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In presenting a "Special Award" to Art Spiegelman's *Maus* in 1992, the Pulitzer Prize committee decided to finesse the issue of genre. The members were apparently befuddled by a project whose merit they could not deny but whose medium they could not quite categorize. The obvious rubric (Biography) seemed ill-suited for a comic book in an age when ever-larger tomes and ever-denser scholarship define that enterprise. Editorial cartooning didn't quite fit either, for *Maus* illustrated not the news of the day but events of the past. The classification problem had earlier bedeviled the *New York Times Book Review*, where the work had criss-crossed the Fiction and Non-Fiction Best Seller Lists. Originally, *Maus* was placed on the Fiction List, a decision Spiegelman protested in a wry letter to the editor: "If your list were divided into literature and non-literature, I could gracefully accept the compliment as intended, but to the extent that 'fiction' indicates a work isn't factual, I feel a bit queasy. As an author, I believe I might have lopped several years off the thirteen I devoted to my two-volume project if I could have taken a novelist's license while searching for a novelist's structure."¹ In a tiny but telling blip on the cultural radar, the *Times* obligingly moved the volume from the Fiction to Non-Fiction Best Seller List. The veracity of the image—even the comic book image—had attained parity with the word.

From its first appearance in 1980 in the comic magazine *Raw* ("High Culture for Lowbrows") to the complete two-volume edition issued in 1991, *Maus* presented an unsettling aesthetic and scholarly challenge, not least to print-oriented purists who scoffed at the notion of comic book artistry and bewailed the incursion of pop culture into the under-

graduate curriculum. In the hands of cartoonist Spiegelman, a conceit obscene on its face—a Holocaust comic book—became solemn and moving, absorbing and enlightening. Occupying a landscape that crossed George Orwell with Max Fleischer, where Nazis were snarling cats, Jews forlorn mice, and Poles stupid pigs, *Maus* redrew the contractual terms for depictions of the Holocaust in popular art. As a graphic reaction to the aesthetics of Nazism and a new mode of inquiry into the past, it offered a media-wise vision whose rough images put traumatic history into sharp focus.

Spiegelman issued his cartoon biography in two volumes published in 1986 and 1991 respectively.² *Maus Part I: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History* tracks Vladek, the artist's aged father and oedipal muse, from the thriving Jewish culture of prewar Poland to the gates of Auschwitz. Prodded by his cartoonist son Artie, Vladek flashes back to a young manhood in which his experiences are alternately mundane (work and courtship) and monstrous (mass executions and casual brutality). *Maus Part II: A Survivor's Tale: And Here My Troubles Began* finds the old man sicker and crankier as he divulges his struggle for survival to Artie, himself now given to spasms of guilt (natch) over the critical and commercial success of the first volume of *Maus*.

In good postmodern fashion, the interview sessions between father and son—and the artist's behind-the-scenes scaffolding—are incorporated into Vladek's narrative. Parallel lines intersect as Artie determines to make Vladek's memory speak and to depict his own entanglements as son and artist. Yet the confluences—writer/illustrator Art Spiegelman drawing mice Artie and Vladek for a comic book biography of his real life father called *Maus*—never get too cute or convoluted. Nor does Spiegelman allow the kvetching of an American baby boomer to detract from or compare with his father's passage through hell. As the artist confides to his shrink, "no matter what I accomplish, it doesn't seem much compared to surviving Auschwitz" (*Maus II*, 44). Finally, though theirs is a father-son relationship of unusual bitterness and anguish (Artie's wife Françoise seems the only non-neurotic in Vladek's contemporary orbit), the artist is faithful to his father's life and memory. To the real Vladek, who died in 1982, Artie is a good son.

