

The Shoah Goes On and On: Remembrance and Representation in Art Spiegelman's *Maus*

Michael E. Staub

Bowling Green State University

In some of the huts are huge glass-enclosed showcases of death. Behind the glass are great bunches of human hair, piles of shoes, stacks of eyeglass frames, heaps of gold teeth and silver fillings, a tangled mass of crutches and artificial limbs, a jumble of dishes, pots, and brushes, and mounds of valises, prayer shawls, books, phylacteries, and clothing—the pitiful possessions of the former inmates. In other cases are displayed tattoo needles for putting prison numbers on the victims, uniforms, rations, insignia, letters written by forced laborers and never mailed, communications from camp officials boasting of their brutality, models of the gas chambers and crematoria, pieces of skin, whips, instruments of torture, and sticks with bloodstains still on them.

—Description of Auschwitz in 1971 (Postal and Abramson)

The two volumes of Art Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale—My Father Bleeds History* (1986) and *And Here My Troubles Began* (1991)—can perhaps most easily be described as a comic strip about the Holocaust with Jews as mice, Germans as cats, and Poles as pigs. *Maus* does not necessarily introduce historical materials unfamiliar to scholars or students of the Nazi genocide, nor does it add substantially to existing descriptions of the conditions concentration camp inmates experienced. What it does do is present a story of this “central trauma of the Twentieth Century” (Spiegelman qtd. in Dreifus 36) that is much more accessible to a general audience than many other accounts, because it is particularly effective at inviting emotional involvement. Spiegelman's book represents an unerringly earnest attempt at an oral history of the 1930s and 1940s in Poland as experienced by Vladek Spiegelman, a survivor of Auschwitz and the author's father. At first a youthful and debonair textile merchant, Vladek slowly, and with mounting intensity, finds his life intertwined with the advances of Nazism and the persecution of the Jews. It is a story told in a way that makes plausible how people could accept for so long that their personal safety was not endangered. By the end of

1943, however, Vladek and his wife Anja are driven into hiding, and within months they are captured and transported to Auschwitz.

The second story in *Maus* (and it is no less central) concerns Art Spiegelman's own life as he seeks to come to terms with his relationship with Vladek, a story tragically tied to the suicide in 1968 of Art's mother Anja, survivor of Birkenau. Vladek is demanding and inconsiderate. Art is sarcastic and bitter. Both men act out of anger and selfishness. Yet the talking about the past gives them a reason to speak with one another, for without that reason they might have no relationship at all. *Maus* clearly documents how the son's ambivalence towards his father in the present immensely complicates the work of reclaiming and representing the world of Vladek's past.

Maus needs to be understood not only as a comic book, but also as an oral narrative, one that struggles to represent, in pictures and writing, spoken memories. As such, it is part of a larger tradition in twentieth century minority and ethnic literature: narratives that rely on the immediacy and authority of oral encounters with members of persecuted and oppressed groups in order to counter "official versions" of history that marginalize or even deny these groups' experiences and perspectives. John G. Neihardt's *Black Elk Speaks* and Zora Neale Hurston's *Mules and Men* are two prominent early twentieth century efforts of this sort; more recent "remembering books," such as *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* and those by Tomás Rivera and Maxine Hong Kingston, are also in this lineage. In spite of the Holocaust's frequent inclusion in "official histories" and the widespread attention given it in cultural documents of many sorts (more on this below), Holocaust survivors' testimonial literature also belongs in this genre. Orality's "authority" has resonances and functions that are different for every ethnic group, but all oral narratives make strategic choices about how to represent remembrances.

Despite its unusual status as a comic book, *Maus* remains remarkably traditional in its documentary strategies for relating its oral narrative. There is the present-day storytelling frame about Art and Vladek; but such a frame is a standard feature of ethnographic narrative (Pratt 31-32), and its inclusion enhances rather than calls into question *Maus*'s insistence on the objective actuality of Vladek's recollected past. *Maus* usually does not fussy the lines of objectivity and subjectivity, nor does it speculate on what James Clifford names the "partial truths" of all ethnographic encounters. *Maus* strives to keep the details of one man's remembrances of the Holocaust as separate as possible from the inevitable dilemmas of representing them in the present.

