



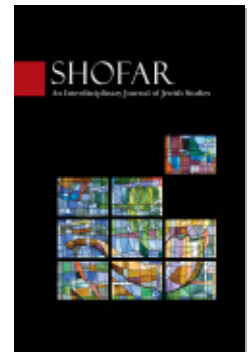
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Art Spiegelman's Maus: A Survivor's Tale: A Bibliographic Essay

Hye Su Park

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RETRACTION

The editors of *Shofar* and Purdue University Press, publisher of *Shofar*, are retracting the following article:

Hye Su Park, "Art Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*: A Bibliographic Essay," *Shofar* 29, no. 2 (2011): 146-64.

The Committee on Academic Misconduct at The Ohio State University have determined that the author was in violation of the code of student conduct in professional journal submission and have requested that this retraction be printed. *Shofar* accepted and published the article in good faith, with warranties regarding originality made by the author, which now appear to have been breached. *Shofar* is committed to the highest standards of publication ethics and has accepted the request of The Ohio State University to retract the article.

Art Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*: A Bibliographic Essay

Hye Su Park
Ohio State University

This bibliographic essay on Art Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* serves as a broad survey of *Maus* criticism based on ten thematic categories such as trauma, postmemory, generational transmission, and the use of English. As much as this essay examines the wide range of scholarly interests surrounding *Maus*, it also highlights the problem of repetitive concentration on certain themes that dominates and restricts discussion on the text. This overview of *Maus* criticism thus not only provides a useful summary of the studies currently available, but also serves as a suggestive guide for future scholars in their attempts to broaden and enrich the field with an eye on expanding the critical discourse.

The growing popularity of the study of the graphic narrative as a critical literary exercise is visible in both university classrooms and many other academic venues. As evidence of this, at least three literary journals,¹ plus this special Jewish comics issue of *Shofar*, have devoted issues to graphic narratives. Scott McCloud, one of the leading critics in comics studies, was a keynote speaker at the 2008 International Conference on Narrative. The 1998 edition of *The Norton Anthology of Postmodern American Fiction* includes excerpts from Art Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*,² the Pulitzer Prize-winning Holocaust

¹"Graphic Narrative," ed. Hillary Chute and Marianne DeKoven, special issue, *Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (2006); "Coloring America: Multi-Ethnic Engagements with Graphic Narrative," ed. Derek Parker Royal, special issue, *MELUS*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (2007); "Graphia: Literary Criticism and the Graphic Novel," ed. William Kuskin, special issue, *English Language Notes*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (2008).

²Art Spiegelman, *Maus: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History* (New York: Pantheon, 1986). The second volume, *Maus II: A Survivor's Tale: And Here My Troubles Began*, was published in 1991. Pantheon published both volumes together in *The Complete Maus: A Survivor's Tale* in 1996.

narrative told in comics form, along with two other graphic works by Jay Cantor and Lynda Barry. Indeed, *Maus* has proven to be a seminal text in graphic narrative studies and has been taught in many undergraduate and graduate courses worldwide. More than twenty years since its publication, *Maus* continues to draw much scholarly attention, including the two most recent critical pieces by Paul Eakin³ and Tal Bruttman⁴ in 2009. This enthusiasm for *Maus* is likely to continue with the upcoming publication of *Meta Maus*, a book with a DVD about the making of *Maus*. The critical success of *Meta Maus*, however, will largely depend on how effectively this project reshapes and further reinforces one's reading of Spiegelman's graphic text.

The critical space *Maus* occupies in graphic narrative criticism is crucial not only because it had won a 1992 Pulitzer Prize—specifically, for Special Awards and Citations—Letters—but also because it is so richly textured, both at the formal and thematic levels. As the confusion surrounding the genre placement of *Maus* suggests—is it a memoir, a testimony, or an autobiography?—its constructed hybridity becomes a central question. *Maus* is about a Holocaust survivor, Vladek, who lived through the concentration camps at Auschwitz and is still bound by what he witnessed and experienced. But it is also about a survivor of another sort, Vladek's son, Artie, who struggles to find his way into his father's Holocaust memory that has become a significant part of the family history. Artie, as a second-generation survivor of the Holocaust, is burdened with the fallout of the historical event while not having encountered it firsthand. As much as *Maus* is about a representation of the Holocaust, it is also about a story of one family whose image is reflected through this historical representation. The text is a historical document based on testimony and facts, but it is also an autobiographical creation of the author, who artistically projects himself onto one of the narrators, Artie, in the text. Most interestingly, however, *Maus* interweaves all these thematic complexities within a hybrid form of the visual and the verbal. Although the scholarly discourse on *Maus* over the past eighteen years does reveal a wide range of critical interests, a strong (and almost repetitive) concentration on certain themes—

³"Eye and I: Negotiating Distance in Eyewitness Narrative," *Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (2009): 201–212.

⁴"The Holocaust through Comic Books," in Aukje Kluge and Benn E. Williams, eds., *Re-Examining the Holocaust through Literature* (New Castle upon Tyne, England: Cambridge Scholar, 2009), pp. 173–200.

trauma, (post)memory,⁵ (post)history,⁶ generational transmission, and ethics of representation—dominates and even restricts discussion of the text. More specifically, *Maus* criticism is sorely lacking in substantial examinations on issues surrounding gender, race, religion, and critical pedagogy.⁷ Scholars, thus, need to pay more attention to ways of *re*-discovering the text through these underdeveloped or overlooked critical approaches. Alternatively, however, some of the critics who have written on *Maus* attempt innovations through the intersections of more than one theme—e.g., trauma, postmemory, and generational studies; postmemory and photography; ethics of representation and postmodernism; postmemory, gender, and postmodernism. Such intersectional moves toward the text shed deeper light on the thematic hybridity and complexities of *Maus*.