The inherent audacity of the project earned *Maus* an extraordinary amount of popular attention in the press, and, by and large, the response was rhapsodic. In addition to the Pulitzer Prize, the work

garnered dozens of laudatory reviews and inspired op-ed pieces in the pages of the major metropolitan dailies, a sure sign of its status as a cultural as well as a literary event. By the time a consumer-friendly packaged edition of both volumes appeared in stores for the 1991 Christmas season, *Maus* had entered the national lexicon. In February 1994 the Voyager Company issued a multimedia CD-ROM version entitled *The Complete Maus*, an elaborate hypertext that includes preliminary drawings, journal entries, home movies, and tape recordings from the interview sessions between Spiegelman and his father.³ Though denied by the artist, rumors of a forthcoming feature-length, animated motion picture version (not by Walt Disney) persist.

Significantly, though, the tentacles of corporate synergy have thus far stopped short of the manufacture of a line of *Maus*-inspired toys for children. Even the forces of commerce recognize that when the Holocaust is the subject, neither the market nor expression is free. No matter how austere and reverent the tone, no matter how traditional the format, any representation of the Holocaust attracts a special measure of critical scrutiny and, if judged lacking, earns a severe measure of opprobrium. The usual criteria for literary and cinematic excellence—originality, wit, formal innovation, and the sundry “pleasures of the text”—are suspended for depictions of the Holocaust. Saul Friedlander expresses a consensus suspicion of “the trap of self-feeding rhetoric or of sheer camera virtuosity” in literary and cinematic treatments of the destruction of European Jewry. “The issue is one of *indiscriminate word and image overload on topics that call for so much restraint, hesitation, groping*, on events we are so far from understanding.”⁴ It remains one event in twentieth-century history in which poetic license and tolerant forbearance are not granted automatically.

From a traditionalist vantage point, the readily accessible, easy-on-the-eye comic-book format of *Maus* would in itself disqualify and indict the work. Spiegelman's medium is associated with the madcap, the childish, the trivial. By its very nature it seems ill-equipped for the moral seriousness and tonal restraint that have been demanded of Holocaust art. But—also by its very nature—the cartoon medium possesses a graphic quality well-suited to a confrontation with Nazism and the Holocaust. The medium is not the message, but in the case of *Maus* the medium is bound up with the message, with the ideology of Nazism and the artist's critique of it. Spiegelman's artistic style and animating purpose are shaped by the two graphic media whose images

make up the visual memory of the twelve-year Reich—cartoons and cinema. Both arts are intimately linked to the aesthetic vision and historical legacy of Nazism. From this perspective, cartoons become not just an appropriate medium to render the Holocaust but a peculiarly apt response to a genocidal vision.

Following a line of inquiry first marked off by Hans-Jürgen Syberberg's *Our Hitler* (1978), Spiegelman sees Nazism not only as a force of history but also as an aesthetic stance. To the Nazis, art was more than an expression of a totalitarian ethos; it was the rationale for it. The Nazi aesthetic celebrated perfection in form just as Nazi ideology demanded purity of bloodlines. Official pronouncements condemned abstract impressionism and other modernist expressions as *entartete "Kunst"* (degenerate "art") sprung from diseased minds and foisted on Germany by Bolshevik art critics and Jewish gallery owners. Adolph Hitler, the Reich's most powerful art critic, inveighed constantly against modernist expressions of all sort—"Dadaist sensationalists, Cubist plasterers, and Futurist canvas smearers."⁵

For the Nazis, matters of aesthetics were not the esoteric domain of a small coterie of artistes and buffs but a compelling state interest to be overseen and regulated by the full-blown Reichsministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda headed by Joseph Goebbels. In Munich on 18 July 1937, an officially sponsored twin bill of Nazi-approved and Nazi-forbidden museum shows put the Reichministry's aesthetics on full display: the Great German Art Exhibition of 1937 and its ostensible doppelganger, an exhibition of "Degenerate Art" which opened the next day in the same city (to much larger crowds). The exhibitions' guidebooks condemned the misshapen visages and contorted physiques of abstract impressionist portraiture and African-influenced sculpture as a defilement of the Aryan ideal; the Reich was threatened by an "endless supply of Jewish trash."⁶ Forbidden to envision the human body in any way short of perfection, artists no less than administrators expunged the sick, the infirm, and the retarded from their sight. As Susan Sontag observed: "Fascist art displays a utopian aesthetics—that of physical beauty and perfection. Painters and sculptors under the Nazis often depicted the nude, but they were forbidden to show any physical imperfections. . . . They have the perfection of a fantasy."⁷ Always, the theoreticians of *Kunst* and *Kultur* abetted the thugs.

