The Real, the True, and the Told
Berlatsky, Eric L.

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Introduction

1. For treatments of Kundera as postmodern, see Eagleton, Chvatik, Lodge, Molesworth, Kleberg, and Patchay. Perhaps the most polemical resistance to such characterizations is by Straus.

2. There are, of course, definitions of postmodernism that do not, perhaps, rely on the notion of the “withdrawal of the real” quite so heavily, if at all. John Barth’s “Literature of Exhaustion” (1967) and “Literature of Replenishment” (1980) are preoccupied enough with “form” to forego discussion of literature’s mimetic role almost completely. The status (or absence) of reality is usually central to discussions of the postmodern, however.

3. This movement in historiographic theory goes by several names (metahistory, narrativism, postmodern historiography, constructivist historiography, etc.). For the moment, however, I will refer to them as “postmodern” for the sake of making some general observations. I will later sort through these terms as it becomes necessary.

4. Peter Novick’s *That Noble Dream* chronicles the rise of Ranke’s ideas to prominence in the United States. As Novick points out, Ranke’s statement may be translated to mean “as it essentially happened” and Ranke, like Hegel, had a tendency to see history as a reflection of an overarching spiritual plan (Novick 28). This, of course, lends some ambiguity to his purported argument for “objectivity.” In fact, while Ranke was celebrated in the United States for his empiricism, in Germany his indebtedness to the idealist tradition was emphasized (Novick 28). “Wie es eigentlich gewesen” is oft-quoted, but surprisingly rarely cited and its origins are obscure. Ranke’s claim that he desires to “extinguish himself” from history comes from the preface to *The Secret of World History*.

5. Robert Berkhofer calls this collective dream of a comprehensive and unified history “The Great Story.”

6. My use of “Foucauldian” here does not cover, of course, the full trajectory of Foucault’s philosophical development. This account of history and discourse as disciplinary constructions relies principally on “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” which may be Foucault’s most “constructivist” denial of the presence and/or accessibility of past events. The early Foucault of *Madness and Civilization* and even of *The Order
of Things would not, perhaps, make such extreme claims about the constructedness of the historical referent, although this attitude is present in those texts. Likewise, the later Foucault of the last two volumes of The History of Sexuality and the late interviews would be unlikely to elide human agency in quite the ways Foucault does in this essay. The “middle period” Foucault I describe here is, however, an important touchstone for the “postmodern” historiography I describe in this introduction, and is perhaps the most prevalently known.

7. Although historians Carl Becker and Charles Beard generated substantial objections to Rankean objectivity in the 1930s, their opposition was soon pushed aside because of the nationalist exigencies of the Second World War (Novick, That Noble Dream 133–67). Likewise, despite the 1973 publication date of Metahistory, White’s influence, substantial in other fields, was not felt fully within his own discipline for quite some time. Richard Evans’s 1999 book, In Defense of History, for instance, defends the discipline’s traditional Rankean assumptions and methods against the philosophers of the linguistic turn. In doing so, he reveals an anxiety about postmodern historiography that had been relatively rare previously. The same can be said of Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob’s Telling the Truth about History (1995). Recent books that detail the history of the linguistic turn in the historical profession indicate the degree to which it can no longer be merely ignored (see Fulbrook, E. Clark, and Spiegel).

8. Barthes argues that narrative was “elaborated in the crucible of fictions” and is therefore inherently problematic for historically referential use because it constructs “myths” (“Discourse of History” 140). Consistent with Barthes’s use of the term “myth” in Mythologies, he accuses historical narrative of ideological complicity.

9. Although White’s Metahistory is generally agreed to be the key text in the rise of postmodern historiography, there are other important publications that predate it. Among these are Morton White’s The Foundations of Historical Knowledge (1965), A. R. Louch’s “History as Narrative” (1969), Maurice Mandelbaum’s “A Note on History as Narrative” (1967), W. B. Gallie’s Philosophy and the Historical Understanding (1964), and the essays contained in Louis Mink’s Historical Understanding. These texts also discuss history’s relationship to narrative, and fiction.

10. White defines the annal as a list of events in chronological order, while the chronicle “starts out to tell a story but breaks off in media res eliminating the possibility of a conclusion” (“Value of Narrativity” 5). Because conclusions are often that which provide an explanation and meaning to a narrative, annals and chronicles can be seen to refuse that explanation (5). As White acknowledges, however, sequenti- ality can lead to the assumption of causality, and therefore both annals and chronicles can be read as protonarratives of a sort.

