RUNNING HEAD: Reflexive Memory

Construction of Social Memory through Strategies of Reflexivity:

A Case Study in Three Texts by Art Spiegelman

Matthew T. Jones

(215) 725 4466

matjones@temple.edu

309 Princeton Avenue

Philadelphia, PA 19111

Submitted to:

SCT Graduate Student Competitive Research Forum

Abstract

This paper sets out to interpret the construction of social memory through reflexive strategies in three comic texts by Art Spiegelman. These texts include *Maus I* and *Maus II* (which tell the story of his father's holocaust experience) and *In the Shadow of No Towers* (a personal account of his experiences on September 11th). It is proposed that Spiegelman uses strategies of reflexivity (including: authorial awareness, demystification, intertextuality, intermedia reflexivity, and reader awareness) in order to provide the reader with a contextual frame of reference for understanding how the memories of events were formed and interpreted. It is further suggested that, due to the difference in the age of the memories, reflexive strategies are used differently.

The objective of this paper is to understand how social memory is shaped through strategies of textual reflexivity in the work of Art Spiegelman. To accomplish this goal, a case study will be undertaken that includes *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History* (1986), *Maus II: A Survivor's Tale: And Here My Troubles Began* (1991) and *In the Shadow of No Towers* (2004).

Social memory has been defined as "recollections of the past that are determined and shaped by the group" (Zelizer, 1995, p. 214). Of central importance to the construction of social memory is the concept of "historical imagination" which is described by Archibald (2002) as the incorporation of historical events into personal memory experiences.

The necessity of understanding the process of social memory construction cannot be understated as cultural elites seek to sculpt social memory to advance their own agendas. Supporting this contention, Zelizer (1995) has observed that "memories of common people are often appropriated by elites, professionals, and other cultural brokers" (p. 221). Mass media plays a critical role in this process. As Zelizer further notes: "From comics to popular films, popular culture has assumed an active presence in the shaping and reshaping of memory" (p. 229).

Given this, how can the authentic social memory of vernacular communities be preserved so that it is not co-opted by those who seek control over the past to achieve their own current aims? An illustration from *Maus II* may contain the hint of an answer:

Near the beginning of the second volume, Artie finds himself at his drafting table surrounded by "cultural brokers" who, based on the success of the first book, want to mass produce his personal story about his relationship to his Holocaust-surviving father

as a television special, a movie and even a vest! ("You've read the book now buy the vest!" (*Maus II*, p. 42)). Artie's response is to reveal these hucksters by reflexively contextualizing them within the scheme of his larger narrative. Although this scene is undoubtedly a mild exaggeration of the truth, it contains within it the antidote to the commandeering of memory that Zelizer warns us about. By shining a light on the commercial pressures that haunt him during the production process, Spiegelman protects the integrity and authenticity of his work.

Reflexive Strategies

Reflexivity is defined as "a process by which the author of the text and/or the audience of the text functions to call attention to the text as an artificial construct" (OMIT, in press), and it has been explored within the context of a variety of disciplines ranging from literature (Alter, 1975; McCaffery, 1982; Waugh, 1984) to new media (Szczepanik, 2002).

A taxonomy of reflexive strategies has emerged from the literature (especially Stam, 1985) that includes the following:

1. Authorial Awareness: A reflexive instance in which the author foregrounds his or her own agency as an individual and/or a constructive force within the text.
2. Demystification: A reflexive instance in which the instruments and contexts responsible for the production of the text are made visible or apparent.
3. Intertextuality: A reflexive instance in which multiple texts are brought together within the context of one single text and function to relativize one another.

4. Intermedia Reflexivity: A reflexive instance in which the medium of representation is itself represented through another medium, thus calling attention to the particular features of each medium (Szczepanik, 2002).
5. Reader Awareness: A reflexive instance in which the reader is made conscious of his or her status as a reader.

In the case study that follows, three texts crafted by Art Spiegelman will be interrogated for the ways in which these reflexive strategies are deployed in the service of forming and maintaining social memory.

A Case Study: Examining the Reflexive Construction of Memory in Art Spiegelman's *Maus I* (1986), *Maus II*, (1991) and *In the Shadow of No Towers* (2004)

In order to meet the objective stated at the start of this paper, the above mentioned texts will be examined to determine how reflexive strategies function at different stages of memory construction. First we will examine social memory in a fairly late stage of development – the Holocaust memory which is the topic of the *Maus* series. Second we will examine the very early stages of social memory formation (with regard to September 11, 2001) which takes place as part of Spiegelman's latest work: *In the Shadow of No Towers* (2004).

Before delving into this analysis, it may be helpful to briefly turn our attention to the author of these works.

Art Spiegelman was born in Stockholm, Sweden in 1948, the son of Polish Jews who survived Auschwitz and Birkenau. He grew up in Rego Park, New York, and has had far-reaching success as an author and artist.