The vision of physical perfection was expressed most vividly in film, the high-definition medium of choice. If the posters, portraits, and sculptures that comprise the kitsch of the Nazi era today accrue value only as collectible artifacts, the cinematic legacy has endured both as archival material and dramatic inspiration. Tellingly, the occasion of Sontag's remarks on fascist aesthetics—her famous essay "Fascinating Fascism"—was a review of a collection of photographs by Nazi filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl. Riefenstahl's screen images of muscular bodies and flawless, chiseled faces, her celebration of the grace and power of the (perfect) human form, projected the aesthetic ideal with all the impact of tour de force filmmaking. *Triumph of the Will* (1935), Riefenstahl's documentary record of the 1934 Nazi Party Congress at Nuremberg, worshipfully frames the hallowed faces of beatific *Hitlerjugend* and fanatic Labor Service workers, while the superhumans in *Olympia* (1938) defy gravity itself, as sinewy marathon runners strain over roadways and high divers fly through the air. In Nazi art, the Greek ideal of human perfection lived—literally so in the opening of *Olympia*, when Greek statues come alive, the marble men of the classical age incarnated as athletes in the Berlin Games of 1936.

No wonder that, on film, the Nazis continue to exert a perverse fascination and seductive attraction. The visual pleasure of the gaze, the scopophilic voyeurism that makes moviegoing so hypnotic and enticing, is an erotically charged experience.⁸ For the moviegoer, physical perfection and bodily beauty are likely to arouse more than disinterested contemplation. Famed as an exemplary specimen of gorgeous humanity, bathed in shimmering chiaroscuro, shot from adoring camera angles, the big screen star is a model human being and a sexually alluring object of the gaze.⁹ Yet where Hollywood harnesses the erotic energy of its stars for commercial exploitation, Goebbels's Reichsfilmkammer sought to transfer the sexual energy into a "spiritual force for the benefit of the community."¹⁰

Of course eroticism is not so easily expunged from the tantalizing spectacle of beauty and youth. So magnetic and alluring is the Nazi celebration of the perfect human form that the attractions—especially on the big screen—are at least as powerful as the revulsions. In contemporary films that recreate the set design and resurrect the model humans of the Nazi era, the erotic energy nascent in Nazi aesthetics is more likely to be ecstatically released than spiritually repressed.

Think of Luchino Visconti's *The Damned* (1969), Bob Fosse's *Cabaret* (1972), Liliana Cavani's *The Night Porter* (1974), Lina Wertmüller's *Seven Beauties* (1976), Sam Peckinpah's *Cross of Iron* (1977), or Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Lili Marleen* (1981).¹¹

Cartoons partake of none of this sexual power. A medium of rough edges and broad caricature, of presexual creatures and anthropomorphic animals, it evokes rather than records the human form. Cartoons define themselves against the aesthetics of photographic reproduction or realist representation. Unlike film, they offer few scopophilic pleasures and little chance of complicity with the aesthetics of Nazism, of the spectator-reader assuming an adoring gaze at Nazi spectacle and Wehrmacht specimens.