Another interesting trend to be found in *Maus* criticism is the extensive attention paid to Artie, a second-generation survivor, who recounts Vladek's own Holocaust testimony as a self-reflexive first-person narrator. Quite a few studies focusing on postmemory, posthistory, generational transmission, and ethics of Holocaust representation equally locate Artie at the center of critical discussions by reflecting the subject matters on Artie's postmemory, as opposed to Vladek's memory, and Artie's story-retelling, as opposed to Vladek's storytelling. Although it is valuable to explore how history and memory are passed on to the next generation, it is surprising that little critical attention has been paid to Vladek's self-reflexivity as a means of bearing witness and

⁵See Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," *Poetics Today*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (2008): 103–128. Hirsch, who coined the term "postmemory" in the early 1990s, describes it as a "structure of inter- and trans-generational transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience" (p. 106). Scholars writing about trauma and generational transmission in *Maus* frequently reference Hirsch's term.

⁶See James E. Young, "The Holocaust as Vicarious Past: Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and Afterimages of History," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (1998): 66–100. Young defines "posthistory" as contextualized within the present temporal frame having a continuing force to reshape present conditions. The Holocaust in *Maus* as posthistory, for instance, is contemporaneous in Artie and Vladek's today and influences their present selves.

⁷There are, however, two notable examples of the teaching of *Maus*. Monica Wood in *12 Multicultural Novels: Reading and Teaching Strategies* (Portland, ME: J. Weston Walch, 1997) introduces Art Spiegelman's *Maus* as an ideal teaching tool for exposing students "to the story of the Holocaust, but also for showing them the breathtaking power of storytelling" (p. 86). Jeff Adams also studies Spiegelman's *Maus* as a pedagogical tool for recounting social trauma along with works by Nakazawa and Sebald in "The Pedagogy of the Image Texts," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (2008): 35–49.

narrating history, especially as a Holocaust survivor. The tedious repetitions and recycling of the same thematic approaches may be hard to avoid in *Maus* scholarship, yet critics need to free themselves from the already established critical discourse and look at the graphic novel anew. The time is right for scholars to draw more attention to some of the underdeveloped readings of *Maus*, and what can be relearned and rediscovered from Vladek's firsthand storytelling of the historical event. This bibliographic essay serves as a broad survey of *Maus* criticism based on ten thematic categories. It examines and reevaluates the body of *Maus* scholarship, articulating trends and tendencies, with an eye on expanding the critical discourse.

Trauma, Postmemory, and Generational Transmission

Trauma, postmemory, and generational transmission of the Holocaust are the three topics that intersect most frequently in *Maus* criticism. Michael Rothberg,⁸ for example, raises questions about postmodern representations of the Holocaust trauma and history, and he does so within the framework of Hirsch's notions of postmemory, expanded to include culture at large. Rothberg's chapter initially suggests that there is a potentially obscene quality to "making images and ultimately commodities out of the Holocaust."⁹ However, he points to Spiegelman's use of serialization, direct address, and subversion of genres to support his claim that the author reinserts the Holocaust into the political domain by highlighting its necessary "imbrications into the [today's] public sphere and in commodity production."¹⁰ Rothberg's take on the formal qualities of *Maus* effectively brings together issues of representation both at the aesthetic and thematic levels, and he makes clear the challenges and formal complexities surrounding Holocaust representation.

The critical discourse focusing on trauma, postmemory, and generational transmission often aims to reevaluate the impact that the Holocaust has upon the second generation of the historical event. This approach, as Martia Grimwood¹¹ emphasizes in her study on the second Holocaust generation, suggests

⁸Michael Rothberg, "Reading Jewish: Philip Roth, Art Spiegelman, and Holocaust Postmemory," in *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), pp. 187–220.

⁹Rothberg, "Reading Jewish," p. 188.

¹⁰Rothberg, "Reading Jewish," p. 206.

¹¹Marita Grimwood, "The Graphic Memoir: Art Spiegelman's *Maus*: A Survivor's Tale," in *Holocaust Literature of the Second Generation* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), pp. 63–82.

an interesting interpretation of *Maus* as a text not necessarily about a representation of the Holocaust itself, but more about a response to its ongoing effects in the present. Marianne Hirsch¹² in her 2008 article takes a similar approach to depictions of the Holocaust and its impact on the present time. More specifically, she examines the role of photography in Holocaust representations as a medium for “inter-and trans-generational transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience.”¹³ Hirsch especially highlights the symbolic and mimetic power of photography and the past that it captures. In her discussion on the use of intercalated family photos in *Maus*, for instance, Hirsch contends that the pictures of Artie’s diseased mother, his brother Richieu (whom he has never met), and Vladek in his concentration camp uniform indicate that the Holocaust is not merely an historical event with figures from an unfamiliar past. More important, she adds, it is Artie’s present desire for safety, belonging, and familial continuity that are unsettled in his postmemory, and the symbolic and mimetic dimensions of the photographs allude to this threat.

