Graphic History

Graphic History:
Essays on Graphic Novels And/As History

Edited by

Richard Iadonisi

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INTRODUCTION

My interest in this collection of essays actually began in the 1960s when I spent weekends with my family at the lakeside cottage of my Aunt Lena and Uncle Jimmy, who had the good sense to anticipate the problems inherent in inclement weather and a small cottage full of bored children. In one of the cabinets was a huge stack of comic books, which I—getting my geek on at an early age—read even when the sun was shining, the water was shimmering, and the bass were biting.

When I began thinking seriously about putting together a collection of essays on the relationship of comics and history, my memory was jogged by two of the books from that cabinet. The first, perhaps an issue of *Rocky Lane*, contained a one-page story of Custer's Last Stand. According to the authors, Custer was the last member of his battalion standing, heroically firing his revolver at the Sioux warriors even as their arrows pierced his buckskin jacket. As young as I was, I couldn't help but question this depiction: *If all the soldiers were killed, who was left to tell anyone that Custer was the last to fall?* (The obvious answer now, of course, is that Native Americans could have provided the information, but, back then, even if I had been intellectually advanced enough to research the topic, neither Native Americans nor their stories were generally taken into consideration. After all, I was reading these comics at about the same time as Perry Miller famously wrote "of the movement of European culture into the vacant wilderness of America,"[1] conveniently and ethnocentrically eliding the presence of the Native Americans. The second comic was an issue of *The Haunted Tank* or *Enemy Ace* that purported to educate readers on the tactics American soldiers used to befuddle Japanese code breakers during World War II. The answer was not, as one might expect, the Navajo "wind talkers." No. Native Americans were once again omitted from history. According to this comic book, the skilled Japanese were able to decipher every code, including pig Latin. However, they were thwarted by, of all things, English. It didn't require a person with a PhD. in linguistics to ask the question I did: *How in the world could a person understand pig Latin but not understand English?* During that period in my life I was beginning to doubt the veracity of history as it was chronicled in comic books. Through the years, comics did little to allay my cynicism. It wasn't until I read Art Spiegelman's *Maus* in a graduate seminar that I started to see the unique perspective that comic books could bring to bear on history. Reading *Maus* led me to Joseph Witek's excellent *Comic Books as History: The Narrative Art of Jack Jackson, Art Spiegelman, and Harvey Pekar*. Witek's scholarly treatise on the intersection of comic books and history illustrated both the range—from the local petit-history of Cleveland to ethnic and racial clashes in the American southwest to the Holocaust and its aftermath—and the depth with which comic books can deconstruct historical moments and events.

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[1] *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), vii.

My transition from skeptic to believer complete, I learned to my surprise that little had been done to pick up the trail that Witek had blazed. Only Matthew J. Costello in *Secret Identity Crisis: Comic Books and the Unmasking of Cold War America* has produced a full-length study addressing comic books and history. As good as Costello's book is, its focus on the Cold War and mainstream Marvel comics superheroes still left a huge expanse of uncharted territory.

While no study of such a broad and complex topic can claim to be exhaustive, the essays in these pages were chosen not just for their quality but for their scope. In addition to Spiegelman and Pekar, two of the writers whom Witek discusses, graphic novelists whose work is considered range from influential Americans such as Frank Miller and Chris Ware to authors who hail from Canada, England, Iran, Japan, and Italy. The subjects of the graphic novels (distinguished from a "comic book" in that they typically are self-contained in a bound volume) under discussion are similarly diverse, treating as they do Jack the Ripper, the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, the fall of the Shah in Iran, and post-war Japan.

This collection begins with six essays on notable American graphic novelists. Janice Morris' rich psychoanalytic reading of Spiegelman's *Maus* explores the struggling intersubjectivities at work in the father-son collaboration of the writer and his father. Laura Beadling engages with *In the Shadow of No Towers*, another Spiegelman piece, uncovering the graphic novel's formal and structural innovations including digital paintings and homages to early newspaper cartoons. These innovations, Beadling suggests, are Spiegelman's attempts to work through the trauma of September 11.

In "From off the Streets of Poland: Harvey Pekar on History, Israeli Nationalism, and Exploiting the Holocaust," Christopher McKittrick traces Pekar's evolving views on Judaism from his youthful indifference to his firm stance against Jewish nationalism. McKittrick focuses on Pekar's negative attitude toward *Maus*, unveiling the varied ways in which Pekar uses his own works to critique Spiegelman's.

Richard A. Iadonisi further deconstructs the iconic hero Batman, already deconstructed in Frank Miller's striking *The Dark Knight Returns*. While Miller claims to be re-inventing the hero as apolitical, Iadonisi applies film theory to demonstrate that this version of Batman reenacts key principles of the 1980s Reagan Revolution.

While reviewers commonly note the obvious parallels of the World's Columbian Exposition to the Corrigan family in Chris Ware's *Jimmy Corrigan*, Kevin Donnelly digs deeply into primary sources related to the World's Fair. Doing so allows him to correlate the family's descent from respectability with the World's Fair's overall purpose of curbing hostility toward the industrial revolution.

Nominated for four Glyph Awards, including story of the year, best writer, and best artist, Mat Johnson and Warren Pleece's *Incognegro* is a powerful, gritty pulp fiction-style piece deserving of critical attention. And Theresa Fine gives it that attention in her study "*Incognegro* and the Legend of Lynching." Fine shows how the graphic novel complements the historical research of crusader Ida B. Wells and activist Walter White to expel the still-prevalent notion that lynching was a form of vigilante justice.

The next section of the book consists of three essays—one on Canadian writer Chester Brown and two on England's Alan Moore. In the first, Samantha Cutrara approaches Chester Brown's *Louis Riel: A Comic Strip Biography* from a feminist perspective showing how Brown's biography of politician/frontiersman Louis Riel glosses over the story of the women who played a prominent role in the resistance movement of the *Métis* people against the Canadian government. Both Thomas Witholt and Seamus O'Malley explore Moore's concerns with the reliability of history. In "By Whose Account?: Reading and Writing Histories in *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*," Witholt argues for the impossibility of understanding history through literary narratives. He further argues that Moore's decision to bring together disparate heroes ranging from Mina Harker to Captain Nemo to Allan Quatermain is more than an engaging plot device; instead, it explodes assumptions of a hegemonic England and a seamless Victorian period. O'Malley's "Speculative History, Speculative Fiction: Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's *From Hell*" also deals with Victorian England, specifically, the infamous case of Jack the Ripper as it is recreated in Moore's writing and Campbell's drawing. Using Paul Ricouer's notion of "hybrid time," O'Malley unpacks the postmodern elements of the graphic novel, the ways in which Moore and Campbell exploit the ambiguity of history as both past and present, of history not as passing but as getting buried and lying in wait for the historian to excavate it.