Not that the cinema-obsessed Third Reich was oblivious to the propagandistic power of the cartoon medium. Just as the Nazis took to the screen to celebrate themselves in a high-definition, cinematic format, the Jews were consigned to a lower-definition medium better suited to their status in the aesthetic hierarchy. Comic art—"low definition, deep involvement" in Marshall McLuhan's terms—is the visual medium most congenial to caricature and low blows. The pivotal inspiration for Spiegelman's cat and mouse gamble was the visual stereotypes of Third Reich symbology, the hackwork from the mephistoes at Goebbels's Reichsministry and Julius Streicher's venomous weekly *Der Sturmer*—the anti-Semitic broadsheets and editorial cartoons depicting Jews as hook-nosed, beady-eyed *Untermenschen*, creatures whose ferret faces and rodent snouts marked them as human vermin (figs. 1 and 2). Hence, Spiegelman's ironic boast that *Maus* "was made in *collaboration* with Hitler. . . . My anthropomorphized mice carry trace elements of [editorial cartoonist] Fips's anti-Semitic Jew-as-rat cartoons for *Der Sturmer*, but by being particularized they are invested with personhood; they stand upright and affirm their humanity. Cartoons personalize; they give *specific* form to stereotypes."¹² But again it is film that generated the iconic image of anti-Semitism under the Third Reich: the notorious sequence from Fritz Hippler's *Der ewige Jude* (1940) that cross-cuts between rabbinical ghetto dwellers and swarming sewer rats. From subhumans to nonhumans, the Jews are linked with vermin, to be eradicated, like plague bearers, from the Fatherland.

Pushing against that deep background is the animation legacy of American popular culture. Like any mass-mediated American, Spiegel-



Figures 1-2: Cartoons from *Der Sturmer* (March 1937) reproduced from microfilm copies on file at the Jewish Division of the New York Public Library.

man's own cartoon memories are of Saturday mornings filled by Crazy Kat, Micky Mouse, and Tom and Jerry. Because Vladek's past and his son's present encompass a graphic aesthetic bound by *Der Sturmer* and Steamboat Willie, Joseph Goebbels and Walt Disney, the cartoon world is an apt if disjointed recreation of their shared experience. The gulf in time and space bridged by Vladek's life alone—from the unspeakable horrors of the Auschwitz past to the serene banality of a Catskill present, from death camps to holiday camps—is a displacement for which surrealist technique is redundant.¹³

Above all, though—more than the supermen in Riefenstahl's films or the cartoon rodents in Streicher's periodicals—the pertinent and indelible visual backdrop to *Maus* is the Holocaust itself. As much as any milestone in history, the Holocaust is made real and vivid by its motion picture documentation. Recorded on 16mm film by the Army Signal Corps, the Soviet Army, and the Nazi's own photographic units, the newsreel footage of the Nazi death camps—which first stunned American moviegoers in late April 1945 and which has been a staple of wartime documentaries and archival compilations ever since—is a permanent presence in the popular memory bank. Documentaries such as the War Department's *Death Mills* (1946), Alain Renais's



Figures 3-4. Figures 3-9 are from *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* by Art Spiegelman. Copyright © 1973, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986 by Art Spiegelman. Reprinted by permission of Pantheon Books, a division of Random House.

Night and Fog (1955) and the BBC's "Genocide" episode of the *World at War* (1975) series have bequeathed a frightful montage: emaciated survivors staring blankly from behind barbed wire fences; bulldozers corralling and burying heaps of corpses; mountains of hair, eyeglasses, and suitcases; and children unrolling their sleeves to expose serial numbers tattooed on their arms. The aesthetic strategy infusing Claude Lanzmann's epic nine-hour documentary *Shoah* (1986), a meticulous chronicle of the bureaucracy of genocide, presumed an intimate acquaintance with this filmic legacy. Reasoning that the Holocaust footage was already in the mind's eye of any sentient spectator, Lanzmann elected not to show a single frame of archival footage. Similarly, the cinematography in Stephen Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993) imitated the black and white film grain of the archival footage, rather than incorporating it, to evoke the celluloid memory of Holocaust history.