Autobiography

Autobiographical readings are common in *Maus* criticism. Most critics pay attention to the ways in which the author mediates—formally and thematically—the interplay between Vladek’s first-person testimony and Artie’s self-reflexive first-person narration to create his own autobiographical self.¹⁴ Victoria Elmwood,¹⁵ for instance, explicates the presence of the author in the text by contextualizing the novel through Art Spiegelman, exploring the construction of his autobiographical self as connected to Vladek’s Holocaust memory. She is

¹²Ever since coining the term “postmemory” in the early 1990s, Hirsch has specifically examined how photography contributes to the construction of postmemory. See, in particular, “Family Pictures: *Maus*, Mourning, and Post-Memory,” *Discourse*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (1992): 3–29; *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); and “Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory,” *Yale Journal of Criticism*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2001): 5–37.

¹³Hirsch, “The Generation of Postmemory,” p. 106.

¹⁴See Tomas Lysak’s “An *Autobiography* of an *Autobiography*: Art Spiegelman’s *Maus*,” *American Studies*, Vol. 20 (2003): 69–89, and Rick Iadonisi’s “Bleeding History and Owning His [Father’s] Story: *Maus* and Collaborative Autobiography,” *CEA Critic: An Official Journal of the College English Association*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (1994): 41–56.

¹⁵Victoria Elmwood, “‘Happy, Happy, Ever After’: The Transformation of Trauma Between the Generations in Art Spiegelman’s *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale*,” *Biography*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (2004): 691–720.

especially interested in illuminating the author's psychological motivation for writing an autobiography within this historical background, and stresses that Artie's (and therefore Spiegelman's) writing of Vladek's Holocaust experience "seeks to narrow the psychological rift between himself and each one of his family members,"¹⁶ both the deceased and the living. As evidence of this, she illustrates the various ways Artie as the author constantly revises and reinterprets the experience that Vladek tells. Through Artie's reshaping of Vladek's testimony, his father's Holocaust experience is incorporated into Artie's "post-Holocaust" experience and thereby intensified by the sense of isolation and loss within his family. Elmwood concludes by highlighting Spiegelman's success in creating a space for himself in the family through postmemory, and argues that this space becomes a site for his artistic "projection, investment, and creation."¹⁷ This space where Spiegelman projects, invests, and (re)creates his father's stories and those he himself gathers through photos, interviews, and dairies facilitates not only the creation of his autobiographical self, but his artistic experiments as a comics artist as well.

Much as does Elmwood, Candida Rifkind¹⁸ particularizes the type of autobiography that *Maus* depicts through the concepts of trauma, postmemory, and generational transmission. Primarily, Rifkind focuses on the dynamics in the father and son relationship and highlights the collaboration between Vladek and Artie as it relates to the construction of Spiegelman's autobiographical self. What this intergenerational collaboration ultimately encourages, Rifkind adds, is the reconciliations between the father and son, past and present, and public and private, which taken together call for the productive portrayal of the Holocaust within the present. Rifkind is especially eloquent in explaining how the "collaborative tensions" created by the "emotional entanglement" between Vladek and Artie blur the two narrations, and instead construct layers of narratives that are transgressive and fluid.¹⁹ This multi-layered structure, in turn, produces the multiple selves of Art Spiegelman—e.g., the Holocaust historian, the artist, and the son—in the text. Rifkind's work also provides a useful narratological reading of the text, especially because she devotes a great deal of her discussion to the ways in which the generational

¹⁶Elmwood, "Happy, Happy, Ever After," p. 691.

¹⁷Elmwood, "Happy, Happy, Ever After," p. 694.

¹⁸Candida Rifkind, "Drawn from Memory: Comics Artists and Intergenerational Auto/biography," *Canadian Review of American Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (2008): 399–427.

¹⁹Rifkind, "Drawn from Memory," p. 402.

transmission is narratologically facilitated through the interactions between the two temporal planes—Vladek’s past and Artie’s present—at the level of storytelling.

History/Posthistory

Maus, as a graphic narrative inspired by and/or based on the Holocaust, inevitably faces critical questions regarding how to justify and validate fictional representations of factual history.²⁰ The critical conversation on *Maus*, however, productively emerges within and against this complexity of historical representation, as critics have explored various ways to reshape and reevaluate the Holocaust in *Maus* through its intersections with personal memories in a form of Hirsch’s “postmemory.” For example, James E. Young reexamines Spiegelman’s use of graphic narrative in *Maus* and praises it as a medium that challenges the redemptory potential of historical interpretation.²¹ Young’s project primarily focuses on clarifying and re-conceptualizing the Holocaust in *Maus* as history under the present condition, rather than an event that happened in the past. This re-understanding of the Holocaust is informed mainly by the “comix”²² medium that effectively portrays Artie’s relation to his father’s history. In short, this narrative choice invites Artie to explore the alienating gap between the experiential knowledge of the first generation and the secondhand discovery of the later generation through a constructed spatiality and temporality. As *Maus*, through its formal elements, openly experiments with the discrepancy between history and its present interpretation within a textual space, the Holocaust serves as a means by which to recapture past events within the present temporal frame as “posthistory” without compromising or redeeming what had happened. Historical representation in *Maus*, then, provides room for Artie to articulate his relationship to the Holocaust as mediated through his father’s memory, something reinterpreted within his own present time and space.

²⁰*The Ethics of History* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2004), edited by David Carr, Thomas Flynn, and Rudolf Makkreel, provides an excellent overview on the ethical issues involved in the literary representation of history.

²¹James E. Young, “The Holocaust as Vicarious Past: Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* and Afterimages of History,” *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (1998): 66–100.

²²In his essay, James E. Young uses this term to emphasize the “commixture” of image and narrative in *Maus*. This is slightly different from, although related to, the use of “comix” when referring to the underground (and at times violent and sexually explicit) comic books of the late 1960s and 1970s.