Spiegelman was nominated for a National Book Critics Circle Award in both 1986 and 1991. In addition, he has won the Joel M. Covior Award for Jewish Writing and a special Pulitzer Prize. Spiegelman was a recipient of the Guggenheim fellowship in 1990 and his work is published in more than sixteen languages. Beyond this, he has been a contributing editor and cover artist for the New Yorker. His work has appeared in a vast range of heavily circulated newspapers and periodicals including *The New York Times, Village Voice*, and *Playboy*.

Maus I & Maus II

Maus is best described as a two-volume graphic novel that tells the autobiographical story of Art Spiegelman's construction of (his father) Vladek Spiegelman's biographical tale of Holocaust survival. Constructed in this way, the text provides a highly self-conscious and reflexive vantage point that brings the context of the biography's creation into focus within the encompassing autobiographical narrative.

Authorial awareness presents itself as a reflexive strategy on three hierarchical levels within the context of *Maus*. Each of these levels functions as filter elements that sift through the details of the story. In a very real sense there are three authors in *Maus*: Vladek, Artie (Art as he is depicted in the text) and Art (Art as the master enunciator – the man who has actually written the text we are reading).

Beginning with Vladek, who has the least amount of narrative control, we can say that our attention is directed toward him as an author of the tale in two ways. First, we become aware of his ability, either by mistake or with purpose, to omit details. For example, his destruction of Anja's (Art's mother) diaries gives him some control over what cannot be included in the story being told. Second, we become aware that Vladek

has control over the story by virtue of the fact that it is contained within his memory. When he nearly suffers a heart attack as he is telling Art about the shoe shop that he worked at (*Maus* I, p. 118), his importance to the story is made quite evident. In addition, Vladek's willingness to speak gives him a measure of narrative control. When he says, "It's enough for today. Yes, Artie?" (*Maus* I, p. 91) or "so…let's stop, please, your tape recorder…" (*Maus* II, p. 136), Art is left with little choice but to oblige him.

Our second author is Artie, who gains our attention as a narrator through his privileged position as the interviewer obtaining Vladek's story. In the words of Nancy K. Miller (2003) "If his father, as Art puts it, 'bleeds history,' the son draws the blood" (p. 47).

To begin with, Artie determines the ordering of the story through his occasional interruption of his father's stream of consciousness memory. An obvious illustration of this is found in the first volume when Artie becomes annoyed stating "Wait! Please, Dad if you don't keep your story chronological, I'll never get it straight…" (p. 82). Here we see Artie's invasive interference with Vladek's memory. Although Vladek remembers events through association without regard for chronology, Artie demands that he tell what he remembers in order. This demand may actually change the way Vladek articulates his memories.

In addition, Artie's presence as an author is made clear in his relentless personal struggle about how to deal with issues of authenticity and representation. For example, in discussing the problems of his project with his wife, Francoise, he states "It's so presumptuous of me I mean, I can't even make any sense out of my relationship with my father…How am I supposed to make any sense out of Auschwitz?...of the Holocaust?..."

(*Maus* II, p. 14). Artie further laments that "I feel so inadequate trying to reconstruct a reality that was worse than my darkest dreams" (*Maus* II, p. 16).

Dealing with the associated issue of his relationship to his father, Artie visits his "shrink," Pavel (also a Holocaust survivor), who helps him comprehend the complex role of "survivor's guilt" in the relationship. These examples of Artie's self-awareness as an author and the many others that go unmentioned not only highlight Artie's position of narrative authority, but contextualize his struggle to tell his father's story with fairness and accuracy.

Even though Artie is shown gathering the story that we, as readers, hold in our hands, there is yet another author looking over Artie's shoulder who makes his presence known to us: Art.

Art's omniscient position as author and master enunciator of the memory tale we are reading is evident in a number of ways. First, however, the distinction between "Art" and "Artie" must be further established: "The narrator Artie Spiegelman in Maus is indeed different from Art Spiegelman. […] Artie is…a lesser Art Spiegelman, an orphaned voice and self that seems more lost than his author" (Bosmajian, 1998, p. 2). Further, the "grownup Art speaks both intra- and metadiegetically, illustrating the story and explaining its implications to the reader" (Ewert, 2000, p. 93). Art's self-reflexive metadiegetic quality as an author is most clearly referenced in three ways:

First, and likely most obvious, Art demonstrates his ultimate authorial presence and narrative control through the recapitulation of the events of *Maus* I at the beginning of *Maus* II. This third person synopsis of Artie and Vladek calls attention to Art as the master author.

Second, the occasional narrative linkage provided by Art demonstrates his supreme control as he ultimately determines the order of the story. This narrative linkage is accomplished through brief notes written at the tops of the pages [e.g. "About a week later, early afternoon" (*Maus* I, p. 98), "Another visit…" (*Maus* I, p. 130), "That night…" (*Maus* II, p. 74), "Back in Rego Park, Late Autumn…" (*Maus* II, p. 102).