In a variety of ways, however, *Maus* does develop into a meditation upon the limits of representation for retelling a survivor's tale of Auschwitz. For example, a pivotal subject of *My Father Bleeds History* is Art's effort to recover a lost book, his mother's diary about her time in the camps; the search for this missing narrative becomes a working metaphor for the ultimate unrecoverability of all Holocaust experiences. The stories Art's father tells him reveal that there is this diary, one which would (as Art says to his father) "give me some idea of what she went through while you were apart," after they were brought to Auschwitz and Birkenau in the first months of 1944 (158). Again and again in the early chapters, after his father alerts him to the existence of this lost book, Art searches for and asks after it.

Yet at the same time, characters in *Maus* are continually questioning what value written representations have in the first place. For instance, Vladek recalls that when a group of Jews hiding from the Nazis had sent one man for food, he had brought back books: "Books!? What's the matter with you? We can't eat books!" (112). When Vladek sees his son's book-in-progress, his response is unchanged now that his experience has been written down: "Yes. *Still* it makes me cry!" (133). And most pointedly, as Art's therapist Paul Pavel, a Czech Jew and a survivor of Terezin and Auschwitz, tells him during one of their weekly sessions: "I'm not talking about YOUR book now, but look at how many books have already been written about the Holocaust. What's the point? People haven't changed.... Maybe they need a newer, bigger Holocaust" (*And Here My Troubles Began* 45). Frames like these about the uselessness of representations take on a very particular meaning in the context of Jewish history: they reflect a general anxiety over the impending death of all concentration camp survivors and their living memories. When they are gone, we will have mountains of written texts, videotapes, films, recordings and other evidence. But the actual voices will be lost forever. How, then, to approximate the authority of the oral in a world increasingly suspicious of and unconvinced by written evidence? Spiegelman's *Maus* argues within itself about proper methods for the embodiment of historical memories that are simultaneously horrible to contemplate, necessary to document, and inevitably open to contest. Sadly, the mice in *Maus* muse over their own insignificance; perhaps this book will not matter much either.

Walter J. Ong has commented on the awkward paradox of the written text—that it is both seemingly closed off from debate and infinitely open to reinterpretations. Ong argues: "There is no way directly to refute a text. After absolutely total and devastating refutation, it says exactly the same thing as before. This is one reason why

'the book says' is popularly tantamount to 'it is true'. It is also one reason why books have been burnt" (79). Ong further states that

Print encourages a sense of closure, a sense that what is found in a text has been finalized, has reached a state of completion.... By contrast, manuscripts, with their glosses or marginal comments (which often got worked into the text in subsequent copies) were in dialogue with the world outside their own borders. They remained closer to the give-and-take of oral expression. (132)

At other points, however, Ong contends that "the deadness of the text, its removal from the living human lifeworld, its rigid visual fixity [simultaneously] assures its endurance *and* its potential for being resurrected into limitless living contexts by a potentially infinite number of living readers" (81; emphasis added). Much of Ong's writings focus on this paradox that writing, unlike speech, is both "resurrected" by and defenseless against its readers, whereas speakers can—at least—directly say, "No, that isn't what I meant at all." Still it can be only writing—and other media for recording historical memory—that survives when all the speakers involved in an event have died.

As Ong's theories suggest, Art's is a contradictory search for closure, one that hopes to "resurrect" as well as lay to rest his mother's memories. In the end, there is a bitter lesson in what Art learns has happened to his mother's diaries; they have been burned not by Nazi book burners, but rather by Vladek. "God damn you!" Art yells at Vladek when he hears the truth. "You-you murderer! How the hell could you do such a thing!!" (*My Father* 159) The tragic climax of *My Father Bleeds History* addresses the destruction of historical memories that do not survive because a survivor has destroyed them himself, and the dilemma of recovering history is how speaking about that history—and then writing down that speech—has (at best) conflicting implications. On the one hand, it can partially reopen the "give-and-take" of oral remembrance and exchange, a process that is central to the project of healing. On the other hand, there is the documenter's own fear that the written record—recording truth so far as he can approximate it—will always be vulnerable to distortion and ugly reinterpretation. Art puts it most bluntly when he worries over the portrait of his father in *Maus*: "In some ways he's just like the racist caricature of the miserly old Jew" (*My Father* 131).

