artie, Vladek describes that “It was such a moment that everybody around us was crying together with us.” In the next panel the couple embrace as in an old Hollywood movie, in the center of a dramatic iris diaphragm, their faces buried in each other’s shoulders. Vladek narrates: “More, I don’t need to tell you. We were both very happy, and lived happy, happy ever after.” The intra-textual reference for *Maus*’s last page is a page in *Maus*’s Chapter Two, “The Honeymoon.” In this scene, which takes place before the war breaks out definitively, the dressed-up Spiegelmans dance closely with each other (at Anja’s sanitarium) in front of an iris diaphragm, in six separate frames (35). Vladek tells Anja, as the two dance, an amusing story about his father’s pillow, which the elder Spiegelman had retrieved at great peril when the family fled the 1914 war (in *Maus*’s last page, Vladek Spiegelman will place his arm, in a gesture of exhausted finality, across his pillow, almost like a child settling down to sleep). In this page’s final panel, when Vladek completes the punchline, about his father’s safe return but horse-sore behind, Anja—in the same posture as in *Maus*’s dramatic final page—embraces Vladek, her arms around his neck. “I love you, Vladek,” she says. Vladek’s voiceover narration, in a box below the image—as in *Maus*’s ending—is as follows: “And she was so laughing and so happy, so happy that she approached each time and kissed me, so happy she was” (35).

This repetition of “happy” three times is echoed in *Maus*’s conclusion, which correspondingly, unbelievably repeats “happy” three times: “We were both very happy, and lived happy, happy ever after.” Of course, however, although they embrace as if in a melodramatic film still at the end of Vladek’s testimony, readers of *Maus* know that the Spiegelmans’ narratives do not end happily. Instead, *Maus*’s last sequence shows, as Gertrud Koch puts it, the “endlessness of sadness” (403). Anja did not live “happy ever after”: even if the text had not earlier referenced her suicide, the tombstone punctuating the page clearly shows she died 14 years before Vladek, at age 56. And Vladek, as we well know, devastated by Anja’s death, in ill health, was often estranged from his only son and unhappy in his second marriage.

On one hand, the doubling of nomenclature (a representation of engraving, the “SPIEGELMAN” inscribed in stone—and its mimicry, the representation of authorial “voice” and performance, the “art spiegelman” inscribed in ink below the drawn grave) indicates Spiegelman’s attention to the idea of text as a social space, here particularly as a collaborative fabric created by father and son (and absent mother) that produces no single master of enunciation, but several interacting enunciators. It is clear that *Maus* subverts, even as it installs, the singularity and originality implied in signature (*Poetics* 81). But here Spiegelman’s narrative (implied in the open-endedness that his signature unexpectedly delivers) also competes with his father’s narrative of closure. Terms like “polyphonic” or “dialogic” come to mind, but the page, intermixed in its “conversation” with different media, is more complicated than a rubric like dialogism indicates, since Spiegelman responds to his father’s verbal narrative *visually*, by drawing his gravesite and drawing his own signature. Reading this page, one is reminded, as Felman points out, that testimony often functions as signature. Here Spiegelman’s literal signature competes with the signature of Vladek’s testimony. Spiegelman is here, as ever, doing (more than) two things at once, contradictorily preserving and questioning his father’s narrative. Spiegelman’s visual post-dialogue epilogue is at once oppositional (calling our attention to the stories told on the tombstone as a rejoinder to his father’s “ever after” conclusion), *and* commemorative, a tribute to his parents, a supplement to Vladek’s testimonial signature that he marks with his own literal signature: a deferring, lowercase inscription.

If life dates are the most traditional way to narrate a biography, Spiegelman offers us his parents’ life dates in *Maus*’s final page, gesturing towards the most basic, simplistic form of life narrative. Drawing their shared headstone as the penultimate punctuation of *Maus*, he officially immortalizes his parents in text (of course, their names are already preserved elsewhere, engraved in stone): “VLADEK Oct. 11, 1906–August 18, 1982” and “ANJA Mar. 15, 1912–May 21, 1968.” Directly below, his signature, followed by the dates he worked on *Maus*—“art spiegelman 1978–1991”—suggests several different meanings. We assume that the dates clearly indicate the “life” of *Maus*’s enunciation, the process of researching, drawing, and composing this work. Echoing the inscription of nomenclature on his parents’ gravesite, then, his signature implies his desire to put *Maus* to rest; or rather, it defines the life of the project as its procedure. Another way to read this line—if one were keyed to the power

of visualizing the literal, as Spiegelman prompts us to do throughout the text—is as Spiegelman’s *own* life dates: indeed, this option makes the most *graphic* sense, even as we know these dates to be false as those marking his biological lifespan.