Last, Art's self-conscious authorial presence as master narrator is most evident in the fact that his voice brackets the entire tale. The first page of the first volume is narrated by Art and the last page of the second volume features Art's unmistakable signature right beneath the gravestone of his parents. In the last analysis, this is his story.

As the context of each particular level of authorship is revealed in the story, we, as readers, are presented with the necessary information to consider additional variables such as emotional frame of mind and social circumstances that would not be available in a text with "hidden" authors. The importance of this to the process of social memory construction is evident in the sense that it provides the milieu under which the memories being articulated were originally formed.

A step further than authorial awareness, the reflexive strategy of demystification not only calls attention to the author, but calls attention to the author in the act of authoring. Conventionally, demystification refers only to the exposure of the tools used in the creation of a text (Ames, 1997; Stam, 1985). Spiegelman, however, takes things a step further and reveals not only the instruments of production, but also his own thought process and social context. Various theorists have called attention to Spiegelman's transparency in documenting his methods of production and process of remembering (see Doherty, 1996; Laga, 2001; Miller, 2003; Staub, 1995; Tabachnik, 1993; Witek, 1989;

Young, 2003). Doherty (1996) in particular observes that "In good postmodern fashion, the interview sessions between father and son – and the artist's behind-the-scenes scaffolding – are incorporated into Vladek's narrative" (p. 70).

Specific instances of demystification in the text can be divided into three categories which include: (1) the tools, (2) the research process and (3) the decision making process.

As in the traditional notion of demystification, the tools of production are openly displayed. Struggling with the issue of how to represent his wife, Francoise, Artie makes a series of sketches on his notebook (*Maus* II, p. 11). Similarly, while describing the construction of a hidden bunker, Vladek says to Artie "Show me your pencil and I can explain to you" (*Maus* I, p. 110). He then proceeds to draw a detailed diagram in Artie's sketch book. Both of these examples contextualize the artwork that they reveal. In each case, Spiegelman is careful not only to transcribe an image of the drawing or diagram, but also to transcribe the notebook upon which it was written. In this way it is revealed to us exactly how particular aspects of the text have evolved to their present form.

Closely related to the tools of production is the research process itself which Spiegelman openly displays through intermittent reference to taking notes and using a tape recorder. At one point during the story, Artie complains "My hand is sore from writing all this down" (*Maus* I, p. 40). He also makes several references to his use of a tape recorder. In addition, there are even a couple of times when Artie is seen reviewing his taped interviews with Vladek (*Maus* II, p. 47, p. 120), thus revealing his research and writing strategy.

Beyond the mechanics of the writing process, Spiegelman provides a vantage point into how he makes decisions about what to include in his documentation of this memory record. To illustrate this point, he goes so far as to betray the trust of his father in *Maus* I, early on demonstrating his dedication to providing a context-rich perspective for reader interpretation. This betrayal occurs when Vladek tells Artie that he married Anja, in part, because she had a larger dowry than his other love interest, Lucia. After telling Artie the story, Vladek follows up by saying "But this what I just told you – about Lucia and so – I don't want you should write this in your book" (*Maus* I, p. 23). Of this, Emily Budick (2001) observes that "the violation first occurs in a kind of negative speech act in which the assertion of the son's words 'I promise' is abrogated in the narrative's breaking of that promise" (p. 379). Of course, in doing this, Spiegelman not only provides a richer context through which to interpret the memory of his father, but also demonstrates his sheer willingness to sacrifice everything (including his own father's perceived integrity) for the sake of a more accurately conveyed memory.

Further demystifying his text, Spiegelman takes us step by step in understanding his struggle over representing memory. At one point he even worries about the ramifications of representing his father as a miser: "It's something that worries me about the book I'm doing about him…In some ways he's just like the racist caricature of the miserly old Jew. I mean, I'm just trying to portray my father accurately" (*Maus* I, p. 131, p. 132).

Intertextuality represents another strategy that is put to use in *Maus* for the purpose of engendering a self-conscious referral to the broader context of its creation. Spiegelman's decision to use animal caricature to represent ethnicity calls to mind other

texts that include animal caricature. In this way, a wide spectrum of cultural memory is rehashed as texts are relativized against the backdrop of one another. By doing this, the *Maus* texts conjure images of Mickey Mouse, Tom and Jerry, Krazy Kat and Ignatz, etc. (Bosmajian, 1998; Charlson, 2001; Doherty, 1996; Ewert, 2000; Gordon, 1992; Staub, 1995; Tabachnik, 1993; Witek, 1989).

Primarily, though, *Maus* represents a series of texts that are intertextual upon themselves. In this way, the books that the reader holds in his/her hands are referenced within the story. For example, page 133 of volume 1 finds Artie, Vladek and Mala (Vladek's second wife) looking at some rough sketches for the story that we, as readers, are currently reading in final form.