For the graphic artist grappling with the visual legacy of 1939-1945, the photographic immediacy of the Holocaust presents something of an aesthetic quandary. Against the horrific photorealism of the death camps, impressionist illustrations of existential torment seem lame



Figure 5.

and self-indulgent. What representational artist can match the scale of Hitler's project or his cold eye for detail? Unable to compete with the real life horror shows recorded in the newsreels and documentary meditations, artists facing the Holocaust seek to create a picture of reality that though not photographic is still a good likeness. In a literal return of the repressed, the impressionist techniques censored by the Nazis are resurrected to delineate the full horror of Nazism.

Working from a lowbrow rung of the ladder of art, Spiegelman sketched a low-definition revision of the high-definition detail of the newsreel Nazis and the Holocaust footage. Relying mainly on sparse black lines and the shadings of the monochromatic scale, the cartoonist conjures the survivor's landscape with rough sketches, black silhouettes, and white space. The pictures lack detail but not depth, the low-definition medium enhancing the deep involvement of the reader. "The mouse heads are masks, virtually blank," commented Spiegelman, "like Little Orphan Annie's eyeballs—a white screen the reader can project on."¹⁴ In *Maus*, cartoons are not just a shield against the visual pleasures of big screen Nazism but a medium that reverses the process of projection.

The reference to Harold Gray's Little Orphan Annie is a clue to the care with which Spiegelman deploys his medium's peculiar advantages. Besides Nazism, *Maus* is invested with the history and aesthetics of the cartoon. In a purely comic-book composition, Vladek and his first wife Anja confront a series of dead end roads zigzagging like a swastika across the page, the couple trapped in the frame of the comic and of history (fig. 3). Another frame assumes the shape of the Star of David and seems to pin Vladek under a spotlight of anti-Semitism (fig. 4). Among the low-definition renderings, a highlighted detail directs attention to itself—the telltale tail of Anja, Vladek's unmistakably

- SOME OF THE FLOUR PESACH FOUND- IT WASN'T REALLY FLOUR,
ONLY LAUNDRY SOAP, WHAT HE PUT IN THE CAKE BY MISTAKE.