Oral historian Alessandro Portelli writes:

The presence of writing liberates orality from the burdens of memory.... Because writing has taken up its burdens, orality can be free to

flow and change with time rather than attempt to resist it at all costs. Freed from responsibilities toward social memory, speakers are allowed to place their own subjectivity and experience at the center of the tale." (75)

Portelli's observations provide further insights into the meanings of Vladek's oral remembrances. For if writing "liberates" orality, thus permitting it to "change with time," then writing's destruction would conversely freeze speech and condemn it to live with a more "timeless" guilt and responsibility. Perhaps Vladek burns Anja's diaries after her suicide to *prevent* being freed from this responsibility, to force himself to hold fast to the burdens of his memory, and to imprison himself forever in that nightmare. However, burning the diaries also permits him to replace the closed record left by his wife with his own subjectivity. His son, in turn, uses *Maus* both to record outrage at such an utterly selfish and despicable act *and* also to recreate—in many ways sympathetically—the circumstances of guilt, pain, and confusion that made such an act possible.

Maus is very much about the inability of art (or Art) to confront fully or represent metaphorically a monstrous past, but it is also about the tensions involved in understanding what it means to have a Jewish identity in a post-Auschwitz age. Critical perspectives on *Maus* have tended to rivet onto the book's style, and no aspect of its "comix-verité" documentary style generates more discussion than Spiegelman's decision to use anthropomorphized animals and animal masks to illustrate his tale.¹ Storytelling with talking animals dates at least as far back as the fables of Aesop and, more recently, has been used (for extremely varied purposes) in Kafka's last published tale, "Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk," George Orwell's satiric *Animal Farm*, George Herriman's *Krazy Kat*, Walt Kelly's *Pogo*, and—especially relevant since millions of Germans, including Hitler, utterly adored him—Walt Disney's Mickey Mouse (Laqua 53-57, 86).² Spiegelman openly operates out of an awareness of all these precedents, but transfigures these various traditions of which he is a part by incorporating actual spoken testimonies into his narrative and by making the burdens of history-telling a central theme.

Spiegelman's stylistic choices also serve as a way to engage with the complexities of ethnic categories. The choice to turn people into animals, as the Hitler quote that opens the first volume ("The Jews are undoubtedly a race, but they are not human") makes clear, can be read as straightforward metaphor for the dehumanization of victims that allows genocide to occur (*My Father* 3). But it also points up the obverse: that it was the Nazis who acted like animals. Simultaneous-

ly, *Maus's* reliance on increasingly banal associations—especially in the second volume where French frogs, Swedish reindeer and Gypsy moths all make an appearance—works to expose the hollowness of “racial” theories of all kinds. Ultimately *Maus* illustrates (literally) how irresponsible the assignment of “race” is as a method for disaggregating people, and how utterly destructive it has been.

Yet at the same time, and held in tension with this point, *Maus* also takes seriously the way marginalized peoples not only often rely on group identity to survive, but also have every right to celebrate their specialness and differences from the dominant culture. But—and this is the key issue—*Maus* clearly suggests that that identity can never be understood as self-evident; *Maus* works continually to disrupt comfortable assumptions about where the differences between people lie. In a scene in which the Polish Jews, Vladek and Anja, are running from the Nazis, for instance, they put on pig masks so as to pass as (gentile) Poles (*My Father* 136). This suggests how reductive it is to associate people with only one facet of their “identity”; it also highlights the way individuals *choose* whether, or how, to present an ethnic identity to the world. Similarly, when asked by a reporter in the second volume, “If your book was about ISRAELI Jews, what kind of animal would you draw?” and Art responds: “I have no idea. . .porcupines?” (42), *Maus* makes transparent how the “fact” of Jewish identity cannot translate into any one static sign.