11. At times, however, even Tamina’s memories might be read as oppressive of others since she attempts to impose the image of her husband on the face of every man she meets (116).

12. In the end, Tamina does not succeed in her quest to find these memories, but it is not because she tries and fails but because she is never given the opportunity. Raphael places her upon the boat and takes her to the children’s island before she is able to articulate her desire to undertake her journey through the past.

13. White’s amendments to this basic account of his ideas, derived principally from “The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality” (1981) are many and further contributions of followers and opponents are legion. I will discuss some
of these throughout the book. It is worthwhile to mention that White’s introduction to *Metahistory* (1973) emphasizes how narrative has the capacity to dictate morality by molding the events that are its raw material into different “modes of emplotment.” White’s appropriation of these modes from Northrop Frye’s *Anatomy of Criticism* contributes to the sense that White sees history and fiction as intimately linked.

14. Although the “modernisms” that White advocates have not yet taken center stage in historical discourse, there has been a movement in the past thirty years away from narrative models and towards forms that challenge the problems White identifies. Among these are the *histoire des mentalités* in France and the similar *microstories*, exemplified by the work of Carlo Ginzburg (see Ankersmit, *History and Topology* 154–58). Also interesting is the work of the French Annalists, who focus less on “human” narratives of political/military history and more on long-term trends in economics and culture. This focus on causes and changes, even over the long term, can be seen to be merely a different kind of narrative, but it does indicate an alternative approach to historiography.

15. In a postcolonial context, Gayatri Spivak voices similar concerns in “Can the Subaltern Speak?” which questions both the practical possibility and the ethical desirability of rendering unspeakable moments speakable.

16. For an excellent discussion of further possible divisions to the nonnarratable, see Warhol (“Neonarrative”). Warhol identifies what I am calling the nonnarratable as “subnarratable,” or that which “needn’t be told because it’s normal” (222). My “antinarrative” is similar to Warhol’s “supranarratable,” defined as “what can’t be told because it’s ineffable” (223). Warhol also adds what she calls “antinarratable” (“what shouldn’t be told because of social convention”) and “paranarratable” (“what wouldn’t be told because of formal convention”) (224–27). While I see the utility of these terms, they are not relevant to this study, and I therefore employ my own terms published previously elsewhere (“Swamps of Myth”).

17. Along with Cathy Caruth’s *Unclaimed Experience*, Slavoj Žižek, in particular, draws LaCapra’s attention as someone who focuses unduly upon the sublime, especially in *The Sublime Object of Ideology*.

18. It is worth noting that Derrida, while interested in, even preoccupied with, Levinas, seeks to “deconstruct” the most radical ramifications of Levinas’s ethics in “Le mot d’accueil,” noting how all selves are also “Others,” how the Other is always multiple, and how a third term necessarily mediates the self/Other relationship, codifying its results in ways inimical to Levinas’s resistance to codification (see Bennington 39–41). As such, Derrida does not “reject” traditional or Levinasian ethics, but instead reveals how each is contaminated by the other.

19. See Parker for a more complete account of how deconstruction began to turn toward the ethical, as well as for a summary of contemporary discourses that contributed to this “ethical turn” (32–42).

20. While there is little doubt that Derrida explicitly discusses ethics (and politics) with more frequency in the wake of the de Man and Heidegger affairs, I do not believe these works can be properly labeled as a “turn to ethics.” I read them more as a “deconstruction” of ethics, refusing notions of “rules of behavior,” or even the possibility of making ethical choices. His primary example in *The Gift of Death* is of Abraham’s decision of whether or not to sacrifice Isaac. Derrida insists that this is an impossible decision, but that it is not *unique* in its impossibility. Rather, it is “the most common thing” (68), and, in fact, *all* ethical decisions are impossible, even
“mad” (66) and therefore not subject to ethical codes or rules. This is not ethics in a conventional sense, but an unraveling of it as Derrida’s explicit rejection of anything resembling Kantian ethics indicates (68).

21. While there is certainly a concurrent “neo-humanist” movement that approaches ethics in more traditional ways, the “deconstructive” ethics linked to Levinas is undoubtedly that which has pulled the mainstream of literary studies towards the ethical (see Craps 6–9).