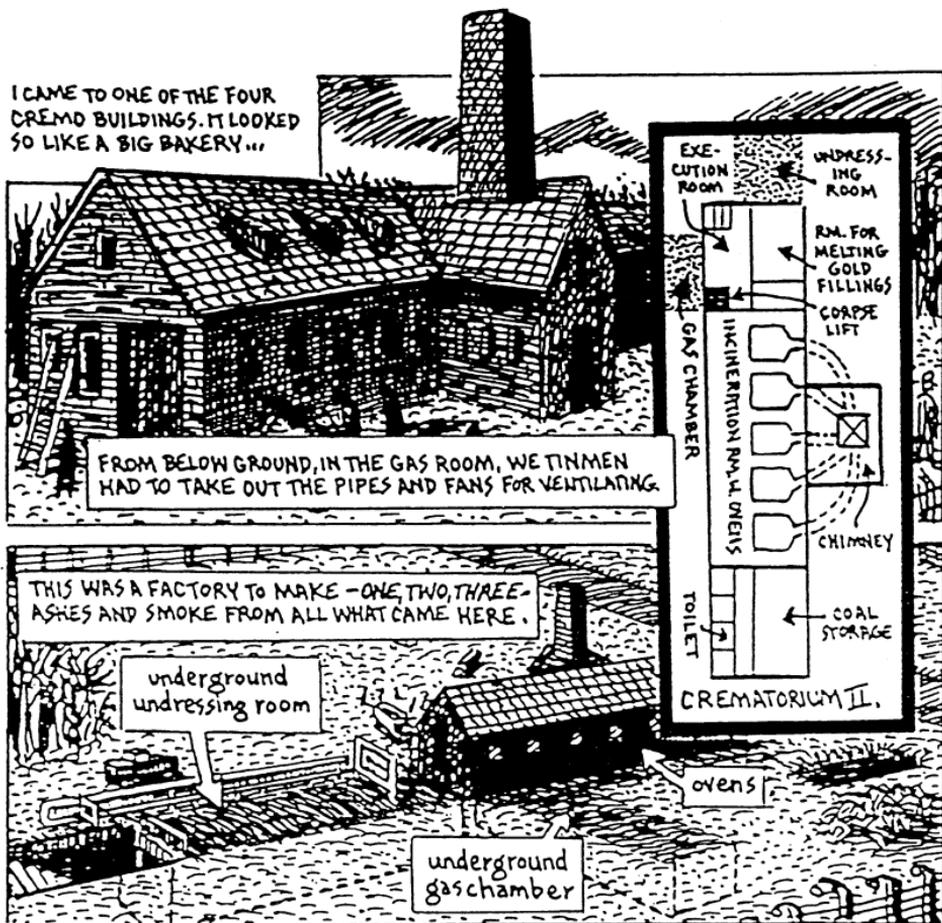


Figure 6.

Jewish wife, for example, or the tattooed serial number on Vladek's forearm as he pedals his exercise bike (fig. 5). Throughout *Maus*, comic-specific associations and tropes dot the cartoon landscape, as when free-floating, Chester Gould-like arrows signpost points of information ("Zyklon B, a pesticide, dropped into hollow columns," reads one) or when, in an audacious interlude of true comic relief, the exclamatory typography of the Sunday funnies lightens things up (fig. 6).¹⁵

The differences in media dialectics notwithstanding, the grammar of cinema translates readily into comic-book terms. In a mosaic presentation akin to cinematic montage, panels and maps splash across the page, figures bleed out of and break across rectangular frames, and elaborately designed layouts greet the eye before a close-in inspection of the individual panels (fig. 7). When a triptych of panels zooms in from a medium shot to a close-up, the sequence of still images duplicates the dynamic telescoping of the camera lens (fig. 8). Unlike the height-to-width "aspect ratio" of a film screen, however, the comic frame has a malleability and elasticity that can heighten dramatic effect and visual impact, as when the dimensions of the comic book screen expand lengthwise to accentuate the horizontal movement of the transport trains (fig. 9).

Perhaps to balance the high risk gamble of the imagery, the language and tone of Spiegelman's comic book work is tempered and austere. In Holocaust literature, the language of low melodrama or high adventure, the reliance on generic machinations and literary



SPECIAL PRISONERS WORKED HERE SEPARATE. THEY GOT BETTER BREAD, BUT EACH FEW MONTHS THEY ALSO WERE SENT UP THE CHIMNEY. ONE FROM THEM SHOWED ME EVERYTHING HOW IT WAS.

Figure 7.

flourish, is deemed blasphemous or at least bad form. A studied, unadorned understatement is the approved style. The title and tone of one of the most moving Holocaust autobiographies captures the reigning aesthetic: Nechama Tec's *Dry Tears*. A searing memoir of Tec's life in Poland as a young girl, the work renders everything from the perspective of a child who knows only horror and witnesses it with a detached, numb acceptance.¹⁶

Verbally if not visually, *Maus* is very much in line with this convention. After all, sparseness of expression is a sine qua non for the cartoon medium, a format that severely rations the space available for wordplay. Save for the free-floating exclamation or sound effect,



Figures 8 & 9.

the two main devices of comic book narration are the dialogue balloon and the boxed commentary positioned at the top of the frame; these set strict limits on exposition and dialogue. The narrative craft of the cartoonist is to prune away excess verbiage to accommodate the limited space available. Claiming a dual kinship with the narrative voice of the novel and the narrative voice-over of cinema, cartoon exposition must be concise and elliptical lest it bleed over into—and overpower—the image.