Michael Staub,²³ on the other hand, proposes to relocate *Maus* in the same lineage as Zora Neal Hurston's *Mules and Men* and other books of remembering by focusing on its orality, a narrative mode representative of certain ethnic groups' experiences and perspectives. Staub problematizes the Holocaust's frequent inclusion in official history, and asserts that the Holocaust as official event marginalizes and even denies individual memories central to *Maus*.²⁴ For instance, he examines the Holocaust in its relation to the family history to which Artie hopes to relate, and he acknowledges Vladek's personal voice as the valid representation of the historical event that Vladek, as an individual, went through. Staub ultimately argues that *Maus* is really about an understanding of what it means to have a Jewish identity in a post-Auschwitz age through one man's unique Holocaust experience. However, Staub hardly elaborates on, or even complicates, what he means by "Jewish identity" and the unique "Jewish experience" that Vladek's voice revives. Also, his discussion does not contextualize Artie's role as a second narrator who collaborates with Vladek's storytelling, and thus Staub fails to fully discuss the text as a whole. As a consequence, he weakens his own arguments surrounding orality as a central creative force in *Maus*.

Amy Hungerford²⁵ places *Maus* within a larger cultural project to contest Berel Lang's argument about literary representation of history as a violation of facts and a mechanism that silences what happened in the past. Interestingly, however, even though Hungerford refuses to treat *Maus* as a mere reflection of historical facts, her discussion foregrounds the use of documents and records to which Spiegelman refers. In other words, she follows the conventional way historians explore history to construct her own argument. For instance, Hungerford takes on an archival research on the cultural and historical contexts within which *Maus* is situated. She argues that Spiegelman's drawing of the Holocaust through some of the deliberate graphic options in these particular contexts shows how closely the text is committed to the historical facts of the Shoah. Specifically, Hungerford discusses the representation of Jews as mice,

²³Michael E. Staub, "The Shoah Goes On and On: Remembrance and Representation in Art Spiegelman's *Maus*," *MELUS*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (1998): 33–47.

²⁴See also Juan Meneses, "A Bakhtinian Approach to Two Graphic Novels: The Individual in Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and Chester Brown's *Luis Riel*," *International Journal of Comic Art*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2008): 598–620. He discusses the treatment of the individual in relation to history.

²⁵Amy Hungerford, "Surviving Rego Park: Holocaust Theory from Art Spiegelman to Berel Lang," in Hilene Flanzbaum, ed., *The Americanization of the Holocaust* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), pp. 102–21.

which goes back to the mid-1930s German political propaganda, and its historical and cultural contexts. She also pays close attention to the occasional use of photographs in *Maus* and explains, in an argument similar to that of Marianne Hirsch, that this use of photographs adds a sense of realism—while also mitigating against fictionality—that the cartoony figures of the text seem to lack. Hungerford further highlights the type of family history that Spiegelman portrays to better understand the larger picture of the *Maus* project. She ultimately draws a seemingly simple yet neat conclusion that the creation of *Maus* itself was inspired by family history, not merely by the author's creativity and imagination. As a consequence, Hungerford succeeds in extending the notion of official history to the individual/familial level, thereby complementing James E. Young's earlier work on the relations of history, the present, and personal memory that together frame the concept of posthistory.

Ethics of Representation

A member of the second Holocaust generation, Artie assumes a central role in presenting the historical event in *Maus*. Not only does he listen to Vladek's firsthand storytelling, but he also mediates the narrative as he understands it in the course of the text. This particular mode of representation used in *Maus* evokes questions of ethics. Most critics, however, complicate and enrich these issues surrounding ethics by focusing on the trauma generationally transmitted to Artie and its impact on his understanding of his and Vladek's lives. Emily Budick,²⁶ on the other hand, critically accuses Artie of what she calls a "forced confession." She characterizes as confrontational the narrative relationship between Artie and Vladek and points to Vladek's reluctance to share his private memory, which the tension between Artie's and Vladek's narrations illustrates. Budick argues that Artie violates his promise to keep Vladek's testimony personal by turning Vladek's private memory into a public text. She thus contends that Vladek is "re-traumatized" by Artie's violation. The core of Budick's criticism lies in the unresolved past within this confrontational tension between the older and younger generations. Nevertheless, Budick validates Artie's "violation" and "failure" to some degree in her concluding remarks and suggests that it is not the fixed truth of reality that today's Holocaust representation reveals, but rather, the condition by which "we process our knowledge of whatever reality we possess."²⁷

²⁶Emily Budick, "Forced Confessions: The Case of Art Spiegelman's *Maus*," *Proof-texts*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (2001): 379–98.

²⁷Budick, "Forced Confessions," p. 396.

Katalin Orban²⁸ rethinks the ethical issues of Holocaust depictions raised in *Maus*, specifically within its formal and thematic complexities. In her book devoted to the work of Thomas Pynchon, Walter Abish, Don DeLillo, and Art Spiegelman, Orban studies what she calls an “ethical turn” elaborated in their work. The chapter on *Maus* introduces the concept of monster/monstrosity to allude to Spiegelman’s anthropomorphic metaphor as well as the simultaneous appeal and repulsion of both his text and his subject matter. Orban argues, similarly to many other critics, that *Maus*’ apparent ethical violations are in fact self-reflexive foregrounding maneuvers. She also gives a lengthy analysis and pays special attention to the question of responsibility, or as she puts it, the “emphasis on [today’s] *response* [to the past memories] *as responsibility*.”²⁹ This emphasis, she argues, complicates, if not undermines, the work of memory as a solitary project.