By placing his signature directly below his parents’ grave—indeed, in the space of the ground below—Spiegelman figures himself as *buried* by his parents’ history. (Indeed, we can recall his strongest response to his status as a member of the “postmemory” generation: his accusations of murder to both parents). But Spiegelman’s signature is also a way to read the book backwards: his signature may be figured as *generative*, growing the text upwards from the space of the buried, repressed, and “entombed”—where it appears to end. *Maus*’s ending, then, *spatially* marks itself as a “working through” (the spaces and enclosures of panels and gravesites and ground), which is that documentary/testimonial imperative that does not give into closure.<sup>35</sup> From a graphic perspective, the movement of the page strikingly travels *upwards* (and backwards, then), suggesting the engendering of the narrative we have just read. Grass grows, somewhat wildly, up from the Spiegelman gravesite; the headstone is positioned as an arrow shooting up through the gutter into the grid of the page—and, it is implied, back through the narrative we have just completed. The Eternal Flame that is engraved on the stone, which represents Jewish persistence and permanence in the face of oppression and death, points up through the dead center of the page, aligned with the straight white line of the gutter. Thus positioned, the Eternal Flame—spiritually and graphically—signals the unending of life and narrative. This marks a continuousness rather than a closure, as with *Maus*’s double epitaph, which resists the teleological and the epitaphic. Because of the complexity of *Maus*, the defining example of this politically invested aesthetic form, graphic narratives are now part of a postmodern cartography, with new work such as Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis* charting childhood in revolutionary Iran, and Joe Sacco’s *Palestine* and *Safe Area Gorazde* mapping the frontlines of Palestine and Bosnia. Epitomizing the possibilities of the new comics form, *Maus*, interlaced with different temporalities whose ontological weave it frames and questions through spatial aesthetics, rebuilds history through a potent combination of words and images that draws attention to the tenuous and fragile footing of the present.

## Notes

1. Laura Frost recently argued that this connection is a weak point of *No Towers*. In my reading, however, the most interesting and politically useful, if risky, aspect of the book is its willingness to analyze a world-historical stage as opposed to keeping 9/11 local and specific, as Frost urges.

2. *In the Shadow of No Towers*, like the groundbreaking *Maus*, makes attention to interlacing temporalities part of its very form: Spiegelman's twenty-first-century comic strips are followed by reprints of old newspaper comic strips from the turn of the twentieth century. Spiegelman's own 10 strips are followed by seven plates, lavish reproductions of the historical strips. *No Towers*, then, like *Maus*, offers no end that implies recovery or transcendence. Working specifically against any metanarrative of progress, it argues, through its narrative grouping of original and historical material, that the "end" is in fact a return to the old. Spiegelman says in an interview that the confusion that the combination of new and old work might induce is "exactly the point of the book" (qtd. in Dreifus).

3. Other authors also note the persistence of the past in *Maus*. See for instance Sara Horowitz, Michael Rothberg, James Young, and Andrea Liss.

4. The work of Marianne Hirsch and Michael G. Levine are two important exceptions. In "Family Pictures: *Maus*, Mourning, and Postmemory" and in "Collateral Damage," Hirsch discusses how the comics form "performs an aesthetics of trauma" ("Collateral Damage" 1213). Levine discusses bleeding as the hemorrhaging of visual images that break out of frames (71). I disagree, however, with Levine's explication of the grammar of comics in terms of film language; dismissing comics on its own terms, he cites "Spiegelman's art of the 'slow motion picture'" (72). Deborah Geis also notes the "filmic" style of *Maus* (2). While *Maus* does make cultural references to film, I believe its form is best understood as specific to comics. For instance, as Scott McCloud points out about the crucial space of the gutter, comics' structural element of absence, "what's between the panels is the only element of comics that is not duplicated in any other medium" (13).

5. Rüdiger Kunow is correct to point out that

a self-reflexive awareness of the limits of representation has become not only a specific problem germane to the Holocaust but more generally a *conditio sine qua non* of all representations in theory, history, and cultural texts. (252)

6. Erin McGlothlin thoroughly dissects *Maus*'s temporalities through identification of its three diegetic levels and Genette's tripartite narrative classification system, but she does not consider the aesthetic issue of how time is represented spatially on the comics page.