It is important to note how the inconsistencies of identity are *Maus's* point. It is hardly irrelevant that a *Maus* portrait of a Jewish mouse, for example, may have a tail in one frame and none in another, may appear to be a human being with a mouse mask in one frame and actually *be* an (anthropomorphized) mouse in another.³ Furthermore, these talking animals have no consciousness of themselves as not humans, so that they may speak of *actual* animals as animals and witness illustrations of themselves as human without commenting on the oddness that they are themselves represented as non-human. These juxtapositions call attention to the ways in which identities are frequently in the (less than clear-sighted) eye of the beholder. As Spiegelman put it in an interview,

You can't help when you're reading to try to erase those animals. You go back, saying: no, no, that's a person, and that's a person there, and they're in the same room together, and why do you see them as somehow [belonging to] different species? And, obviously, they can't be and aren't, and there's this residual problem you're always left with. (Brown 108)

In short, all of *Maus's* disjunctive characterizations—unquestionably deliberate in their apparent inconsistencies—go to the heart of what *Maus* is and what it attempts. Unlike the reviewer, then, who simplistically presumes that Spiegelman is seeking “amid changing comic styles” to define his “Jewish character”—thus treating what it means to be Jewish as self-evident, and Jewishness as some essential trait—*Maus* itself is constantly preoccupied with the utter lack of self-evidence in ethnic identities and deconstructs essentialist assumptions at every turn (Buhle 14).

This deconstruction is commented on most directly when Art represents his own struggle—as he was conceptualizing *Maus* in the summer of 1979—over how to portray his French, gentile-born wife Françoise. The first page of *And Here My Troubles Began* opens with Art drawing her in various forms: as moose, poodle, frog, bunny rabbit, and mouse. “What are you doing?” Françoise asks Art. “Trying to figure out how to draw you,” Art responds, pad and pencil still in hand.

Françoise: Want me to pose?

Art: I mean in my book. What kind of *animal* should I make you?

Françoise: Huh? A *mouse*, of course!

Art: But you're *French*!

Françoise (pointing): Well... How about the bunny rabbit?

Art: Nah. Too sweet and gentle.

Françoise: Hmmph.

Art: I mean the French in general. Let's not forget the centuries of anti-Semitism.... I mean, how about the Dreyfus Affair? The Nazi collaborators! The—

Françoise: Okay! But if you're a mouse, I ought to be a mouse too. I *converted* didn't I? (11)

Maus gives many answers to the question of what it means to be a Jew, providing repeated reminders that ethnic identities are not fixed—and not only something people are born into. Placing this episode at the very beginning of *And Here My Troubles Began* gives the title double meanings. While the title most directly refers to the feelings Vladek describes later in the volume about his transfer from Auschwitz to Dachau, it also points to difficulties Spiegelman encountered before he began drawing the first page of *Maus*: seeking representational forms that would both viscerally communicate *and* critically comment upon the workings of racism.

The title of my essay has three overlapping dimensions.⁴ First, the title refers to the *continuing* psychological damages inevitably inflict-

ed on survivors and on survivors' children—and the efforts at self-therapy that *Maus* necessarily became for Spiegelman. As Art says to Françoise about growing up with his parents: "Don't get me wrong. I wasn't *obsessed* with this stuff.... It's just that sometimes I'd fantasize Zyklon B coming out of our shower instead of water" (*And Here My Troubles Began* 16). Or, as Spiegelman said in a National Public Radio interview about being a child of survivors,

You grow up as a survivor's kid—it seems to be a common denominator—that as a kid, you're playing baseball or whatever and you break a window and then your mother or father says, "Ach, for this I survived?" And that's a heavy load to carry around for breaking a window with a baseball—or less. And it tends to make kids who grow up to become doctors, lawyers, professionals, overachievers of one kind or another, who tend to try very hard to make things easy for their parents. And for whatever mad molecule is in my particular genetic makeup, I was in rebellion against my parents from an early age and had a very difficult time coming to terms with them.