A second example of this self-contained intertextuality occurs surrounding Mala's discovery of one of Artie's old comic strips called *Prisoner on the Hell Planet: A Case History*, which is a text within the text that chronicles his emotional struggle in the wake of his mother's suicide. After reading it, Mala comments to Artie "I spent a lot of time helping out here after Anja's funeral. It was just as you said" (*Maus* I, p. 104). This provides an objective exterior validation of how Artie represents his memory of the time surrounding his mother's death.

Vaguely similar in principle to intertextuality (except for the fact that it deals with form and not content) is intermedia reflexivity. In describing his concept of intermedia reflexivity, Szczepanik (2002) observes that "[a]s one media form takes over and transforms the structural components of another, the hidden or automatised structural components of both media become defamiliarised" (p. 29). Briefly, this means that when viewing one form of media within another form of media, the structural features of each

become obvious and they fail to appear, to any extent, as direct windows into reality. This principle manifests itself in *Maus* through "frame breaks." Anderson and Katz (2003) observe that "[t]here are three moments that "break the frame" of the printed *Maus*'s panels: the photo of Art and his mother in "Prisoner on the Hell Planet" in the first volume, and the photographs of Richieu [Art's brother who died during the Holocaust] and Vladek in the second volume" (p. 169).

In juxtaposing photographs with hand-drawn imagery, Spiegelman uses intermedia reflexivity to jar the reader into awareness that real people stand behind the caricatures that compose the story he has drawn (Budick, 2002; Tabachnik, 1993). This form of reflexivity also binds together Vladek's memory with Art's efforts to accurately represent that memory (Charlson, 2001; Levine, 2003). Drawing from Marianne Hirsch, Levine (2003) notes particularly that the photographs "connect the two levels of Spiegelman's text, the past and the present, the story of the father and the story of the son…" (p. 63).

A final way that *Maus* shapes the formation of memory through reflexivity is by making the reader aware of his or her own status as a reader. This is accomplished through a technique known in film and television as "breaking the fourth wall," whereby a performer interrupts the flow of the narrative to speak interpersonally with the reader/spectator. This technique is employed on page 41 of volume 2 when Artie is preoccupied over the enormous success of the first volume and the impact this will have on the second. Turning to the reader he states, "In September of 1986, after 8 years of work, the first part of *Maus* was published. It was a critical and commercial success" (*Maus* II, p. 41). In doing this, Spiegelman points to us as readers and reminds us that the

memory he is building through these volumes is contextual and that by sharing the memory with us, it is contextualized further by our own contexts, circumstances and dispositions. This sequence speaks to what Zelizer (1995) refers to as "processual" memory in which "remembering is no longer seen as a finite activity…[r]ather, it is seen as a process that is constantly unfolding, changing, and transforming" (p. 218). What *Maus* does is expose the personal contexts that cause this transformation.

In the Shadow of No Towers

As opposed to *Maus* I and *Maus* II with their restrained, impressionist, minimalist style and textbook-like size and appearance, *Towers* looks bizarre, abstract and expressionist with its massive 20" X 14.5" plates made of thick, cardboard paper-stock.

Through this contrast, it is already apparent – just from initial physical appearance – that the *Maus* books contain a more processed and refined memory; one that has already passed through a number of contexts which have shaped it. In opposition, *Towers* is in a stage of memory infancy, as yet undeveloped by context and environment. This substantial difference which is due to the age of the memory will play out through the difference in reflexive approaches between *Maus* and *Towers*.

In a descriptive review of *Towers*, Dan DeLuca, in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* writes: "The oversized volume, published on heavy cardboard like a children's book, opens to reveal inventive strips whose tumbling, vertical structures evoke the massive scale of the towers themselves" (2004, p. H11). DeLuca further describes the contents of the volume as "…one neurotic New Yorker's frantic, self-involved political broadside…" (p. H11). This description is suitable, especially considering that Spiegelman describes the work, himself, in a very similar way (see *Towers*, The Sky is Falling).

Before delving full scale into the contrasting reflexive strategies used in memory construction within *Towers*, it is first necessary to briefly describe the impact of September 11, 2001 on memory in American culture.

It should be understood to begin with that September 11th has been perceived as something outside the purview of the real and the possible (Sontag, 2004; Taylor, 2003) and, as such, has thrown into a tailspin many of the narratives in common to the nation. Archibald (2002) makes note that "narratives are how we construct ourselves and how we order the world around us (p. 66). If this is so, September 11th thoroughly disrupted that order (Edkins, 2003; Taylor; 2003).

Evidence of this disruption can be found in journalism. As Zelizer and Allan (2002) report: "News organizations – together with their sources – lacked a readymade "script" to tell their stories, a frame to help them and their audiences comprehend the seemingly incomprehensible" (p. 1). Perhaps Diana Taylor (2003) describes the situation best when she writes "we stood transfixed, watching, witnesses without a narrative, a part of a tragic chorus that stumbled onto the wrong set" (p. 237).