The final section of the book takes readers on a journey beyond North America and England to illustrate the global appeal of graphic novels and what they can tell us about other cultures. The first three essays focus on the Middle East, long a source of fascination for the West. In "Historicizing in Graphic Novels: The Welcome Subjective G(l)aze," Maaheen Ahmed explores the manner in which history, fiction, and authorial subjectivity are interwoven in such graphic novels as Ari Folman and David Polonsky's *Waltz with Bashir*, Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*, and Joe Sacco's *Palestine*. Contrasting with Ahmed's poststructuralist approach, Maryanne Rhett's "Orientalism and Graphic Novels: A Modern Reexamination of Popular Culture" views the same three novels (as well as G. Willow Wilson's surreal *Cairo)* through the lens of Edward Said's *Orientalism*. Rhett's purpose is to show how valuable such graphic novels can be in the education of students. Concluding this section is Jennifer Brock's lively single-work study of the tangling of history and memory in *Persepolis*. Brock asks and answers the provocative question, how does Satrapi attempt to correct an image of Iranians that is "far from the truth" by replacing it with a personal and conjectural rendition of memory?

For Barbara Uhlig, the question is how the authors of a graphic novel represent the life of a man who shaped the world but who is himself lost to the shadows of the past. The authors are Jorge Zentner and Lorenzo Mattotti, and the man is adventurer/cartographer/merchant/scientist Sebastian Cabot (Sebastián Caboto). Uhlig charts the ways in which Zentner and Mattotti turn their novel into an expedition that at once searches for Caboto's true identity and rediscovers renaissance history.

The collection concludes with an essay on Japanese manga, specifically the gekiga tradition of Yoshihiro Tatsumi, author of the acclaimed *A Drifting Life*. Roman Rosenbaum's essay situates the gekiga tradition in the West's preoccupation with conceptual dichotomies and dialectical oppositions, a preoccupation that has led Westerners to overlook the similarities between Tatsumi's gekiga and the American countercultural movement spearheaded by R. Crumb, Kim Deitch, and Art Spiegelman.

The aim of this collection is not to privilege a particular graphic novelist. (Scholars could argue endlessly and futilely whether Spiegelman or Pekar is "better.") Nor is it to promote a particular theoretical lens as the one offering definitive answers to the questions that arise when one considers the relationship of graphic novels and history. In 1948, Victor

Fox told *Time* magazine that comics would always have an audience because “[t]here are more morons than people, you know.”[2] Fox’s statement, with its suggestion that comics were simplistic and that unintelligent people dominated that audience, was not only a statistical impossibility, but it was as inaccurate then as it is today. In fact, graphic novels have reached heretofore unattained levels of sophistication, as have both their readers and their critics. The decision to yoke together various authors and critical perspectives was made for the sole purpose of further opening the door, which Witek cracked years ago, for those readers and critics to engage in further debate, bring to bear additional perspectives, and examine yet more novels and novelists. And if the collection enables any readers to get their geek on, as I did so many years ago, so much the better.

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[2] “Press: Code for the Comics,” *Time*, July 12, 1948, 62.

CHAPTER ONE

OF MICE AND MEN: COLLABORATION, POSTMEMORY AND WORKING THROUGH IN ART SPIEGELMAN'S *MAUS: A SURVIVOR'S TALE*

JANICE MORRIS

Scholarship on comic art—strips, books, cartoons, and graphic novels—is now highly diverse in both approach and perspective, ranging from the history of comics and their controversies, to comics as communication, the rhetoric of comic forms, fans and audiences of comics, comics as culture, and comics as ideology. Arguably, it is the combination of printed words and visual images that *allows* for such a multitude of critical approaches. Further, the complex nature of this combination *invites* flexibility in the (at times, covert) contemplation of meaning. While, on the one hand, the very nature of comic art—a typically constrained space of page, panel, and thought balloon—encourages a closed textual zone that imposes a preferred reading, its visual techniques open up and "play" with narrative, creating (often) intentionally ambiguous meanings and encouraging multiple interpretations. In this way, the comic art "reader" actively enters into, and engages with, the text, thereby becoming a kind of polysemic collaborator.

Interestingly, as M. Thomas Inge reminds us, from the beginning, comic art has been a collaborative project, routinely combining the skills and outputs of writer and artist. As Inge notes, "There are few solitary artists who insist on writing, penciling, inking, and lettering their own work with no assistance."[1] While Inge cites Art Spiegelman as one, who like Charles M. Schulz in *Peanuts*, produced by himself every page of his work, the status of *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* as a collaborative text should not be dismissed, not only because its very existence owes to the collaboration itself between Art Spiegelman[2] and his father, Vladek Spiegelman, but because, with the exception of Vladek's memories of the Holocaust and Nazi death camps, the collaboration itself figures as the text's most sustained and dominant storyline and chief narrative concern.[3]

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[1] M. Thomas Inge, "Collaboration and Concepts of Authorship," *PMLA* 116, no. 3 (2001): 629.

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[2] As an acknowledgement that the multiple selves of Art Spiegelman operate from within and without the text, "Art" will refer to the writer/artist of *Maus*, and "Artie" will refer to the character of Art Spiegelman in *Maus*. Occasionally, where the overlap of "Art" and "Artie" is indistinguishable, I will refer to "Art/Artie." While some readers may be uneasy with this hybridization, Spiegelman himself affirms this reference: "I don't know how to refer to myself—author, artist, cartoonist, historian. They are all words trying to surround actuality. I think of comics as co-mix, to mix together words and pictures" (quoted. in Esther B. Fein, "Holocaust as a Cartoonist's Way of Getting to Know His Father," *New York Times*, December 10, 1991, sec. C15.)