7. Spiegelman rejected a certain woodcut style for *Maus* because it made the text "like a political cartoon" ("Jewish Mice" 116). He rejects the notion of a "graphic approach" as "a visual analog to the content" (Interview with Andrea Juno 10).

8. See Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub's *Testimony*, especially the chapter "Education and Crisis"; and W. J. T. Mitchell's "Commitment to Form."

9. Felman rightly believes this statement "has become itself (perhaps too readily) a cultural cliché, too hastily consumed and too hastily reduced to a summary dismissal" (33). This reading is affirmed by "Commitment," in which Adorno demands that art strive to resist the judgment of its uselessness in the face of suffering.

10. Spiegelman claims, "The page is the essential unit of information" and "I've considered the stylistic surface [of the page] a problem to solve" (*Complete Maus*).

11. While many critics invoke *Maus*'s "hybrid form" (Miller, "Art of Survival" 99) or "hybridized status" (LaCapra 146) when elaborating the destabilizing work that the text performs, few analyze the graphic form of *Maus* that creates this hybridity. Although LaCapra goes beyond other critical invocations of *Maus*'s hybridity by explaining that "blurring and hybridization should not be conflated although they may at times be very close" (146n14), his frequent use of the term warrants further discussion: see 145, 146, 147, 149, 151, 152, 153. See also Huyssen, Orvell, and Young for unexplicated invocations of *Maus*'s hybridity. My own understanding of this term as apposite to comics is premised on the fact that in comics, the images do not necessarily illustrate the text but can comprise a separate narrative thread; verbal and visual narratives do not simply blend together. This notion of hybridity is clarified in Lyotard's discussion of the *différend*: necessarily set into play by the nonunity of language, the *différend* represents the impossibility of bridging incommensurate discourses.

12. *Annotation* is Spiegelman's term for the procedure of comics; he describes comics pioneer Bernard Krigstein as "a philosopher of how time could be made visible and annotated in space" ("Krigstein"). For important theorizations of framing generally see Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*; Goffman; and Malina.

13. Friedman discusses location on page 20, multiplicity on page 24, and borders on 27–30. See also Mitchell, “Space, Ideology, and Literary Representation.”

14. Spiegelman refers here to his dense comic strip “A Day at the Circuits,” collected in his book *Breakdowns*. This obsession for packing and gathering took a more virulent form in Spiegelman’s youth, when, reportedly, he hoarded string while hospitalized for a mental breakdown, as he knew Vladek had done at Auschwitz (Gerber 168).

15. All emphases, including boldface in quotations from *Maus*, are Spiegelman’s. I call *Maus*’s artist character Artie (as his father does) and the text’s author Art Spiegelman.

16. The second volume of Spiegelman’s 1980s magazine *Raw* evokes *My Father Bleeds History* in its subtitle, *Open Wounds from the Cutting Edge of Commix*. This connection emphasizes the *extraction* implied in Spiegelman’s father “bleeding history” for his son’s medium.

17. There is an important body of criticism that explores this rebuilding in terms of the absent mother, Anja Spiegelman. See Hirsch, “Family Pictures”; LaCapra; Levine; and Miller, “Cartoons of the Self” and an expanded version, “The Art of Survival.”

18. *Maus* makes frequent use of the iris diaphragm, a technique often used at the end of silent films when the scene is viewed as if through a binocular and the image gradually diminishes into the darkness. This description is in Koch 401.

19. Smoke also figures the presence of the past in *In the Shadow of No Towers*, where Spiegelman draws Art’s cigarette smoke as the smoke coming from Ground Zero on 9/11. Art connects his father’s inability to describe the smell of the smoke of bodies in Auschwitz with his own indescribable olfactory experience in Lower Manhattan in 2001, all the while himself smoking, as in *Maus*, Cremo brand cigarettes.

20. Hirsch writes:

I use the term *postmemory* to describe the relationship of children of survivors of cultural or collective trauma to the experiences of their parents, experiences that they “remember” only as the stories and images with which they grew up, but that are so powerful, so monumental, as to constitute memories in their own right.

(“Projected Memory” 8)

See also Hirsch’s “Family Pictures,” “Surviving Images,” and *Family Frames*.