Due to the resultant eclipse of narrative, September 11th was also perceived in many ways as the end of history. Mary Marshall Clark (2003) writes "It was registered…as a monument that stood outside of time and an event that ended history as we had previously understood it" (p. 128). Spiegelman reflects this feeling when he observes "At first, Ground Zero had marked Year Zero as well" (*Towers*, The Sky is Falling). In fact, in an interview with Mother Jones, Spiegelman admits: "I really didn't think we had much of a future, so I really was believing, 'maybe I'll stick around long enough to see if it's printed okay, but I'm not sure'" (Fleischer & Spiegelman, 2004).

Most of all, it would seem that September 11, 2001 demonstrated the "contingency and fragility" (Edkins, 2003, p. 232) of life, environment and institutions. In the early stages, memory surrounding September 11th was extremely fluid, since the events of that day were too vast and out of control to be incorporated into any existing narrative. It was in this atmosphere that Art Spiegelman began to create *In the Shadow of No Towers*.

Like the *Maus* volumes, *Towers* actively calls attention to Spiegelman as the author of the text. However, unlike *Maus*, *Towers* is self-obsessed in the sense that the book is exclusively about Art Spiegelman's understanding of events as they take place within his memory. He is not trying to discover the hidden truths buried in someone else's memory (as in *Maus*), rather he is interrogating his own memory and privileging it above all else. Spiegelman readily acknowledges this, stating that "doing *No Towers* this narcissistic take on a cataclysm much larger than me, let me develop this sort of fractured storytelling style that I'm interested in trying out on other things" (DeLuca, 2004, H1).

In many ways, this self obsession can be credited to the fact that the memory of these events is still raw in the author's mind, thus making his own testimony the most authentic of all. The processes of social memory construction seem not to have yet fully taken effect.

Aside from relentlessly representing himself intratextaully and metatextually on virtually every page of the book, Spiegelman underscores his existence as an author through his unique signature that also makes an appearance on every page.

The witnessing of September 11th, by itself, was in many ways an intertextual experience. Sontag (2004) and Taylor (2003) among others make note of how

individuals reacted to the live event as if it were part of a media production. In a certain sense, this reaction is perfectly logical since Hollywood fantasy is quite possibly the only frame of reference most witnesses had to interpret an event of such huge proportions. They simply filled the gap in the real-life narrative with material from fictional narrative.

Unlike *Maus*, which is predominantly reflexive upon itself (a symptom indicative of a well-honed narrative), *Towers* reaches out every which way grabbing to incorporate any text capable of lending even the slightest hint of significance to such a grotesquely pointless event. Spiegelman references Dan Rather, vintage 1950's trading cards from Topps Gum, Inc., The Schwarzenegger film *Collateral Damage* and, most profusely, turn of the century comic-strip characters.

Significantly, Spiegelman explains his decision to rely so heavily upon old comics in the following way:

> The only cultural artifact that could get past my defenses to flood my eyes and brain with something other than images of burning towers were old comic strips; vital, unpretentious ephemera from the optimistic dawn of the 20th century. That they were made with so much skill and verve but never intended to last past the day they appeared in the newspaper gave them poignancy; they were just right for an end-of-the-world moment (*Towers*, The Comic Supplement).

He also reiterates this idea multiple times in an interview with Jeff Fleischer (2004).

Some specific manifestations of intertexuality that involved turn of the century comics included Hans and Fritz of *The Katzenjammer Kids*, Happy Hooligan, and Jiggs (among others). Hans and Fritz occupy the central role in *Towers* since they do indeed represent the Twin Towers themselves. We encounter Hans and Fritz on the second

plate, each wearing a flaming tower upon his head, being spanked by a caricature of Osama Bin Laden, and running around screaming in terror. Plate four finds them engulfed in flames and crying hysterically as they are photographed, and plate five features "Uncle Sam" dousing Hans and Fritz in oil causing them to burn down to their skulls.

Spiegelman's choice of using Hans and Fritz to represent the twin towers implies an acknowledgment of the fleeting insubstantiality of the towers and of life in addition to the absurdity of what had occurred. Beyond this, though, it demonstrated (yet again in American history) a loss of innocence – after all, Hans and Fritz can be said to represent nothing if not childhood innocence.

In plate seven we witness a man jump from the top of the World Trade Center and land safely in the gutter as Happy Hooligan. A caption reads: "But in the economic dislocation that has followed since that day, he [Art] has witnessed lots of people landing in the streets of Manhattan." Here Spiegelman seems to use the character of Happy Hooligan to allude to an earlier instance embedded in social memory that found people jumping out of financial institutions: the stock market crash of 1929.