Critics like Gillian Banner and Richard Glejzer differentiate Spiegelman’s project in *Maus* from a simple mirror reflection of history and highlight its unique storytelling mode, graphic narrative. Most importantly, both Banner and Glejzer aim to reevaluate the ethical dimensions of the text within this formal context. For example, Banner³⁰ seems primarily concerned with demonstrating the challenges Spiegelman faces given his historical distance from the Holocaust itself, as well as the ways in which the narrative structure, the medium, and the relationships between characters make Spiegelman’s narrative comparable to, or at least as worthy of attention as, survivor testimonies. Glejzer,³¹ on the other hand, draws on Jacques Lacan, Dominick LaCapra, and James E. Young to reflect on the inescapability of the forgotten in memory. He suggests that *Maus* thematizes the difference between testimony as telling and witnessing as seeing, and that comics as a medium visualizes the interplay between the two, while at the same time acknowledging that “in the face of testimony . . . the original trauma of seeing insists.”³²

²⁸Katalin Orban, “Mauschwitz: Monsters, Memory, and Testimony,” in *Ethical Diversions: Post-Holocaust Narratives of Pynchon, Abish, DeLillo, and Spiegelman* (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 35–74.

²⁹Orban, “Mauschwitz,” p. 69.

³⁰Gillian Banner, “Art Spiegelman,” in *Holocaust Literature: Schulz, Levi, Spiegelman, and the Memory of the Offence* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 2000), pp. 23–45.

³¹Richard Glejzer, “*Maus* and the Epistemology of Witness,” in Michael Bernard-Donals and Richard Glejzer, eds., *Witnessing the Disaster: Essays on Representation and the Holocaust* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), pp. 125–139.

³²Glejzer, “*Maus* and the Epistemology of Witness,” p. 137.

Andreas Huyssen³³ challenges critics like Theodor Adorno, who denounces any attempt to revive the Holocaust within literary genre by calling it “barbaric.” Huyssen is especially interested in the mimetic dimensions of the Holocaust depicted in *Maus*. For instance, he explores the use of mimesis both at the levels of content—Artie’s approach toward Vladek’s trauma with his own mimetic affinity—and form—the mice-and-cats representation of the Holocaust as a distancing mechanism that cautions against the stereotyping of certain ethnic groups. Huyssen posits that this mimetic approach to the novel evokes self-reflexivity and ironies, consequently guiding the reader beyond a reductive mirror reflection of the past. Huyssen also asserts that through the use of mimesis, *Maus* proposes multi-dimensional ways to reflect on the re-representation of the Holocaust. The mimetic approach to the historical events in *Maus*, he adds, negates construction of the Holocaust canon based on any limiting aesthetic categories. In concluding his remarks, Huyssen argues that mimesis in *Maus* acknowledges and celebrates the productive distance privileged by today’s re-interpretation of the Holocaust.

Postmodernism

The postmodern approach to *Maus* examines how the text, with its formal and thematic innovations, suggests new ways of reading the Holocaust within the context of self-reflexivity and metafictionality. Daniel Schwarz, in his 1999 article, “The Comic Grotesque of Spiegelman’s *Maus*,”³⁴ is one of the earliest critics using this postmodern frame. In this piece, Schwarz identifies *Maus* as a postmodern text that, in its use of playful and innovative discourse, breaks with many traditional forms of Holocaust narratives. Schwarz’s most consistent claim seems to be an implicit response to questions he poses in his book’s introduction. He posits there that modernism is uncomfortably aligned with Nazi language, and in classifying Spiegelman’s text as postmodern, he suggests that it provides an alternative to more conventional narrative forms. His chapter on *Maus* in particular—interestingly grouped in the “Fantasy” section of the book as opposed to the sections “Memoirs,” “Realism,” or “Myth, Parable, and Fable”—details the ways some of *Maus*’ most striking images effect in readers

³³Andreas Huyssen, “Of Mice and Mimesis: Reading Spiegelman with Adorno,” *New German Critique*, Vol. 81, No. 3 (2000): 65–82.

³⁴Daniel Schwarz, “The Comic Grotesque of Spiegelman’s *Maus*,” in *Imagining the Holocaust* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), pp. 287–302.

the ability to see their “human commonality”³⁵ with Jewish Holocaust victims by instantly eliciting more intense and immediate emotional responses.

Arlene Wilner³⁶ takes a similar approach to the postmodern impulse in *Maus*. Specifically, she is concerned with how the postmodern formal experiments in *Maus* make more vivid the difficulties and complexities of Holocaust representations. She extensively examines such elements as the text’s seven ironic juxtapositions and tensions among the characters, its visual illustrations, and its panel displays to illuminate the formal strategies of *Maus* that challenge any totalizing vision or meaning making of official history. Wilner argues that internal consistency and logic are present despite the repeated disjunctions and tensions at the formal level. The postmodern tendency emphasizes construction *through* destruction, or formation through the very formlessness of a text. She adds that comics’ unique form refuses to restrict the Holocaust within any narrowly defined logic of narrative structure. Wilner is astute in pointing out Spiegelman’s deliberate formal choices in constructing his storyworld which mitigate any constraints imposed by the discrepancy between the Holocaust past and present. Postmodern readings of *Maus* also deal with questions of politics when thinking of the Holocaust. For example, Eric Berlatsky³⁷ addresses what he describes as the problems of representation based on memory, especially for oppressed people in the postmodern era. He argues that Spiegelman’s work affirms the political necessity of personal memory, in the face of institutional records and Holocaust deniers. However, he also points out how the author wishes to destabilize memory’s authority in light of its troubled relationship to both referentiality and power, drawing on theorizations of history from such critics as Michel de Certeau, Michel Foucault, and Linda Hutcheon. Berlatsky insists that rather than attempting to resolve these tensions between personal memory and institutional records and authorities, Spiegelman foregrounds them through metafictional self-reflexiveness, and that he seems ultimately unsure of the political utility of his own text.