Spiegelman's insistence that the text represents experienced reality is underscored by his own December 29, 1991letter to *The New York Times Book Review*, expressing dismay that *Maus* was categorized on its best sellers list as "fiction": "If your list were divided into literature and nonliterature, I could gracefully accept the compliment as intended, but to the extent that 'fiction' indicates that a work isn't factual, I feel a bit queasy. As an author, I believe I might have lopped several years off the 13 I devoted to my two-volume project if I could only have taken a novelist's license while searching for a novelistic structure" (4).

[3] I acknowledge the difficulty some critics may have with categorizing *Maus* as a "collaborative autobiography." While Vladek did narrate his own stories, Art ultimately retains editorial control over those stories. However, I resist the urge to classify *Maus* as an "as-told-to" autobiography (or even, simply, "biography") because such a classification obscures the dialogism I argue exists in the text in favour of processes that imply a kind of "autobiographical internalization" on the part of the biographer/ghostwriter/editor. In their Introduction to *Getting a Life: Everyday Uses of Autobiography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson respond to this myth of the autobiography as "singularly formative" and "coherent and monologic": "But autobiographical storytelling, and by this we mean broadly the practices through which people assemble narratives out of their own experiential histories, cannot escape being dialogical, although its central myths resist that recognition. Autobiography is contextually marked, collaboratively mediated, provisional" (9). In *Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), Paul John Eakin concurs: "Why do we so easily forget that the first person of autobiography is truly plural in its origins and subsequent formation? Because autobiography promotes an illusion of self-determination: *I* write my story; *I* say who I am; *I*

On the issue of *Maus* and collaborative authorship more explicitly, in part, this essay seeks to respond to Rick Iadonisi's 1994 essay "Bleeding History and Owning His [Father's] Story: *Maus* and Collaborative Autobiography," wherein he places *Maus* in dialogue with Philippe Lejeune's landmark theory on collaborative autobiography and demonstrates how *Maus*, due to issues of family relationship, artistic technique, and historicity, problematizes Lejeune's paradigm.[4] As Iadonisi shows, the different selves of Art Spiegelman within and without the text—second-generation survivor, Holocaust historian, artist, son, autobiographer, mouse, person behind the mouse mask, and maskless person of "Prisoner on the Hell Planet"—meld together, at once influencing the collaboration and reflecting on the narrative that results from that collaboration. In exploring these textual moments of what he coins "temporal seepage"—that is, those meta-narrative passages that conflate the past (embedded narrative) and the present (frame narrative)—Iadonisi astutely reveals in his reading of *Maus* that the collaboration in *Maus* is *not* an external, interpersonal process (as Lejeune proposes).[5] Rather, it is enacted in and through the printed/imaged text into which the collaborative process itself is integrated as a point of tension. Second, this particular collaboration carries with it the emotional weight of the Holocaust, which provokes in Art/Artie a desire not only to be a responsible writer, but also to cope with,

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create myself. The myth of autonomy dies hard, and autobiography criticism has not yet fully addressed the extent to which the self is defined by—and lives in terms of—its relations with others" (43).

[4] Iadonisi draws on Philippe Lejeune's essay "The Autobiography of Those Who Do Not Write" (in *On Autobiography*, ed. John Paul Eakin, trans. Katherine Leary, 264-271 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989)). Iadonisi values Lejeune's collaborative model of autobiography pertaining to "as-told-to" and "ghostwritten" stories and Lejeune's claim that "[f]ar from imitating the unity of the [supposedly] authentic autobiography, [collaborative autobiography] emphasizes its indirect and calculated character" (188). To be clear, Lejeune's model involves a collaborative "negotiation" between a "model" and "writer." For Lejeune, the successful writer operates as a "trustee," dialogically drawing forth the model's story, and then *internalizing* it so s/he can imagine and transcribe it for the reading public. While Iadonisi points out that Spiegelman demonstrated an awareness of this responsibility of the collaborative autobiographer when he noted how *Maus* "consisted of re-inhabiting [his] father's life on a moment-to-moment basis, on a panel-to-panel basis . . . as a way of reconstructing what happened," he nonetheless observes key points of departure between *Maus*'s collaborative model and that envisioned by Lejeune (quoted in Iadonisi 44).

[5] Iadonisi, "Bleeding History," *CEA Critic* 57, no. 1 (1994): 45.

and psychologically survive, his own Holocaust "memories."[6] Because model and writer are father and son, this particular collaboration remains inextricably bound up in familial relationships and tensions (something Lejeune's model does not address) that spill over into the representation of the collaboration. Iadonisi argues that Art/Artie responsibly demonstrates his obligation to the collaborative process and its representation, but that he nonetheless casts himself in the privileged position of an arbiter of truth, thus further complicating the ethics of collaboration Lejeune envisions.

While Iadonisi offers a unique insight into *Maus* as collaborative autobiography, his baseline acceptance of the Lejeunian paradigm—despite his desire to reveal its limits—forces him to accept *Maus* as *Vladek's* story (his own essay title attests to this point) and Art as the writer (and, more problematically, owner) of that story. Reading the text only one way (the Lejeunian way, that is, writer-model collaborative autobiography) leads Iadonisi to side step his own observations about the multiple Art Spiegelman selves at work within a space he claims is necessarily fraught with the collision of (self-) reference, and effectively to dismiss that part of the collaboration that is *Art's/Artie's* (auto)biography. To be sure, Iadonisi's concern rests with the extent to which Art's/Artie's multiple selves alter (even seize) *Vladek's* biography, and not with how they might create their own (auto)biography(ies). Similarly, Iadonisi's reading relegates Vladek to the teller of his story, and obviates any sense of Vladek as similarly multiplied, as one operating in and acting upon not only the collaboration, but also upon the representation of that collaboration, as well as upon whatever (auto)biography(ies) of Art's/Artie's is/are at work. Moreover, and most important for my discussion here, despite raising the centrality of the text's "psychic stakes"[7] that the myriad of complexities of representation lays bare, Iadonisi never explores whether (or how) Vladek or Art/Artie (un)successfully move through their respective traumas or, more importantly, what part the collaboration itself plays in that (un)success.[8] What else might the multitude of selves indicate beyond a complication of collaborative modes? Might these selves be indicators of larger psychic processes? Furthermore, Iadonisi's desire to eschew definitions (for a special kind of familial collaboration), while perhaps a sound impulse, nonetheless results in a missed opportunity to discuss the nature of the familial collaborative partnership as one *necessarily* without fixity—that is, as an embodiment of the multitude of competing inter-subjectivities at work. *Maus* offers a chance to rethink the familial model of collaboration as an embodied performance that necessarily sets in motion cross-generational practices of exchange—of memory, of affect, and of meaning—and as an ever-evolving process that cannot be neatly theorized along genre lines.