The ongoing damage of the Shoah is perhaps most brutally conveyed in "Prisoner on the Hell Planet: A Case History," a brief comic strip Spiegelman published in 1972 and which appears as an insert in the first volume of *Maus*. In "Prisoner," Art relates the story of his mother's suicide and funeral in 1968, three months after he himself had been released from the state mental hospital. Art has guilt enough about Anja's suicide—particularly because the last time he had seen her, he had turned away from her, "resentful of the way she tightened the umbilical cord"—and his parents' friends only reinforce this by offering him "hostility mixed in with their condolences," implying that his life in the counterculture and his emotional breakdown killed her. In addition to the guilt, Art struggles with the agony of not knowing her motivations; she left no note, and so scraps of thought like "menopausal depression," "Hitler did it!," "Mommy!" and "bitch" swirl through his head (*My Father* 103).

That Art wears concentration camp clothing throughout drives home the persistence of the Holocaust's legacy, and the strip ends with him behind the bars of a high-security prison. There, in the final frames, he addresses his dead mother: "Well, mom, if you're listening.... Congratulations!... You've committed the perfect crime.... You put me here... Shorted all my circuits.... Cut my nerve endings... And crossed my wires!... You *murdered* me, Mommy, and you left me here to take the rap!!!" An anonymous prisoner responds: "Pipe down, Mac! Some of us are trying to sleep!" (*My Father* 103). The inclusion of scenes like this one (and the one in which Art accuses his father of

being a murderer for having burned Anja's diaries) work to undercut, in the most dramatic fashion possible, any impulse readers might have to see survivors—or their children—as either saints or heroes, or indeed to prettify in any way the “moral lessons” one can draw from the Holocaust.

Second, the title of this essay plays off the enormous selling potential of Nazism in today's world, a crisis partially prophesized by Susan Sontag in her 1975 essay, “Fascinating Fascism.” Or, as Spiegelman commented in a recent interview, “As they say, there's no business like *Shoah* business” (Dreifus 35). There are many only seemingly incidental moments in *Maus* that reflect critically upon the commercialization of Holocaust memories in the modern (and post-modern) world. *And Here My Troubles Began*, for instance, discusses the popular reception of *My Father Bleeds History*. “Artie, baby,” a businessman says (referring to Art's preferred attire and holding up a placard that reads “*Maus*: You've Read the Book Now Buy the Vest!”), “Check out this licensing deal. You get 50% of the profits. We'll make a million. Your dad would be proud!” (42). Marketing Holocaust memorabilia, however, hardly began with *Maus*, as the final pages of the second volume make remarkably clear. Next to an actual photograph of Vladek, the mouse Vladek tells his mouse son: “I passed once a photo place what had a camp uniform—a new and clean one—to make souvenir photos...” (134). The photo was taken in 1945.

Finally, the title refers to the dilemma of how to keep alive the memory of the Shoah (the Hebrew word meaning “annihilation”) at a time when standard forms of commemoration and recollection are increasingly falling under intense scrutiny and attack. First, there is the popular perception that there is no problem: that the Holocaust as theme and subject saturates cinema, television, fiction, and classroom discussions. This is related to the problem of overtitillation, which stymies and deadens any moral responses beyond the automatic or superficial, along with the disturbing and ever more common juxtapositions of “kitsch and death” that Saul Friedlander has identified. Spiegelman too has railed against examples of what he calls “Holokitsch,” criticizing their “fatuous attempts to give it a happy ending. ‘And then he survived and then came the state of Israel’—anything like that” (Dreifus 35).