Last, and most powerful of the selected examples that incorporate intertextuality to achieve reflexive memory construction, Osama Bin Laden (represented as a donkey) kicks all of the classic comic-strip characters across the page (The Yellow Kid, Ignatz, Happy Hooligan, etc.). Here the caption reads "the blast that disintegrated those Lower Manhattan towers also disinterred the ghosts of some Sunday supplement stars born on nearby Park Row about a century earlier" (*Towers*, plate 8).

If "place is the crucible of memory" (Archibald, 2002, p. 68) the attack which jolted Lower Manhattan physically, can be said to also have jolted it mnemonically and culturally, bringing back to life an earlier time of strife surrounding the era of World War I, which is the time that many of these turn of the century comic-strips emerged in U. S. newspapers. DeLuca (2004) observes that "[l]ike *No Towers*, they [early comics] were oversized comics produced in a turbulent, politically fractious era" (H11). Spiegelman also states directly that "[t]hey indicated what it was to be alive at a different moment where the world was ending, as always, on the front page. But in the inside pages where the comics were, there was grace" (Fleischer & Spiegelman, 2004). Thus, at least to Spiegelman, these early memories in comic form helped to make some provisional sense out of the chaos he had experienced.

Unlike *Maus*, *Towers* also occasionally combines authorial awareness and intertexuality in the same instance. Since this permits Spiegelman to incarnate himself into a variety of comic-strip characters, conjuring both intertexuality and authorial awareness simultaneously, it tends to have the effect of encoding a memory of dislocation in the wake of September 11th.

In one particular sequence on plate seven, Spiegelman depicts himself walking into a parody of Gustave Verbeek's *The Upside Downs of Lady Lovekins and Old Man Muffaroo* (1903-1905). In Verbeek's comic-strip, a two-part story was comprehensible upside down and right side up. In Spiegelman's intertextual reference, his clearly articulated argument is juxtaposed with the inverted fanatical ramblings of the Bush administration. In another allusion to the memory of World War I, Spiegelman adds the

comment "I began this page just as my unelected government began its war to begin all wars…" (*Towers*, plate 7).

Other examples include Spiegelman incarnated as George McManus' "Jiggs," Frederick Opper's "Happy Hooligan" and, most importantly, Artie Spiegelman from *Maus*.

Depicting himself as a mouse on plate three and four, Spiegelman draws a strong connection between the highly crafted and refined memory of the Holocaust and this current "fresh wound" called September 11. Specifically, Spiegelman recalls "I remember my father trying to describe what the smoke in Auschwitz smelled like. […] That's exactly what the air in Lower Manhattan smelled like after September 11!" (*Towers*, plate 3). In a further statement hinging upon his realization that September 11th has made him a "rooted cosmopolitan" (*Towers*, plate 4), he states "I finally understand why some Jews didn't leave Berlin right after Kristallnacht!" (*Towers*, plate 4).

Looking at these statements and drawings from one perspective, it would seem that Spiegelman is trying to use the strength, durability and stability of his previous work about Holocaust memory to lend substance and meaning to his current "ephemeral" work about memory of September 11th.

Unlike the juxtaposition of photograph and caricature drawing that characterized the intermedia reflexivity of *Maus*, *Towers* combines computer generated imagery with hand-drawn imagery with startling results. The computer imagery, though used to represent only one image, is reproduced on every page underscoring its importance as the central image of this text. David Horspool (2004) notes that "[t]he abiding image of these strikingly drawn pages is that of the first tower at the moment of collapse, its

"glowing bones" outlined on every page." Spiegelman explains further: "The pivotal image from my 9/11 morning – one that didn't get photographed or videotaped into public memory but still remains burned onto the inside of my eyelids several years later – was the image of the looming north tower's glowing bones just before it vaporized" (*Towers*, The Sky is Falling). He follows up in an interview, noting "It looked very specific – the 110-story glowing bones of the tower kind of evanesced into the surrounding air and glowed…" (Fleischer & Spiegelman, 2004).

Likely the most evocative use of this intermediated reflexivity comes with the opening image of the book where the computerized glowing bones are inserted in the center of the front-page of an ancient newspaper ("The World") with a dateline that reads: New York, Wednesday, September 11, 1901. The headline of this paper reads "President's Wound Reopened; Slight Change for Worse" (inside front cover). One is tempted to form a connection between this headline and the events of a century later, if for no other reason than they are presented together on the page in a reciprocally reflexive intermediated context that demonstrates Zelizer's (1995) assertion that "at the same time as the use of the old secures and solidifies the new, the new helps assign and reassign meaning to the old" (p. 222). In many ways, this observation sheds light upon how reflexivity functions to adapt memory in Spiegelman's *Towers*. Particularly through intertextuality and intermedia reflexivity, *Towers* forms a relationship with the past that is of mutual significance, both informing and suggesting and being informed and taking suggestions.