³⁵Schwarz, “The Comic Grotesque,” p. 302.

³⁶Arlene Fish Wilner, “Happy, Happy Ever After: Story and History in Art Spiegelman’s *Maus*,” in Deborah Geis, ed., *Considering Maus: Approaches to Art Spiegelman’s “Survivor’s Tale,”* (Birmingham: University of Alabama Press, 2003), pp. 105–21.

³⁷Eric Berlatsky, “Memory as Forgetting: The Problem of the Postmodern in Kundera’s *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* and Spiegelman’s *Maus*,” *Cultural Critique*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (2003): 101–51.

Despite its active engagement with postmodern approaches to *Maus*, the larger body of criticism lacks more concrete critical frameworks that take the discussion beyond the metaphorical formlessness and its destabilizing and complicating effects. Hillary Chute's postmodern argument, in this regard, is worth noting.³⁸ Citing such critics as Fredric Jameson and Susan Friedman, Chute stresses that the narrative medium in *Maus* deserves more attention in its own right, especially because the spatial features, such as panel arrangement and gutters, allow Spiegelman to present fluid temporalities in depicting the Holocaust within the present temporal frame. What is especially postmodern about the making of *Maus*, Chute argues, is how the comics form in *Maus* destabilizes the static, and binary-based, temporal structure between past and present. She concludes that the graphic narrative in *Maus* makes possible the "postmodern politics" which refuses "telos and closure."³⁹

Narratology

Narratological readings of *Maus* are some of the most recent additions to the scholarship. This approach is most interested in how the formal aspects of the text, the system and construction of the storyworld, further highlights and complicates the thematics of *Maus*. Erin McGlothlin,⁴⁰ for instance, takes a close look at the interplay between different temporalities within the text by examining the multi-layered narrative structure embodied in the discourse between Artie and Vladek. In her essay she explicates the distinction between story and discourse and focuses on the concept of metalepses.⁴¹ More specifically, McGlothlin explains that *Maus* contains three narrative strands: story (Vladek's Holocaust experience), discourse (his retelling of that experience to Artie), and narrating (Artie's reshaping of Vladek's story, and the problems that occur in a process of framing it into a form of visual narrative). However, the differences among these distinct narrative strands dissolve when *Maus* is read in its totality. The consequence, she adds, is blurred temporal boundaries and fluid transgressions of space within the narrative world. As past and pres-

³⁸Hillary Chute, "'The Shadow of a Past Time': History and Graphic Representation in *Maus*," *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 52, No. 2 (2006): 199–230.

³⁹Chute, "'The Shadow of a Past Time,'" p. 202.

⁴⁰Erin McGlothlin, "No Time Like the Present: Narrative and Time in Art Spiegelman's *Maus*," *Narrative*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (2003): 177–98.

⁴¹Gerald Prince in *Dictionary of Narratology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003) describes the term as "the mingling of two distinct diegetic levels" (50).

ent integrate into each other beyond any restricting spatio-temporal distinctions, Vladek's Holocaust memory becomes a "contemporaneous reality"⁴² that affects both Vladek's and Artie's present.⁴³

Within a book of collections dedicated to broadening the scope of narratology and investigating its applications to various media, Jeanne Ewert⁴⁴ makes a move toward the poetics of graphic narratives in her chapter on *Maus*. She argues with critic Hillel Halkin's assessment that the graphic novel is too limiting a form for the subject matter in *Maus*, and she builds on Will Eisner's theorization of the medium. Specifically, Ewert points to the unique narrative functions of the visual elements in Spiegelman's books: narrative economy (efficiency/use of space) and subtlety (subnarratives); metonymic techniques (e.g., the use of swastika, chimneys, Stars of David, number tattoos, and the Red Cross); framing and foregrounding negotiation of verbal/textual temporalities; and issues of unreliability and narrative control. The result is a claim both for the power of visual narrative in Spiegelman's text and for the significance of narratology in expanding our awareness of and attention to such visual elements.

Photography and Art

Since the publication of *Maus*, there has been consistent scholarly interest in the use of photography in the text and its juxtaposition with cartoony figures and animal imagery. Marianne Hirsch, as previously discussed, is one of the leading critics invested with this field of criticism. She has specifically argued that the photographs of the diseased figures creates in *Maus* an intercalation, or a space for postmemory. Andrea Liss is also concerned with this use of photography in Holocaust representations and its artistic effects on public reception. In her comparative work of Christian Boltanski's *Memorials* and Art Spiegelman's *Maus*,⁴⁵ she explores ways to situate personal history within

⁴²McGlothlin, "No Time Like the Present," p. 194.

⁴³See also McGlothlin's "When Time Stands Still: Traumatic Immediacy and Narrative Organization in Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and *In the Shadow of No Towers*," in Samantha Baskind and Ranen Omer-Sherman, eds., *The Jewish Graphic Novel: Critical Approaches* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), pp. 94–110.