21. Artie's therapist Pavel even suggests that Artie is "the **real** survivor." *Maus II* 44.

22. Spiegelman sees "Prisoner" and "Time flies" as sequences that exist outside of the already complicated narrative structure of *Maus*. But, he notes, they "pull the narratives taut in different temporal and spatial directions" (qtd. in Silverblatt 35–36). Notably, Spiegelman's language here suggests a loose flow of historical narrative that is made more lucid—instead of more slack—by a complicating self-reflexivity.

23. The CD-ROM *The Complete Maus*, in which we hear portions of Vladek's narrative, suggests Spiegelman's attempt to represent Vladek's literal voice. It also shows how Spiegelman edited his father's speech to fit the format of *Maus*.

24. Spiegelman, while allowing his father's rejection of this "very well documented" fact, lets readers know which "version" is correct. *Maus II* 54.

25. As Felman points out, testimony is composed of "events in excess of our frame of reference," and does not offer a completed statement, a totalizable account (5).

26. *Maus*'s representational ethic firmly rejects aesthetic mastery as inappropriate to Holocaust representation. Spiegelman says: "I wanted [the drawing in *Maus*] to be more vulnerable so that it wouldn't be the master talking down to whoever was reading" (Brown 102). This methodology would seem to figure itself against the mastery of subject implied in the project of an institution like the Holocaust Museum. Liliane Weissberg writes, for instance, that the Holocaust Museum is problematically "an object fully mastered by its creators" (19). For more on the Holocaust Museum and *Maus*, see Landsberg.

27. "Collateral Damage" is the first literary analysis I have read of any Spiegelman text besides *Maus*. Hirsch's cogent reading reinforces and clarifies my claim that the same fascinating formal procedures (the architectural structure of pages and the complex, layered panelization therein) drive both *Maus* and *In the Shadow of No Towers*.

28. See also Koch and Rothberg. Hungerford reads *Maus* as a fundamentally strong moral text, claiming it seeks to "build a Jewish identity around the Holocaust" (93) and imagine a "healthy, true relation to the past" (94)—ideas that I read *Maus* as rejecting. Spiegelman comments on the question of Jewish identity in "Looney Tunes."

29. Fascinating work, however, is just now being published on historical comic books exactly because of their persuasive and didactic impulses. See Hansen.

30. *Maus* also eschews the idea of an instructional morality by offering no model characters, refusing to sentimentalize or sacralize either the survivor or the artist.

31. Two points are worth mentioning: first, Spiegelman came up with fifty to sixty ideas for the ending of *Maus*; therefore, we may understand that he wanted to make a significant, particular (graphic) point on this last page (*Complete*). Second, Spiegelman purposefully designed the last page to go right up against the endpapers: there is no white page following the conclusion. The contiguity of text and endpapers that Spiegelman presents—achieved by rejecting the spatial format of traditional books—underscores my point that Spiegelman did not want this ending to mark itself as a definitive “end.”

32. I use “breaking the frame” after Felman, and after Hirsch’s “Family Pictures.” *Maus*’s few photographs, such as one of Anja and Artie in *Maus I*’s “Prisoner,” and *Maus II*’s souvenir snapshot of Vladek in a concentration camp uniform, also literally, spatially break the frame by tilting out of their tiers at diagonal angles (*Maus I* 100, *Maus II* 134).

33. It is in a broad, affirmative sense that Spiegelman foregrounds the Magen David so powerfully on the last page of *Maus*. It would be incorrect to read the graphic prominence Spiegelman bestows the Magen David as a statement about Israel. Arguing that the world itself has become “the Diaspora Jew,” Spiegelman was attached (before 9/11 compelled him to reconsider himself as a “rooted cosmopolitan”) to the notion of the “rootless” and “ruthless” cosmopolitan, and also to the concept of the Diaspora Jew: “For me the romantic image of the Jew is . . . the pale, cosmopolitan, alienated, half-assimilated, International Stateless outsider Jew” (“Looney Tunes” 16). In *Maus II*, Spiegelman jokes that he would draw Israeli Jews as porcupines, and his attitude about Israel is ambivalent and evasive: “I am not anti-Zionist. I am Agnostic. . . . But, maybe Israel was a bum steer, a quick-fix salve for the world’s guilt that was an all-too-adequate response to the urgent and profound questions Auschwitz should have raised” (16).

34. See, for instance, Hutcheon 121.

35. Friedlander’s gloss (52).

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