Furthermore, there is an increasing recognition that such seeming certitudes as “history,” “fact,” “evidence” and “truth” are infinitely contestable. This development is often blamed on “poststructuralism” by, among others, Holocaust scholars. But such attacks miss how inescapable the problem of contestability is, not least because

the event of the Holocaust itself calls attention to the way what counts as truth inevitably changes. As Anson Rabinbach bluntly put it, "Overnight, as it were, the entire history of the Jews and their place in European culture had to be rewritten" (3). More importantly, traditional means of memorialization and appeals to factual evidence have not been able to curtail the recent proliferation of conservative apologias and the spread of revisionism. Most well-known are the "Holohoaxers" who blatantly deny that the death camps existed. But efforts to minimize the Holocaust's meaning have a broader base. A famous episode encapsulating these larger tendencies was the 1985 visit by President Ronald Reagan and Chancellor Helmut Kohl to the Bitburg Military Cemetery in West Germany, a move that necessarily honored the Nazi soldiers buried there. In defending his decision to visit Bitburg, Reagan made his position plain: "I don't think we ought to focus on the past. I want to focus on the future. I want to put that history behind me" (qtd. in Hartman xiii).

An additional dynamic has emerged even more clearly in the years since Bitburg: a process of trivialization paradoxically resting precisely on the Holocaust's status as uniquely horrific. As James E. Young has remarked, "It is ironic that once an event is perceived to be without precedent, without adequate analogy, it would in itself become a kind of precedent for all that follows: a new figure against which subsequent experiences are measured and grasped" (99). Indeed, comparisons and analogies to Nazi Germany (most recently Iraq, Rwanda, Serbia and Bosnia) seem to have become an ever more routine part of American (and, indeed, world) political and cultural life, as if by some unspoken agreement enough time has passed and the moment has come to place that history in its "proper" perspective. Who will be this year's "Hitler" and what will be the next "Holocaust"?

All three dimensions of this essay's title—the lingering consequences of the Nazi genocide, its awesome profitability, and the immense difficulties of presenting a monstrous past in ways that will matter to people today—are addressed at the beginning of the eighth chapter of *Maus*. Entitled "Auschwitz (time flies)," it opens with the artist/author—an unshaven man with a mouse mask fastened to his face—sitting at his drawing board smoking a cigarette. Behind him, shifting right angles of black and white light—like pieces of a giant swastika—frame the action. Several horse flies hover silently about the author's head. "Time flies....," reads the opening caption, with its several meanings, which include: how quickly the past is forgotten; how obsessed we are with "having fun"; and how rapidly huge numbers of human beings can be brutally slaughtered. In this first panel

and the four that follow on this page, the words Art speaks identify the various temporal landmarks relevant to *Maus*:

Vladek died of congestive heart failure on August 18, 1982.... Françoise and I stayed with him in the Catskills back in August 1979. Vladek started working as a tinman in Auschwitz in the spring of 1944.... I started working on this page at the very end of February 1987. In May 1987 Françoise and I are expecting a baby.... Between May 16, 1944, and May 24, 1944 over 100,000 Hungarian Jews were gassed in Auschwitz.... In September 1986, after 8 years of work, the first part of MAUS was published. It was a critical and commercial success. At least fifteen foreign editions are coming out. I've gotten 4 serious offers to turn my book into a T.V. special or movie. (I don't wanna.) In May 1968 my mother killed herself. (She left no note.) Lately I've been feeling depressed. (*And Here My Troubles Began* 41)

In the fifth and final panel on this page, the frame expands and reveals more of Art's studio. The blackness also expands. The flies that hover around Art's head are more numerous, drawn to a twisted heap of dead and naked skeletal bodies (with mouse heads) gathered at Art's feet. The artist's mouse head is lowered down onto his curled arms across the drawing board. He is not working. Towards the lower right hand corner of this panel—which itself takes up half the page—there is the voice of an anonymous and off-screen television interviewer: "Alright Mr. Spiegelman.... We're ready to shoot!..." Like "time flies," these words communicate desperate irony when



placed beside the Jewish dead piled high in Spiegelman's studio and the camp watchtower visible outside its window.