⁴⁴Jeanne Ewert, "Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and Graphic Narrative," in Marie-Laure Ryan, ed., *Narrative Across Media: The Languages of Storytelling* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), pp. 178–94.

⁴⁵Andrea Liss, "Between Trauma and Nostalgia: Christian Boltanski's *Memorials* and Art Spiegelman's *Maus*," in *Trespassing through Shadows: Memory, Photography, and the Holocaust* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), pp. 39–68.

the official history of the Holocaust through “interventions” of artistic elements. More specifically, she compares and contrasts Boltanski’s photographic representation of Holocaust victims, exhibited in various art museums, and Spiegelman’s illustration of Jews, Nazis, and Poles as animals in *Maus* to shed light on the artistic recapturing of the subject matter. The use of art in both cases, Liss asserts, challenges and further complicates the divisions between history and aesthetics, as well as between the public and private. She also points out that Spiegelman’s approach to the Holocaust, in comics form and with animal imagery, transforms the historical specificity into artistic/fictional representation of the Shoah, consequently making the official history more accessible to the public. While Boltanski’s photo exhibition of the Holocaust personalizes the memory of the historical event with heightened realism and intimacy, Spiegelman’s animal illustrations have an opposite effect: it resists identification with the Holocaust by erasing any particular ethnic characteristics and stereotypes. This, in turn, makes history more accessible to a broader audience.⁴⁶ Liss ultimately contends that the artistic representation of the Holocaust—either photographic or pictorial—alters traumatic memory of the historical event into a shared history of Humanities, evoking even more telling and lasting effects on the viewers.

Miles Orvell⁴⁷ aims to examine *Maus* as a part of the author’s career experiments as a comics artist. In his comparative study of Jay Cantor’s *Krazy Kat: A Novel in Five Panels* and Spiegelman’s *Maus*, Orvell argues that their common “vitality” of the hybridized form of the visual and verbal, along with the positioning of the subject matter within the historical and psychological contexts, creates a unique space in the literary marketplace. Specifically regarding *Maus*, Orvell locates the novel within the larger context of Spiegelman’s career and shows how the content and form of the text reflect Spiegelman’s artistic evolution toward a middle ground, where the author brings together the opposite poles of low and high culture. He starts his discussion with Spiegelman’s active involvement with the underground comix movement of 1960s and 1970s (low art). He then examines Spiegelman’s founding of the avant-garde comics

⁴⁶See also Judith Goldstein’s “Realism without a Human Face,” in Margaret Cohen and Christopher Prendergast, eds., *Spectacles of Realism: Body, Gender and Genre* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), pp. 66–89.

⁴⁷Miles Orvell, “Writing Posthistorically: *Krazy Kat*, *Maus*, and the Contemporary Fiction Cartoon,” *American Literary History*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1992): 110–28.

magazine *Raw*⁴⁸ in 1980 and argues that this signals the author's turn toward high art. Finally, Orvell highlights the completion of the *Maus* project that, according to his argument, rests in the space between low and high art, especially with its appeal to both the cartoony images and the world of historical/psychological complexity, and thereby gains "a broader based audience."⁴⁹ Orvell's project of reading *Maus* within the context of the Spiegelman's career as a whole is interesting and worthwhile. However, his distinction between low and high art is rather out-dated and even arbitrary.

Gender

Even though few critics have substantively discussed the construction of gender in *Maus*, Nancy Miller⁵⁰ has nonetheless given this topic considerable attention. Her gender-based reading approaches *Maus* as an autobiographical text that reinforces the vision of an autobiographical self "connected to a significant other,"⁵¹ a tradition widely adopted in many female-authored autobiographies. Miller argues that Spiegelman sets out to tell his father's story so that he may ultimately tell his own, which is closely connected and subordinated to Vladek's. Miller's understanding of *Maus* nicely relates to the history of women's autobiography, which she examines extensively in her article. Miller explains how, in the tradition of women's autobiography, the (female) self is often defined as a member of an oppressed social group and identified through her relationships with privileged others. Spiegelman's self-portrayal (as Artie) and his relationships to both his father and Anja, the silenced mother, is reminiscent of most female-authored autobiographies. Yet, despite her obvious intent to examine *Maus* through the silence of the absent mother—thereby situating it within the tradition of women's autobiography—Miller ends up discussing Spiegelman's storytelling mainly through its connection to Vladek's story. This brings the reader back to the father-son relationship that many other scholars have likewise examined. As a consequence, Anja's silence is neglected despite Miller's attempt to foreground it.

⁴⁸Spiegelman founded *Raw* with his wife Francoise Mouly. It was also intended as an art *object* and was printed on oversize paper in high quality color. It was sold in bookstores and newsstands rather than in comics stores.

⁴⁹Orvell, "Writing Posthistorically," p. 111.

⁵⁰Nancy Miller, "Representing Others: Gender and Subject of Autobiography," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, Vol. 6, No.1 (1994): 1–28.

⁵¹Miller, "Representing Others," p. 4.