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[6] Iadonisi never discusses the status of Art's/Artie's Holocaust "memories."

[7] Ibid., 50.

[8] While I value Iadonisi's use of *Maus* to trouble Lejeune's model, showing how Lejeune's "writer" and "model" are not mutually exclusive, Lejeune is most concerned with the autobiography *of those who do not write*, or, more to the point, those who *cannot* write. The Lejeunian model of collaborative autobiography is thus most applicable to the ghostwritten or as-told-to autobiography.

Thus, this essay proposes to investigate the collaborative partnership of Vladek and Art/Artie—specifically, its constitution, its enactment, its representation, and how, as a site of tension in its own representation, it not only complicates autobiographical questions, but also opens the door to as-yet unspoken dialogues concerning *Maus*. More precisely, since by definition autobiographical "collaboration" implies varying degrees of cooperation and mutuality, and since the collaboration between Vladek and Art/Artie is distanced, both temporally and qualitatively across generations, it makes sense to discuss *Maus* in terms of what Marianne Hirsch coined, in her 1994 landmark essay, "postmemory."[9] However, I propose extending this treatment of *Maus* by linking it with Dominick LaCapra's notions of "acting out" and "working through," not in order to initiate a detailed psycho-analytic reading of *Maus*, but rather to allow for a dialectical exploration of *both* the collaboration *and* the graphical/linguistic representations to which it necessarily gives rise (and which have tended to preoccupy most critics[10]) while simultaneously exploring the extent to which both contribute to, or detract from, memorial and post-memorial processes of working through. LaCapra's efforts to combat the impulse toward total mastery—the "all or nothing approach" to psychological recovery from trauma—fits well with the totalizing drive I contend still problematically undergirds authorship. As Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford point out, while the "death of the author[11]" opened up new pathways toward decentered loci of power and multiple identities, so too did it spawn new, and perhaps reinforce old, concerns over personal agency, subjectivity, and authorial rights.[12] Consequently, a willingness to enact alternatives to conventional practices—specifically, collaborative forms of authorship—tends toward the exception and not the norm, since theoretical convictions rarely outweigh institutional risks. While I do not advocate substituting one totalizing ideology (collaborative authorship) for another (singular authorship), perhaps we might agree that *all* discourses are deeply situated, and that the exigencies of practices, as they *intersect* with relevant contemporary theory, should guide our analyses of authorial subjectivity. If "interdisciplinarity," as Linda Hutcheon and Michael Hutcheon suggest, signals the path to legitimizing collaborative authorship, how might we avoid yet another impulse toward totalization—that is, the kind of totalizing that some argue is the very aim of interdisciplinarity[13]—instead making room for "dissensus across disciplinary lines"?[14] How might the demands of theory be (re)configured so that they allow for

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[9] Drawing on the theories of Susan Sontag and Roland Barthes, Hirsch posits photographs as the connective tissue joining memory and postmemory (that is, the memory of the children of survivors of trauma), bringing together the past and the present and the stories of father and son precisely because they document both memory (of Vladek) and postmemory (of Artie, the child of a survivor dominated by memories that precede his birth). Hirsch claims that the photographs in *Maus* juxtaposed with drawings of mice necessarily complicate the aestheticizing tendency in all visual representations, producing "a more permeable and multiple text that may recast the problematics of Holocaust representation and definitively eradicate any clear-cut distinction between the documentary and the aesthetic" ("Family Pictures" 11).

[10] In addition to Iadonisi, Victoria Elmwood discusses *Maus* as a cross-generational collaboration in her essay "'Happy, Happy Ever After': The Transformation of Trauma between the Generations in Art Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*" (*Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly,* 27, no. 4 (2004): 691-720). Rather than the specifics of collaboration, Elmwood focuses on what she labels the "transformation" of trauma, a term she prefers because it implies both transmission

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as well as *change* in the processes of transmission. Elmwood argues that transformation allows Art Spiegelman to develop a hybridized narrative whereby he is able not only to gain some personal agency by integrating himself into the family as family scribe, but also to introduce elements of his own trauma (namely, his mother's suicide), which establishes a much-needed post-memorial link between Art and the Holocaust.

[11] As Ede and Lunsford discuss in "Collaboration and Concepts" (*PMLA* 116, no. 2 (2001): 354-69), the status of "author" has been "problematized, deconstructed, and challenged to such an extent that discussions of the author problem now seem decidedly old-hat" (354). However, while scholars now understand the notion of "author" to be an over-determined, modern construct—routinely echoing Michel Foucault's assertion that "[t]he coming into being of the notion of 'author' constitutes the privileged moment of individualization in the history of ideas, knowledge, literature, philosophy, and the sciences"—the impulse to affirm *autonomous* individualism persists (365).

[12] Ede and Lunsford, "Collaboration," 355-56.

[13] Quoted in Julie Thompson Klein, *Interdisciplinary: History, Theory, and Practice* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990), 12.

[14] Linda Hutcheon and Michael Hutcheon, "A Convenience of Marriage: Collaboration and Interdisciplinarity," *PMLA* 116, no. 5 (2001): 1372.

collaborative, as well as individual, subjects? What might it mean to recognize the co-dependency and inter-subjectivity of collaborative authors?