Our last aspect of reflexivity that contributes to memory formation brings us back to the reader's own awareness of his or her role in consuming the text. Recalling *Maus*,

we remember that the reader is, at one point, confronted through Artie's direct address. Not only does this technique occur throughout *Towers*, but another factor plays an important role in bringing the reader's own agency to his/her attention: the gaze. Because the layout of *Towers* is composed of 20" X 14.5" plates, the reader's eye is free to roam with a minimum of structural interference from the text. This effect is properly described as "automontage" (OMIT, in press) which can be defined as a visual shuffling of images that takes place through the reader's own self-motivated gaze. Stoichita (1997) illustrates a similar concept when he describes the spectator looking at an "exhibition space" with many paintings: "The eyes are constantly ricocheting from one spot to another, unable to stop on any one thing. It is up to the spectator to construct, step by step, a combinatory technique, to establish bridges and correlations" (p. 114).

During the process of making connections within the ten plates of *Towers*, the reader becomes the arbiter of meaning by providing linkage between elements of the text, reflexively calling attention to his/her status as reader and permitting the memory embedded in the text to enter the new context of the reader's experience. In this way, social memory emerges from cultural artifacts such as the present texts that have been analyzed.

Conclusion

Having examined both volumes of *Maus* as well as *In the Shadow of no Towers*, several important differences emerge with regard to how these respective texts make use of reflexive strategies in order to contribute to the construction of social memory.

The Holocaust memory of Vladek Spiegelman, which is the topic of *Maus*, presents itself in a late stage of refinement. These are not new issues to Art, Vladek, or

even history books. As a result, the reader has formed certain expectations and preconceptions before even opening the book. What the reader does not expect is a sense of immediate personal impact and relevance, since the Holocaust is a part of history, not a part of the reader's experience. Through the use of reflexive strategies, Spiegelman succeeds in reconstituting this sense of personal immediacy that is essential for the continued relevance of Holocaust memory to future generations. As Laga (2001) notes "If authenticity dies with those who experienced the camps first hand, then the Holocaust as an event will fade as well (p. 63). To remedy this, "Spiegelman has conflated the past and present, modern America and Second World War Europe, and has succeeded in making the Holocaust a permanent part of the contemporary reader's historical memory" (Tabachnik, 1993, p. 161). By using himself as a vessel in the story to sort out his troubled relationship with his father, and, in the process, uncovering rich testimony about one of the darkest times in history, Spiegelman succeeds in authenticating the story of an event that he did not personally experience.

In stark contrast to the challenge of navigating through the memory of an experience from a generation ago that was not his own, *In the Shadow of No Towers* requires Spiegelman, in effect, to perform the opposite task: to *contextualize* a brand new traumatic memory: that of September 11th. He attempts to do this by drawing heavily (indeed almost exclusively) from his own experience of events. In this case authenticity is not a concern because he was a witness. The difficult task was not to tell an authentic story, but to begin to assimilate experience. This goal is accomplished through a reflexive reference to earlier times of turbulence and trauma when it also seemed that, without a doubt, the world would come to an end.

The key difference between these approaches suggests the existence of what might be called an *optimal memory distance*, which describes a temporal relationship between memory and the person remembering that is not so distant that it loses its relevance, but also not so close that a coherent meaning is unattainable.

Observing the diverse memory conferral tasks that Art Spiegelman has accomplished through the use of reflexive strategies in *Maus* and *In the Shadow of No Towers*, we learn that memory is best experienced at arms length – not too close to grasp in its entirety, but not too far away to be touched.

The advantage of using reflexive strategies to analyze memory texts including, but not limited to, comics is that "memory distance" can be adjusted to accommodate the position of the reader. For example, Spiegelman uses authorial awareness in *Maus* to bring a distant memory closer by inviting the reader to connect and identify with his own contemporary experience as an author. Conversely, he uses intertextuality in *Towers* to import context form elsewhere so that narrative gaps can be filled.

In sum, the spectrum of combinations of reflexive strategies allow for a wide latitude of effects that serve to suggest memory distances to readers who are seeking inroads to connect with the text. The analysis presented here represents a step toward understanding how these reflexive strategies function mnemonically.

References

Alter, R. (1975). *Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Anderson, J. C. & Katz, B. (2003). Read Only Memory: Maus and Its Marginalia on CD-ROM. In Deborah R. Geis (Ed.). *Considering Maus: Approaches to Art Spiegelman's "Survivor's Tale" of the Holocaust.* Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.

Archibald, R. R. (2002). A Personal History of Memory. In Climo, J. J. & Cattell, M. G. (Eds.). *Social Memory and History: Anthropological Perspectives.* Walnut Creek, CA: Mira Press.

Bosmajian, H. (1998). The Orphaned Voice of Art Spiegelman's *Maus I & II*. *Literature and Psychology, 44*, ½ , 1-22.

Budick, E. M. (2001). Forced Confessions: The Case of Art Spiegelman's *Maus*. *Prooftexts, 21,* 3, 370-399.

Charlson, J. L. (2001). Framing the Past: Postmodernism and the Making of Reflective Memory in Art Spiegelman's *Maus*. *Arizona Quarterly, 57,* 3, 91-120.