The forced economy inspires Spiegelman's most impressive literary achievement: his unobtrusive modulation of Vladek's voice. Infused with the music of second-language English and Yiddish syntax, Vladek's first person voice-over is devoid of oratorical flourish or self-pity. "All such things of the war, I tried to put out from my mind once for all," Vladek tells Artie, "until you rebuild me all this from your questions" (*Maus II*, 98). Or: "And we came here to the concentration camp at Auschwitz. And we knew that from here we will not come out any more" (*Maus I*, 157).

Just as the tone of *Maus* conforms to expectations, Spiegelman's research method is traditional enough: probe the subject, master the

historical record, “reality test” the testimony, and organize all into a coherent vision of the individual in the web of history. Maps and diagrams of wartime Europe and the gas chambers at Auschwitz are testimony to the scrupulous scholarship that invests the book with historical authority as well as emotional power (fig. 7). The first injunction of Holocaust literature is to get the facts straight—to master the details and maintain an utter fidelity to the known record.¹⁷ At one point Artie disputes his father’s memory on a matter of fact; at another he solemnly pledges to conceal an anecdote the old man relates in confidence, a sequence he has already illustrated. Rather than conceal the truth from the reader, he exposes himself as a liar to his father—in service to a greater truth and higher trust.

Spiegelman’s fidelity to the unvarnished truth is apparent in his unsparing portrait of Artie as a (sometimes) petulant son and his father as a (usually) insufferable human being. Indeed the maddeningly self-absorbed and thoroughly unpleasant Vladek comes off as something of an ethnic stereotype himself. “In some ways he’s just like the racist caricature of the miserly old Jew,” Artie worries (*Maus I*, 131). As a working artist in a culture whose own sensitivities to ethnic portraits can be exquisite, Spiegelman challenges the real comic-book mentalities. Rendering the truth in stereotype (ethnic group members can be quite true to form) and the lie (that the group image defines the individual), the artist refuses to flinch from a literal illustration of the complexity of being human, of being both an ethnic type and a unique individual, a cartoon character and a fully realized human.

Artie’s father forthrightly defies one stereotype: the stereotype of the Holocaust survivor. Neither saintly sufferer nor guilt-ravaged witness, he is most appealing at his most annoying. Vladek seems pretty much the same irascible SOB before Auschwitz as after. Preternaturally self-interested (he’s the kind of romantic suitor who checks out his girlfriend’s medicine cabinet to make sure she has no hidden ailments) and resourceful (at various points he works as salesman, soldier, laborer, tinsmith, shoemaker, and translator), Vladek is a born survivor but not a born Survivor. Stubbornly, gallantly, he refuses to be ennobled. When Françoise berates him for his own bigotries (“You talk about blacks the way the Nazis talked about the Jews!”), his reply is unrepentant: “Ach,” snorts Vladek. “It’s not even to compare the shvartzers and the Jews!” (*Maus II*, 99).

Near the end of the book, the end of Vladek's nightmare in history, Spiegelman pastes a photograph of his father into the *Maus* layout, a real photograph, sharp and clear, of a handsome and healthy young man who looks almost natty in the gray stripes of a camp inmate's uniform. The picture was taken shortly after the war, Vladek explains, at a souvenir photo shop. Amid the rough lines of Spiegelman's comic book art, the snapshot on film seems pallid and duplicitous. The true picture of this survivor's tale is in the cartoons.