“Framing” *Maus*: Collaboration, Acting Out/ Working Through, and Postmemory

As LaCapra points out, when Sigmund Freud formulated his psychoanalytic theories of “acting out” and “working through,” he did so within a clinical context, eschewing collective applications for what he posits as individual processes. LaCapra selectively re-reads Freud, and in so doing, jettisons what he perceives to be “mistaken individualistic ideological assumptions [that give] rise to misguided questions.”[15] For LaCapra, concepts such as “acting out” and “working through” signal nothing inherently *individualistic*, since “[t]hese concepts refer to processes that always involve modes of interaction, mutual reinforcement, conflict, censorship, [and] orientation toward others.”[16] Thus, while LaCapra redeploys Freud’s model of melancholia as a mode of acting out—that is, “as characteristic of an arrested process in which the depressed and traumatized self, locked in compulsive repetition, remains narcissistically identified with the lost object”—and designates mourning as a mode of working through—that is, as characteristic of “the possibility of engaging trauma and achieving a reinvestment in, or ‘recathexis’ of, life that allows one to begin again”—LaCapra’s chief interest rests in shifting the boundaries of acting out and working through beyond the “self” and the “one” to explore the possibilities of multivalent, collective, inter-subjective sites of mourning.[17]

LaCapra’s reading of Freud allows for the possibility of conditions wherein acting out and working through, while certainly distinguishable, are intimately linked and, to varying degrees, interdependent. Such interdependence resists what LaCapra sees as the binaristic “phantasm of total mastery, full ego-identity, ‘totalitarian’ social integration, and radically positive transcendence [. . .] on the one hand, and acting out repetitive compulsions with endless fragmentation, aporias, and double-binds, on the other.”[18] LaCapra’s insistence on re-theorizing working through so that totalization is actively resisted while simultaneously counteracting the repetition-compulsion of acting out provides a generative starting point from which to envision processes that can include, perhaps even invite, notions of disruption, change, "even radical disorientation."[19] Certainly, if the failed transcendence of trauma is no longer universalized as something irredeemably lost, then meaningful recuperation is *possible*, and not objectionable or naïve. Moreover, how might letting go of this fixation on melancholia extend to questions of collaborative authorship?

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[15] LaCapra, *History and Memory afterAuschwitz* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 43.

[16] Ibid., 43.

[17] Ibid., 44-45.

[18] Ibid., 46.

Shedding the need to see these processes as inherently individualistic begs the question: to what extent are they present within the collaborative partnership of Vladek and Art/Artie? As LaCapra contends, to work through "requires an *interactive* context that mitigates isolation, depression, and melancholy and may have to extend beyond both self-reflection and a one-on-one relationship such as that between analyst and analysand or writer and reader [emphasis mine]."[20] Focusing instead on the ways in which acting out and working through co-exist in "a tense mutual articulation" of one another offers an opportunity to read *Maus* by taking into account not only its collaborative framework, but also the complex, multiple modalities of that collaboration, its enactment, and its representation.[21] Thus, the impulse toward total mastery (and its counter-impulse toward repetition-compulsion) is rendered less important than exploring the multitude of ways in which engaging *with*, rather than fixating *on*, the past, memory, and trauma, *enables* working through and the creation of a viable identity. Moreover, recognizing this enabling process as necessarily interactive and collective foregrounds the inter-subjectivity of all collaborative partnerships.[22]

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[19] Ibid., 46.

[20] Ibid., 54.

[21] Ibid., 55.

[22] I am indebted to LaCapra's reading of *Maus* in *History and Memory After Auschwitz.* LaCapra offers a comprehensive survey of *Maus*, its critical reception, its persistent themes (genre classification, the weaving of past/embedded and present/frame narratives, artistic technique and the use of animal metaphors, the interplay between word and image, and the issue of second generation "survivors"). Most relevant to my own discussion, LaCapra contends that "[p]erhaps the most pronounced impetus of *Maus* is to problematize identity in multiple and strenuous ways but to do so without simply obliterating the self as responsible agent or the group as locus of belonging and commitment" (142). I find LaCapra's analysis lucid and compelling on many counts; however, on some points, I disagree. LaCapra claims that one of the reasons that *Maus* succeeds is because it "presents material without resorting to misplaced sentimentality or a Hollywood format, and it is able to render certain complexities simply, without

In the case of *Maus*, the collaborative partnership is intergenerational, between father and son, a fact that necessarily invites the triangulation to which I have already alluded—that is, between collaboration, acting out/working through, and postmemory. Hirsch coined the term “postmemory” to distinguish it from “memory,” not as something beyond memory, but rather as something distanced by generations, and from “history” through its charged, (inter)personal connections. For Hirsch, “postmemory” is a term preferable to Nadine Fresco’s “absent memory” since Hirsch sees the former not as absent at all, but rather “as full and as empty as memory itself.”[23] Specifically, postmemory describes “the relationship of children of survivors of cultural or collective trauma to the experiences of their parents, experiences that they ‘remember’ only as the [powerful and monumental] stories and images with which they grew up [come to] constitute memories in their own right.”[24] More specifically, for Hirsch, the term “is meant to convey a sense of both *temporal* and *qualitative* difference from survivor memory, its secondary or second-generation memory quality, [and] its basis in *displacement*, its *belatedness* [emphasis mine].”[25] Its value then rests in its connection to its object not through direct experience or recollection,[26] but rather through mediated processes of “projection, investment, and creation.”[27] This connection certainly resonates throughout *Maus*, not only because its very material form results from such processes (which might also be classed as modes of collaboration), but also because they underscore how Art’s/Artie’s own belated stories are dominated by the narratives of survivor memory and, thus, necessarily displaced, as well as the attendant struggle to understand or re-create Vladek’s stories in the face of that narrative displacement. By foregrounding these mediating layers as inherent to the collaborative mode, Vladek and Art/Artie constitute this particular familial collaboration as necessarily a joint project of survivor memory and postmemory.

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unduly distorting them” (142). However, by his own admission, Spiegelman does just that with the text’s pivotal last frames, where he purposely manipulates narrative, characterization, and setting to achieve what he believes to be a crucial tripartite ending: boy-gets-girl, the resurrection of Richieu, and the “reunion in dirt” of Vladek, Anja, and Art (“Complete *Maus*”). I raise this here (as I do in the body of my essay) because it signals how Art/Artie achieves only small openings to a desirable future, to the “happy, happy ever after” ending.

[23] Hirsch, “Family Pictures,” 9.

[24] Hirsch, “Projected Memory,” 8.

[25] Ibid., 8.

[26] Hirsch emphasizes that survivor memory is not without mediation, but rather, that “it is more directly connected to the past” (8).

[27] Ibid., 8.