Clark, M. M. (2003). The September 11, 2001, Oral History Narrative and Memory Project: A First Report. In Joanne Meyerowitz (Ed.). *History and September 11th*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

DeLuca, D. (2004, September 26). A Comics Legend Draws on 9/11. *The Philadelphia Inquirer,* pp. H1, H11.

Doherty, T. (1996). Art Spiegelman's *Maus*: Graphic Art and the Holocaust. *American Literature, 68,* 1, 69-84.

Edkins, J. (2003). The Rush to Memory and the Rhetoric of War. *Journal of Political and Military Sociology, 31,* 2, 231-250.

Ewert, J. C. (2000). Reading Visual Narrative: Art Spiegelman's *Maus*. *Narrative, 8,* 1, 87-103.

Fleischer, J & Spiegelman, A. (2004). Art Spiegelman Interviewed by Jeff Fleischer. *MotherJones.com*. Available: http://motherjones.com/arts/qa/2004/10/10_101.html

Glejzer, R. (2003). *Maus* and the Epistemology of Witness. In Bernard – Donals, M. & Glejzer, R. (Eds.). *Witnessing the Disaster: Essays on Representation and the Holocaust.* Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.

Gordon, J. (1992). Surviving the Survivor: Art Spiegelman's *Maus*. *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts, 5,* 2, 81-89.

Halbwachs, M. (1992). *On Collective Memory*. Lewis A. Coser (Ed. & Trans.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Horspool, D. (2004). In the Shadow of No Towers by Art Spiegelman. *Timesonline*. Available: http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2102-1362247,00.html

Kammen, M. (1993). *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*. New York: Vintage Books.

Laga, B. (2001). *Maus*, Holocaust, and History: Redrawing the Frame. *The Arizona Quarterly, 57*, 1, 61-90.

Levine, M. G. (2003). Necessary Stains: Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and the Bleeding of History. Deborah R. Geis (Ed.). *Considering Maus: Approaches to Art*

Spiegelman's "Survivor's Tale" of the Holocaust. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.

McCaffery, L. (1982). *The Metafictional Muse: The Works of Robert Coover, Donald Barthelme, and William H. Gass.* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Miller, N. K. (2003). Cartoons of the Self: Portrait of the Artist as a Young Murderer – Art Spiegelman's *Maus*. In Deborah R. Geis (Ed.) *Considering Maus: Approaches to Art Spiegelman's "Survivor's Tale" of the Holocaust.* Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.

Rothberg, M. (1994). "We Were Talking Jewish": Art Spiegelman's "Maus" as "Holocaust" Production. *Contemporary Literature, 35,* 4, 661-687.

Sontag, S. (2004). *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Picador, Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Spiegelman, A. (1986). *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History.* New York: Random House.

Spiegelman, A. (1991). (1991). *Maus II: A Survivor's Tale: And Here By Troubles Began.* New York: Random House.

Spiegelman, A. (2004). *In the Shadow of No Towers.* New York: Random House.

Stam, R. (1985). *Reflexivity in Film and Literature: From Don Quixote to Jean-Luc odard.* Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press.

Staub, M. E. (1995). The Shoah goes on and on: Remembrance and representation in Art piegelman's *Maus*. *MELUS, 20*, 3.

Stoichita, V. I. (1997). *The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Meta-Painting.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sturken, M. (2002). Memorializing Absence. In Calhun, C., Price, P. & Timmer, A. (Eds.) *Understanding September 11*. New York: The New Press.

Szczepanik, P. (2002). Intermediality and (Inter)media Reflexivity in Contemporary Cinema. *Convergence, 8,* 4, 29-36.

Tabachnik, S. E. (1993). Of *Maus* and Memory: The Structure of Art Spiegelman's Graphic Novel of the Holocaust. *Word & Image, 9,* 2, 154-162.

Taylor, D. (2003). *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Waugh, P. (1984). *Metafiction: The Theory and Practive of Self-Conscious Fiction.* New York: Methuen.

Wilner, A. F. (1997). Happy, Happy Ever After: Story and History in Art Spiegelman's *Maus. The Journal of Narrative Technique, 27*, 2, 171-189.

Witek, J. (1989). *Comic Books as History: The Narrative Art of Jack Jackson, Art Spiegelman, and Harvey Pekar.* Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.

Young, J. E. (2003). The Holocaust as Vicarious Past: Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and the Afterimages of History. In Bernard-Donals, M & Glejzer, R. (Eds.). *Witnessing the Disaster: Essays on Representation and the Holocaust.* Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.

Zelizer, B. & Allan, S. (2002). Introduction: When Truama Shapes the News. In Zelizer, B. & Allan, S. (Eds.). *Journalism After September 11.* New York: Routledge.

Zelizer, B. (1995). Reading the Past against the Grain. *Review and Criticism*, ?, ?