Jewish Identity

Along with investigations surrounding the universalizing effect of animal imagery and the interpolation of art into the novel, some critics have also read *Maus* as a specific statement on Jewish experience and identity, especially in relation to the Holocaust. In her contribution to *Maus* scholarship, Marilyn Reizbaum⁵² starts with praise for Spiegelman's innovative answer to Adorno's challenge regarding the impossibility of poetry after Auschwitz. She then goes on to criticize the issues of self-representation and Jewish identity that arise in Spiegelman's work. She proposes that there is an implicit historical concept of Jewishness in *Maus*; moreover, it is the one imposed by external categorizations. Reizbaum goes to some length, citing Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman, to explain the conflicting urge toward and impossibility of witnessing the Holocaust, and she relates this to what she sees as Spiegelman's disguise. Still, she remains steadfast in her critique, especially when she juxtaposes *Maus* with a 1993 *New Yorker* cover by Spiegelman himself.⁵³ Her conclusion is succinctly stated thus: "*Maus* reinforces a stereotype, whereas Spiegelman's *New Yorker* image undoes the historical type by localizing it."⁵⁴ She questions the greater reception and the acceptance for Spiegelman's stereotypes, and she contextualizes this by discussing the various types of self-representation found among American and Israeli Jews.

Andrew Gordon's⁵⁵ approach to Jewish identity is specifically focused within a context of a Jewish father-and-son relationship. Gordon starts his discussion by briefly summarizing literary illustrations of Jewish fathers. The fathers in Jewish American fiction, he examines, often have been portrayed as pitifully ineffectual and timid. However, the fathers in Spiegelman's *Maus* and Philip Roth's *Patrimony* are different, and Gordon calls each a "mensch." Particularly regarding *Maus*, Gordon considers Vladek a central figure of the novel and investigates the "monumental contradictions"⁵⁶ in Vladek's charac-

⁵²Marilyn Reizbaum, "Surviving on Cat and *Maus*: Art Spiegelman's Holocaust Tale," in Laurence Silberstein, ed., *Mapping Jewish Identities* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), pp. 122–44.

⁵³This cover illustration of the *New Yorker* shows Jewish American male and African American female lovers kissing each other in their very traditional and stereotypical ethnic attires.

⁵⁴Reizbaum, "Surviving on Cat and *Maus*," p. 128.

⁵⁵Andrew Gordon, "Philip Roth's *Patrimony* and Art Spiegelman's *Maus*: Jewish Sons Remembering Their Fathers," *Philip Roth Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2005): 53–66.

⁵⁶Gordon, "Philip Roth's *Patrimony* and Art Spiegelman's *Maus*," p. 58.

ter. As much as Vladek is a survivor, a successful businessman, and a family man with tremendous courage, he also suffers from a character disorder and consequently harasses those closest to him. This analysis of Vladek leads Gordon to suggest that despite some of the negative traits in Vladek's character, one can neither hate nor be too judgmental of him, largely due to do the very stereotypical portrait of Vladek as an old immigrant Jewish father "who speaks broken English with a Yiddish accent" and struggles within his relationship with the "neurotic intellectual Jewish American son."⁵⁷ Gordon concludes by asserting that while the fathers in these works are "exposed" and "betrayed" by their sons, it is what the Jewish American sons have to do "to survive the survivors."⁵⁸ Gordon's attempt to focalize Jewish identity through the paternal relationship and the psychological and emotional dimensions involved in it is both thoughtful and touching.

Use of English

Even if Vladek's broken and accented language is often referenced by critics interested in Jewish identity, there are hardly any studies that pay substantial attention to the use of English in its own right and examine its multiple functions. One critic who does so is Alan Rosen. He examines the use of English in *Maus* as he symbolically relates the chosen language to the impossibility of the Holocaust representation.⁵⁹ He discusses how English functions as a means for Vladek's survival in different situations and at different levels. Rosen first makes a distinction between the use of English before the liberation and after the liberation. In Auschwitz, where English is foreign, it functions as a language of romance (his first encounter with Anja) and survival (in a few occasions, Vladek is exempted from the gas chamber due to his ability to speak and write in English). After the liberation, however, living where English is the native language, Vladek strives to retell his Holocaust trauma through broken and unfitting English. Rosen concludes that Vladek's use of improper English after Auschwitz represents the impossibility of (verbally) reviving the Holocaust memory. He ultimately argues that the use of English as represented on two different levels—one celebrated as a language of survival and the other chal-

⁵⁷Gordon, "Philip Roth's *Patrimony* and Art Spiegelman's *Maus*," p. 59.

⁵⁸Gordon, "Philip Roth's *Patrimony* and Art Spiegelman's *Maus*," p. 60.

⁵⁹Alan Rosen, "The Language of Survival: English as Metaphor in Art Spiegelman's *Maus*," *Prooftexts*, Vol. 15, No.3 (1995): 249–63.

lenged as an embodiment of Vladek's struggle to tell—is itself an effective illustration of the problematic claims for storytelling inevitably found in *Maus*.

Writing about the Holocaust, one of the most shameful events in history, has been an overwhelming challenge to writers because of its emotional baggage and a sense of responsibility that never seems to be satisfactorily fulfilled. Art Spiegelman also confesses his own difficulties and challenges in writing the historical event in his own work: "I feel so inadequate trying to reconstruct a reality that was worse than my darkest dreams. . . . I mean there's so much to understand or visualize. I mean, reality is too complex for comics. . . . So much has to be left out or distorted."⁶⁰ Critics have been welcoming Spiegelman's attempt to "reconstruct a reality" with a wide range of scholarly interests. However, as this bibliographic essay demonstrates, there are still gaps to be filled in *Maus* scholarship, including those on such issues as gender, narrative form, the use of English, and critical pedagogy. It is my hope that this overview of *Maus* criticism will not only provide a useful summary of the studies currently available, but also serve as a suggestive guide for future scholars in their attempts to broaden and enrich the field.

⁶⁰Spiegelman, *Maus II*, p. 16.