However, I do not mean to suggest that postmemory's relevance to *Maus* begins and ends with textual production. I understand the unease that some critics have with the term, and more to the point, the risk it poses to the specificities of post-Holocaust memory-work and the identities that are shaped and/or formed through those practices. Certainly, the possibility for appropriation looms, so that Hirsch's claim to "seeing through another's eyes, of remembering through another's memories"[28] risks collapsing into an invented seeing through one's own eyes, into one's own memories.[29] This collapse is expressed in perhaps its most extreme terms by French philosopher and cultural critic Alain Finkielkraut who coined the term "Imaginary Jew" to describe those who live what he perceives as fictional, inauthentic lives, borrowing identity from predecessors who were truly persecuted:

> Cowards in life, martyrs in dream, post-genocidal children love historical self-deception, confusing the sheltered world in which they live with the cataclysm their parents endured. [. . .] They have chosen to pass their time in novelistic space full of sound and fury that offers them the best role [. . .]. Spellbound, these young people live in borrowed identities. They have taken up residence in fiction.[30]

Finkielkraut's insistence that the second generation takes up "residence" feels particularly apt in the case of *Maus*, although not in the way he suggests. As Spiegelman recalls, "home" for him consisted not of any *speakable* trauma (at least in the sense of a publicly acknowledged trauma), movement toward catharsis, or even mourning, but rather of his parent's nightly screams and nightmarish remembrances of death camps and gas chambers, all of which he regarded as perfectly "normal" until well into his college years.[31] Fresco describes the grip of this inherited, but unspeakable, past, and how children of survivors often return to the past to fill in the gaps of what often remains unsaid. As Fresco claims, from within this "compact void of the unspeakable,"[32] children of survivors must necessarily rely on their own *imagination*; however, the reverberations of the transmitted wounds necessarily stain that imagination.[33] In the case of Art/Artie, this *imagination* locates itself through the visuality of the image, an attempt to relocate, to reconnect.[34] As Hirsh says, "Full or empty, postmemory seeks connection. It *creates* where it cannot recover. It *imagines* where it cannot recall [emphasis mine]."[35] Rather than the act of cowardly martyrdom, historical self-deception, or borrowed identity Finkielkraut suggests, Art's/Artie's Holocaust postmemories represent not an attempt to "take up residence," but rather an attempt to (re)create, or in this case, relocate, "residence" from the exiled elsewhereness of banishment. As Hirsch reminds us:

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[28] Hirsch, "Surviving Images," 10.

[29] Hirsch registers this concern herself, acknowledging "[t]hese lines of relation and identification need to be theorized more closely [in order to understand how] identification can resist appropriation and incorporation, resist annihilating the difference between self and other, the otherness of the other" (*Surviving Images* 11).

[30] Finkielkraut, *The Imaginary Jew*, Trans. Kevin O'Neill and David Suchoff (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 18-19.

[31] Spiegelman, Appendices to *Complete Maus* (New York: Voyager, 1994).

> [t]he children of exiled survivors, although they have not themselves lived through the trauma of banishment and the destruction of home, remain always marginal or exiled, always in the diaspora. "Home" is always elsewhere, even for those who return to Vienna, Berlin, Paris, or Cracow, because the cities to which they can return are no longer those in which

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[32] Fresco, "Remembering the Unknown," *International Review of Psychoanalysis* 11 (1984): 419.

[33] Michael G. Levine's "Necessary Stains: Spiegelman's *Maus* and the Bleeding of History" (*American Imago* 59, no. 3 (2002), 317-41) explores *Maus* as a postmemorial text, one that exemplifies how the Shoah, in Spiegelman's own words, outlives its apparent end and stands as a "cataclysmic world event, the ripples of which keep seeping through the pages of *The New York Times* on a regular basis" (318). Spiegelman's 2004 *In the Shadow of No Towers* exemplifies this "seeping through"—the inconclusive processes of melancholia and mourning—by framing the trauma of 9/11 with reference not only to the Holocaust in general, but Spiegelman's ever-evolving identity within the "framework" that is the Holocaust. In the aftermath of the destruction of the Twin Towers, as Art's wife, Françoise, races to retrieve their daughter, Nadja, from school, Art emerges in his *Maus* persona to contemplate the similarity between the billowing smoke in Lower Manhattan and that of Auschwitz as described to him by Vladek (3). This sequence is further layered and complicated by what can only be read as the presence of the now grown Artie, who eerily resembles Vladek.

[34] The haemorrhaging of Vladek's left eye perhaps best exemplifies the interconnectedness between trauma, memory, and visuality. Eventually removed and replaced by a glass facsimile, Vladek's wounded eye represents the trauma with which he is unable (at least initially) to come to terms (to "see"). Art's imagination (and the attendant attempt to (re)create that which has previously remained unspoken) might be read as a similarly new (perhaps transparent) lens through which to "see" … to "re-member" that which has been dismembered.

[35] Hirsch, "Past Lives," 422.

> their parents had lived as Jews before the genocide, but are instead the cities where the genocide *happened* and from which they and their memory have been expelled.[36]

Building on Hirsch's claim that "the aesthetics of postmemory is a diasporic aesthetics of temporal and spatial exile that needs simultaneously to rebuild and to *mourn* [emphasis mine],"[37] I contend that this struggle to (re)create, embedded as it is in collaboration, in turn, provokes dialogic, inter-subjective trajectories of acting out and working through for both Vladek and Art/Artie.

For Vladek, the stakes of collaboration are high, but so too do they allow for the possibility of engaging with memories and traumas of the past at a critical distance necessary for change, renewal, and the resumption of his social life—a cathartic opportunity to begin again (recognizing, of course, that he may have already experienced such opportunities prior to the collaboration). For Art/Artie, the stakes offer all of that and possibly more—the opportunity to participate in the traumatic memories of another, to inscribe them (literally and figuratively) on to his own life story, and to (re)conceive of himself as "interconnected with others of the same, of previous, and of subsequent generations, of the same and of other—proximate or distant—cultures and subcultures."[38] Moreover, since mourning as a *mode* of working through "involves introjection through a relation to the past that recognizes its difference from the present,"[39] collaboration with Vladek offers perhaps Art's/Artie's only opportunity to demarcate and work through his own traumas.