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Notes

- 1 Art Spiegelman, "A Problem of Taxonomy," *The New York Times Book Review*, 29 December 1991, 4. Spiegelman did suggest a possible compromise: that the *Times* add a special "nonfiction/mice" category.
- 2 Art Spiegelman, *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986) and *Maus II: A Survivor's Tale: And Here My Troubles Began* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1991). Subsequent references to *Maus* are cited parenthetically.
- 3 Calvin Reid, "A 'Maus' That Roared," *Publisher's Weekly*, 31 January 1994, 26-27. Spiegelman is quoted as saying, "I was not interested in animation or in licensing *Maus*. It would just be destroyed. But *The Complete Maus* will allow for a lot of extra information about the original that should be useful and interesting." Typical of the hypertext adaptations challenging the perceptual boundaries of both print and moving image media, *The Complete Maus* bills itself as a document that "grants the user unprecedented access to the historical and structural details behind the finished book. The pages of *Maus* are linked to preliminary sketches, alternate drafts, archival photographs, and drawings made by prisoners and audio from the interviews between Art Spiegelman and his father that were the basis for the narrative." For readers of the comic book version, the CD-ROM version is apt to be an expansive, if spooky, excursion into the Spiegelmans' backstory. The tape recordings of Vladek comprise its eeriest and most electrifying moments—a melodic, sparse voice from the past summoning the vision again before the eyes. In truth, the CD-ROM seems more a supplement to the original than an autonomous text, an ancillary package that assumes the "user" has already experienced the narrative of *Maus* in the antediluvian role of "reader."
- 4 Saul Friedlander, *Reflections of Nazism: An Essay on Kitsch and Death* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984), 96; italics in original.
- 5 From Hitler's 1938 speech opening the second Great German Art Exhibi-

- tion; quoted in Berthold Hinz, *Art in the Third Reich* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979), 10.
- 6 From *The Guide to the Exhibition of Degenerate Art*; quoted in Hinz, 41.
- 7 Susan Sontag, "Fascinating Fascism," in *Movies and Methods: An Anthology* ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1976), 40.
- 8 Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," the touchstone essay on the scopophilic gaze, is reprinted in Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1989), 14–26.
- 9 Although a good deal of written criticism has made this point, it is vividly explored in two documentary films on the aesthetics of Nazism, Peter Cohen's *The Architecture of Doom* (1986) and Roy Muller's *The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl* (1994).
- 10 Sontag, 41.
- 11 For a comprehensive discussion of film and the Holocaust, see Annette Insdorf, *Indelible Shadows: Film and the Holocaust* (New York: Random House, 1983).
- 12 Art Spiegelman, "Drawing Pens and Politics: Mightier Than the Sorehead," *The Nation*, 17 January 1994, 46. Hence, too, the epigraph to *Maus Part I*: "The Jews are undoubtedly a race, but they are not human."—Adolph Hitler.
- 13 Taken from a Nazi newspaper article in the mid-1930s, the epigraph to *Maus Part II* joins together a comic and not-so-comic constellation of aesthetics, history, and cartoons: "Mickey Mouse is the most miserable ideal ever revealed. . . . Healthy emotions tell every young man and every honorable youth that the dirty and filth-covered vermin, the greatest bacteria carrier in the animal kingdom, cannot be the ideal type of animal. . . . Away with Jewish brutalization of the people! Down with Mickey Mouse! Wear the Swastika Cross!"
- 14 Spiegelman, *The Nation*, 17 January 1994, 46.
- 15 The single best work on comic book aesthetics is Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (Northampton, Mass.: Kitchen Sink Press, 1993). On *Maus* specifically, see Joseph Witek, *Comic Books as History: The Narrative Art of Jack Jackson, Art Spiegelman, and Harvey Pekar* (Jackson: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 1989), 96–120.
- 16 Nechama Tec, *Dry Tears: The Story of a Lost Childhood* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1984).
- 17 In the wake of recent Neo-Nazi efforts to deny the Holocaust, demands for scrupulousness in research and monitoring of careless scholarship have become particularly urgent. In this light, it is worth noting that Spiegelman's insistence on his own historical precision came after the publication of his second volume in 1991—not after the first volume in 1986. The guidelines for literary adaptations of the Holocaust, no less than

historical works, are articulated by Pierre Vidal-Naquet: “It remains the case nonetheless that if historical discourse is not connected—by as many intermediate links as one likes—to what may be called, for lack of a better term, reality—we may still be immersed in discourse, but such discourse would no longer be historical” (*Assassins of Memory: Essays on the Denial of the Holocaust*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman [New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1992], 110–11).