22. For similar Levinas-influenced claims, see Gibson (63) and Critchley. Lyotard’s definition of the postmodern is also seen as “ethical” by many because of its rejection of the metanarratives of modernity that oppressed the “others” of Western society. However, Lyotard’s notion of the “withdrawal of the real” indicates that while such metanarratives may not be true, rejection of them also cannot be based upon ontological “fact.” From this a différend is created, an argument that is irresolvable because of no common ground that can mediate between them. The “ethics” of the différend derives from the impossibility of reducing the conflict to questions of truth or “knowledge” in ways similar to the Levinasian “face.” The powerful influence of Levinas (and Lyotard) can be seen in recent collections that attempt to theorize ethics (see Gabriel and Ilcan and Madison and Fairbarn).

23. In a well-known concession, Gayatri Spivak acknowledges the political utility of such “essentialisms” when she advocates “strategic essentialism,” to be used in particular political circumstances (“Subaltern Studies”).

24. The distinction between morality and ethics is an important one in philosophical circles, and one of which Jenkins avails himself (in unconventional ways) in historical debates. Due to space constraints, it is beyond my purview to discuss the distinction thoroughly here, although I agree with Nancy Fraser’s attempt to reject any categorical distinction between the two on the basis of “right” vs. “good” or on the basis of “redistribution” vs. “recognition” (97).

Chapter One

1. The Outline of History is modeled after either H. G. Wells’s Outline of History or G. M. Trevelyan’s History of England. Most critics cite Wells, but Patricia Joplin argues that “the actual source” is Trevelyan (103n4). Joplin does not, however, explain the source of her confidence in the attribution.

2. This notion of modernism is, of course, perpetually under question and has various sources. T. S. Eliot’s Ulysses, Order, and Myth, in which he argues that Joyce’s use of mythological parallels “is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history” (681) is perhaps the best known. Closer to home, Woolf and the Bloomsbury circle were influenced by Roger Fry’s focus on “significant form” in the visual arts. Another treatment of modernism that separates art from life is Theodor Adorno’s notion of “autonomous art” (see “Commitment”). Woolf’s own unorthodox political commitments indicate the problematic nature of these definitions of modernism.

3. In McLaurin’s defense there is ample evidence for Woolf being an aesthete, a misconception she occasionally propagates herself. In “Modern Fiction,” for instance, she castigates “materialist” writers like Wells, Bennett, and Galsworthy for
discharging “the work” of “government officials” (105). It is this kind of self-representation that led a new generation of artists in the 1930s to critique Woolf for producing art that no longer met the needs of the world (see H. Lee 602–4, 647–705; Bell 2:185–91). When, however, Woolf writes in a letter to her nephew, Julian, that “all politics be damned” (Letters 5:436), we cannot take this to be merely a statement of a detached formalism. Rather, it should also be read as a critique of contemporary politics.

4. Woolf makes this point explicitly both in A Room of One’s Own and in “Women and Fiction.” “This is an important book, the critic assumes, because it deals with war. This is an insignificant book because it deals with the feelings of women in a drawing-room” (Room 74; “Women” 145).

5. McWhirter calls Between the Acts perhaps the first “postmodern historical novel” (805–8). See also Hussey, Caughie, Joplin, Daugherty, Waugh, and Christie for readings of the novel as postmodern.

6. This scene is noted and cited almost universally by critics of the novel. It is central to most of the postmodern readings I cite in note 5 in order to establish its meta-fictiveness. See also Hafley (187).

7. See Zwerdling (“Between the Acts”) and Ames (“Carnivalesque”) for discussions of the balance between La Trobe’s desire for artistic unity and her simultaneous commitment to dispersal and fragmentation.

8. Three Guineas precedes Between the Acts closely in the bibliography of Woolf’s major works. She was reading the proofs of the former on April 11, 1938, and began composing the latter fifteen days later. Roger Fry was ultimately published between the two.

9. Simon Critchley correctly points out that there are, in fact, two distinct iterations of this principle. “[T]he first claims that there is no ‘outside-text,’ no text outside [Of Grammatology 158], whereas the second claims that there is nothing outside of the text [Of Grammatology 163], that the text outside is nothing, implying by this that any reading that refers the text to some signified outside textuality is illusory” (Critchley 25; emphasis in original). Both are variations on the central notion that reality is not separate from signification, but is constituted by it.