A Collaborative *Frame*-work: Vladek and Art/Artie

Before analyzing the extent(s) to which the collaborative partnership allows either Vladek or Art/Artie to work through trauma, an understanding of the collaborative partnership itself—its constitution, dynamics, processes, enactment, and ultimately, graphical representation—is first necessary. From the outset, the glaring lack of an explicit dedication by Art to Vladek (Volume I is dedicated to Anja Spiegelman, and Volume II is dedicated to both Richieu Spiegelman and Nadja Spiegelman) points to what could be read as not only a tense family relationship, but also what Jeanne Ewert claims are "contested grounds of narrative control between a domineering father and an often-rebellious son, carried over into a project important to both."[40] Furthermore, the lack of any dedication to Vladek makes central the editorial control that Art, as editor, ultimately wields—a control Art himself acknowledges and indeed relishes: "I get the last word rather than Vladek since it's my book."[41][42]

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[36] Ibid., 420-21.
[37] Ibid., 423.
[38] Hirsch, "Projected Memory," 9.
[39] LaCapra, *History and Memory*, 45.

Thus, one might argue that the collaborative mode in *Maus* conforms to what Ede and Lunsford term "hierarchical." According to Ede and Lunsford, the hierarchical mode exemplifies a carefully, often rigidly, structured approach to collaboration driven by specific goals and carried out by participants playing clearly defined and delimited roles where the realities of multiple voices and shifting authorities are seen as difficulties to be overcome (for example, the ghostwritten and/or as-told-to autobiography). While highly productive, the hierarchical mode remains typically conservative and most often a masculine mode of discourse. Conversely, the collaborative mode which Ede and Lunsford term "dialogic" operates as a predominantly feminine mode of discourse characterized by a loose structure where roles are fluid and shifting and where the processes of goal articulation are often "as important as the goals themselves and sometimes even more important" so that the participants "generally value creative tension."[43] Despite what appears to be an obvious divergence between the dialogic and hierarchical modes, Ede and Lunsford are careful not to set them in stark opposition to one another or to argue for one as "liberatory and postmodern [dialogic] and for the other [hierarchical] as oppressive and phallogocentric."[44] Rather, they recognize that, like gender roles, "discourse situations are inherently mixed and paradoxical; they defy easy analysis and categorization."[45] (On this point, I would argue for a more nuanced reading of the collaboration between Vladek and Art/Artie. Indeed, it is the very complexity of the collaborative partnership that invites the triangulated exploration I propose.) Vladek and Art/Artie are more than writer and model, and the paradoxical nature of their partnership—at once a site of shared, intergenerational power, risks, and tensions *and* one that is mutually repressive—most loudly speaks to collaborative authorship, acting out/working through, and postmemory.

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[40] Ewert, "Reading Visual Narrative," 91.

[41] Quoted in Ewert, "Reading Visual Narrative," 90.

[42] Perhaps we should take Art's claim with a grain of salt. In the opening page of the CD-ROM's "The Complete Maus," Art concedes that the ability to "find Vladek's version of an anecdote [means that] rather than having me always win in my discussion with Vladek of how something should be presented, [Vladek can have] the last word."

[43] Ede and Lunsford, *Singular*, 133.

[44] Ibid., 134.

[45] Ibid., 134.

One of *Maus*'s opening sequences lays important ground in this regard and illustrates, quite literally, the difficulty of categorizing this collaborative partnership as necessarily hierarchical. As Vladek recounts to Artie how he abandoned the lover he had been seeing for several years when he met and became engaged to the much wealthier Anja, he extracts from Artie a promise not to include its retelling in the book, claiming it "isn't so proper, so respectful."[46] Despite Artie's promise to omit the private, unflattering episode, its inclusion reveals how the last word (and image) does, in fact, belong to Art. However, we must not be too quick to classify this particular collaboration as simply hierarchical, as emblematic of the rigid, structured approach to collaboration driven by specific goals, or a predictable difficulty to be overcome. Certainly, as editor, Art could have elected, if not to omit the exchange altogether, at least to omit his own broken promise. Its inclusion in the text acts as a site of tension, highlighting the multiple and complex layers within this particular collaborative partnership. Ranging from Vladek's initial reluctance, to the questions that his reluctance exposes about Vladek's money-obsessed, calculating character, to Artie's exasperation, to Art's ultimate editorial command over the work, the sequence flatters neither Spiegelman. While it might be argued that its inclusion speaks to Art's insistence on narrative control above all else and thus supports the text as a hierarchical collaboration, so too does its existence illustrate the ways in which the participants occasionally occupy multiple, dialogic roles where clear-cut authorial "power" is not always discernible.

While the choice to make these collaborative contests textually and artistically visible rests with Art, so too does Vladek demonstrate his ability to dominate and steer narrative outcomes. Vladek repeatedly sidesteps Artie's requests for Anja's wartime diaries, insisting that, while he has looked, he cannot locate them.[47] Notorious for never throwing anything away, Vladek's sudden "remembrance" at the end of Volume I that he actually burned Anja's diaries after her funeral meets with utter disbelief and disgust from Artie: "God damn you! You—you murderer! How the hell could you do such a thing!!"[48] Coming as it does after the volume's most harrowing passage—Vladek and Anja's arrival at Auschwitz and Artie's subsequent interjection that "This is where Mom's diaries will be especially useful. They'll give me some idea of what she went through while you were apart"—Vladek's "timely" revelation subtly inserts a degree of narrative ownership on Vladek's part.[49] When he retorts, "*I* can tell you . . . *she* went through the same what *me*: terrible! [emphasis mine],"[50] Vladek insinuates that, in spite of Artie's attempt to add another dimension to what Artie initially sees as a family's story, perhaps the diary burning might have happened not after Anja's funeral at all, but rather as a more recent response to competition from a narrative that rivals his own.[51] A more blatant example of Vladek's control over Anja's social and political interactions arises earlier in the text when he discovers her involvement with local Communists and threatens to leave her: "If you want me you have to go my way."[52] Vladek's ability to enact narrative control reveals how this collaborative space, despite the jockeying for control that underpins its existence, functions as a continually *shared* and *shifting* space.

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[46] Spiegelman, *Maus*, vol. I, 23.
[47] Ibid., vol. I, 105.
[48] Ibid., vol. I, 159.

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[49] Ibid., vol. I, 158.

[50] Ibid., vol. I, 158.