The eighth chapter continues with a German reporter asking Art about the forthcoming German translation of *My Father Bleeds History*: "Many younger Germans have had it up to HERE with Holocaust stories. These things happened before they were even born. Why should THEY feel guilty?" (*And Here My Troubles Began* 42). Art—having just assured the reporters that "I never thought of reducing [my book] to a message"—responds tentatively: "Who am I to say?" Then he adds: "But a lot of the corporations that flourished in Nazi Germany are richer than ever. I dunno.... Maybe EVERYONE has to feel guilty. EVERYONE! FOREVER!" (42). An American television reporter tramples on the heaped corpses in her haste to get the scoop. Later, when a distraught Art walks uptown to see his therapist (having just wailed, "I want... ABSOLUTION. No... No... I want... I want... my MOMMY!"), he has to wade through the sea of corpses that litter the streets of Manhattan as well, while part of a swastika looms on a building wall (42-43). The East German novelist Christa Wolf once wrote about growing up in the Nazi era: "What is past is not dead; it is not even past. We cut ourselves off from it; we pretend to be strangers" (3). Instead of, like Reagan, dividing the past from the present and future, *Maus* constantly calls attention to the ways they collapse into each other. No one can claim to be a stranger.

Notes

1. Along with those cited elsewhere in this essay, important articles about *Maus* and interviews with Spiegelman include those by Groth and Fiore, Orvell, Storr, and Witek. In addition, since this essay was first written, the following valuable studies of *Maus* have come to my attention: Hirsch, Kaplan, and Rothberg.
2. A few Nazi commentators were appalled by Mickey Mouse's popularity. Thus, for example, in 1931 the NSDAP paper *Die Diktatur* exclaimed: "Blond, free-thinking, urban German youth on the leash of the finance-Jew: Youth, where is your self-esteem? Mickey Mouse is the most shabby, miserable ideal ever conceived.... Healthy feeling by itself should actually tell every decent girl and every honest boy that the dirty and filth-covered vermin, the greatest bacteria carrier in the animal kingdom, cannot be the ideal type of animal. Don't we have anything better to do, than to decorate our dress with the filthy animal, because American business Jews want to profit?... Throw out the vermin! Down with Mickey Mouse, wear the Swastika cross!" (qtd. in Laqua 35). A slightly different version of this quote appears on the copyright page of *And Here My Troubles Began* (4).
3. The use of masks in *Maus* also echoes a phenomenon many survivors have commented on: the feeling of having a double skin. As one Auschwitz survivor, Charlotte Delbo, puts it, the "skin of memory" will always be part of her beneath a "fresh and shining" new skin she gained slowly and years later.

"Auschwitz is there, fixed and unchangeable," Delbo says, "but wrapped in the impervious skin of memory that segregates itself from the present 'me'. Unlike the snake's skin, the skin of memory doesn't renew itself" (qtd. in Langer 5). Another Auschwitz survivor says of her camp experiences:

I feel my head is filled with garbage: all these images, you know, and sounds, and my nostrils are filled with the stench of burning flesh. And it's...you can't excise it, it's like—like there's another skin beneath this skin and that skin is called Auschwitz, and you cannot shed it, you know. And it's a constant accompaniment. (qtd. in Langer 53)

4. A number of works by survivors and by students of the Holocaust have helped me think through the issues addressed in this essay. In addition to the scholars cited in the text, I would like to call attention to the thought-provoking works of Améry, Friedlander (*Probing*), Kantor, Lanzmann, Marrus, Rosenfeld, and Santner.
5. One particularly dramatic and effective recent example of the "Hitler" analogy occurred during the closing arguments in the O. J. Simpson double-murder trial. Labeling former L.A.P.D. detective Mark Fuhrman a "genocidal racist", Johnnie L. Cochran Jr., chief defense lawyer for Simpson, elaborated: "There was another man not too long ago in the world who wanted to burn people... People didn't care. People said he's just crazy, he's just a half-baked painter. This man, this scourge became one of the worst people in this world, Adolf Hitler, because people didn't care, didn't try to stop him" (Margolick A1, A10).

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