[51] Later, in Volume II, in response to Artie's inquiry regarding letters Vladek exchanged with a Frenchman he met during the war, Vladek says, "Of course I saved. But all this *I threw away* together with Anja's notebooks [emphasis mine]" (98). While this inconsistency in Vladek's story (burning versus discarding) might signal the uncertainty of memory, room must be left to read it as (1) a sign of Vladek's control over the narrative (his ability to render the diaries "burned" or "thrown away"), or possibly, (2) an indicator of his own psychological progression. LaCapra claims, "Vladek burns the books in order to forget the past and to obliterate (incinerate?) the memory of both Auschwitz and his wife. In this sense his assertion against Auschwitz (fighting fire with fire) is also a bizarrely inappropriate act of aggression against his wife. But his burning of the papers serves simultaneously to burn them into his being as emblems of an unworked-through relation to the past and to the dead wife, both of which will continue to possess him and help to undermine his second marriage" (*History and Memory* 156). While LaCapra insists that the burning of the diaries be interpreted not as a "scar" (regeneration) but rather an "open wound" (156), he never addresses the discrepancy in Vladek's testimony and seemingly accepts Vladek's first version of events. I contend that, in fact, Vladek does achieve movement toward successful mourning and that it is specifically through his collaboration with Art/Artie that he is able to, in his own words, "rebuild" (II, 98), to regenerate. This "scarring" results both from the control Vladek exerts over the collaboration in its earlier stages (even if it means to lie), and his ability to then remobilize the collaboration as he moves toward (perhaps) more truthful recollections of the past. In other words, the tussle for narrative control can be read as a necessary first move toward an articulation of the past that recognizes its distance from the present.

[52] Ibid., vol. I, 29.

This capacity for collaborators to "value the creative tension inherent in multi-voiced and multivalent ventures" gives rise to a collaborative space without fixity, an absence that paradoxically allows for a kind of group effort present at the scene of production.[53] This simultaneous absence and presence can most aptly be seen in the pivotal four-panel scene from Volume II. As Vladek tells Artie about how he and other prisoners proceeded to work detail each morning, Artie mentions having read about an orchestra that played as prisoners made their daily march. The sequence begins before Artie even mentions the orchestra, yet initially depicts *his* mental rendering, which includes the orchestra. After Vladek asserts, "No. I remember only marching, not any orchestras," the third panel corrects the first to show only marching prisoners.[54] However, a closer inspection reveals Art's decision not to erase fully the orchestra, leaving it slightly visible in the background. While it might be said that Art/Artie, at best, seeks to evaluate the relative merits of Vladek's memory against documented historical record and, at worst, questions the accuracy of it altogether, there exists room to read the passage as indicative of the collaborative and narrative movement that emerges as dialogic impulses intersect with hierarchical practices. Ewert argues that the passage shows only that Art "is reluctant to disregard an event that is elsewhere well documented simply because his father cannot recall it."[55] However, I would argue that, more than a covert affront to Vladek's failed memory, the amended panel becomes a space that allows for the co-existence, even co-*dependence*, of both versions of events, so that the issue is less one of absolute accuracy than relative, dialogic accommodation—a kind of collaborative memory. This interpretation counters those that render Art/Artie as merely an outsider marginalized into insignificance by the historical facticity of Vladek's narrative, or similarly, Vladek as merely a pawn in Art's/Artie's own heroic journey. Unlike Hamida Bosmajian who claims that "no moment of genuine communication [exists] between father and son," [56] I find that passages such as this attest to the contrary. This passage simultaneously illustrates both the limits and the possibilities of communication between collaborators and the ways in which, as Cathy Caruth suggests, the truth that trauma transmits "is intricately bound up with its refusal of historical boundaries"[57] and how, as an event, it "may reside not *only* in its brute facts, but also in the way that their occurrence defies simple comprehension. [emphasis mine]"[58][59] Moreover, echoing Dori Laub's assertion that the intent of the listener should be to "respect—not to upset, not to trespass—the subtle balance between what the [speaker *knows*] and what [he *does*] *not,* or *could not, know,*" this inter-subjective space, while undoubtedly fraught with tension, provokes narrative momentum and collaborative movement.[60]

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[53] Ede and Lunsford, *Singular*, 133.

[54] Spiegelman, *Maus*, vol. II, 54.

[55] Ewert, "Reading Visual Narrative," 90.

[56] Bosmajian, "The Orphaned Voice in Art Spiegelman's *Maus* I and II," *Literature and Psychology* 44, no. 1-2 (1998): 9.

Toward Working Through: Vladek

According to Art, although Vladek "had no need to bear witness," he was nonetheless a good storyteller who "quite simply wanted his son around."[61] However, Art's claim that his father's collaborative urge stemmed more from a desire to "hang out" with his son rather than to give testimony belies the fact that so many of the pivotal, formative exchanges between Art/Artie and Vladek are couched in Vladek's inability to speak in terms *outside* of his own trauma. While the text's epigraphic sequence conveys the sense of fatherly disregard with which *Artie* grew up, it also

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[57] Caruth, Introduction to *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 8.

[58] Ibid., 153.

[59] Both Vladek's "memory" and Art's eventual artistic choices evoke Dori Laub's discussion of the controversy surrounding testimony for the Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale University. Specifically, the testimony of a woman claiming to have witnessed "four chimneys going up in flames, exploding" (59) was called into question by a group of historians, psychoanalysts, and artists who later gathered to evaluate the project's educational merit (59). As Laub recounts, "Since the memory of the testifying woman turned out to be [. . .] fallible [only one chimney is known to have blown up], [archivists] could not accept—nor give credence to—her whole account of the events" (59). One psychoanalyst vehemently disagreed, insisting, "'The woman was testifying not to the number of the chimneys blown up, but to something else, more radical, more crucial: the reality of an unimaginable occurrence. [. . .] The woman testified to an event that broke the all-compelling frame of Auschwitz, where Jewish armed revolts just did not happen, and had no place. She testified to the breakage of a framework.'" (60). In the same way, we might view Art/Artie as "breaking a framework"—the "framework" of historical "truth" that seeks only to attend to recorded facts, and the "framework" of its visual representation (in the form of comics) that here seeks to accommodate a meaningful version of events for both who "re-member."

[60] Laub, "Bearing Witness," 61.

[61] Spiegelman, "Introduction: Making *Maus*."