10. See Wiley, Marder, and Joplin for further discussions of the novel’s “frames” in Brechtian terms.

11. Such a parallel is most explicitly expressed in the first chapter of Three Guineas. In referring to two publications banishing women to the house and giving men exclusive purview in the public sphere, Woolf writes, “One is written in English, the other in German. But where is the difference?” (53).

12. Woolf delineates a credo for women as “outsiders” in England. “‘For,’ the outsider will say, ‘in fact, as a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world’” (Three Guineas 109). For Woolf, nationalism itself is a patriarchal idea, bound inextricably to violence and enslavement. She establishes women as “outsiders” by counting them among the enslaved (108). Despite the rhetorical power of this statement, the comparison of all women, and especially Woolf herself, to slaves may stretch the analogy too far at this moment in history, exposing Woolf’s somewhat lesser sensitivity to issues of class and race.

13. A similar point is made symbolically through the geographical commentary in Figgis’s Guide Book (1833). “The Guide Book still told the truth. 1833 was true in 1939” (52).
14. It is here that both deconstruction and Hutcheon’s version of postmodern parody differ from the standard notion of parody (or non-postmodern parody). Typically, parody is an attempt to mock a particular person, discourse, or politics through imitation. This imitation takes a position “outside the text” it parodies, however, implying a “meaning” of critique and an alternative point of view. Jameson’s delineation of parody as opposed to (postmodern) pastiche is one attempt to highlight this difference (Postmodernism 17).

15. The focus on human life as ideologically influenced “repetition” is also central to The Years (1937). In that novel, Woolf depicts successive generations of the Pargiter family and the ways in which they repeat their “forefathers’” achievements and mistakes. By the end of the novel, taking place in “the present day,” characters are repeating entire conversations from twenty years (and more) previous, again suggesting how little things change in the historical “long term” under the influence of patriarchal discourse (see esp. 315–16, 369). Characters’ professed optimism for a “new world” is, as in Between the Acts, balanced by the reader’s (and several characters’) knowledge that even the wish for a “new world” is just a repetition of previous wishes (329–30). The other possible cause and derivation of such unavoidable repetition in Between the Acts is the notion of a primitive, natural, and/or essential nature to the roles played by men and women. Woolf’s invocation of primitive societies and behaviors in Lucy’s daydreams and La Trobe’s vision lend credence to this point of view (see Marcus, “Liberty, Sorority, Misogyny” 77). Nevertheless, the complicated deployment of narrative frames suggests that these primitive and “natural” repetitions are actually constructions, repeated because of the “general text” or symbolic power of culture.

16. The choice of Whitehall is significant, as Rachel Blau DuPlessis points out: “Whitehall is a synecdoche for British civil service and administrative agreements that endure beyond changes in specific governments, and thus is a metaphor for broad sociocultural agreement” (39). That is, it is a virtual synonym for British patriarchal hegemony. As both McWhirter (795) and DiBattista (197) note, Whitehall was also the place where the British war council met, tying the violence of the rape to the broader violence of oncoming war.

17. The incident, according to Gillian Beer, is “startlingly, not invented” (137).

18. For more in-depth discussions of photographs in Woolf, see Sarker and Humm. For a discussion of newspapers in the novel, see Westman.

19. Woolf notes that every newspaper “is financed by a board . . . each board has a policy . . . each board employs writers to expound that policy” (Three Guineas 95). She also observes that if one is to get “the facts,” reading at least three newspapers is necessary to “come . . . to your own conclusion” (95).

20. Most critics acknowledge the continuity between Woolf’s views on pacifism in Three Guineas and in Between the Acts, as I do here. For a contrary viewpoint, see Mackay (238–39).

21. For a discussion of Woolf’s similarity to Cage, see Cuddy-Keane (“Virginia Woolf” 91), Laurence, and Caughie (Virginia Woolf and Postmodernism 55–56).

22. See Richardson (56–62) for a brief but useful overview.

23. See Banfield (“Time Passes”) for a discussion of the transformation of two “moments” into narrative in To the Lighthouse. For Banfield, the deployment of “moments” may be read as a critique of the temporality and sequentiality of narrative (476), and as an insistence on the “reality” of crystallized moments (493–95),
something I further explore over the course of this chapter.

24. For one of the first discussions of *The Waves*’ critique of imperialism, see Marcus (Hearts of Darkness 59–85).

25. All of this might be seen to contribute to what Roland Barthes refers to as “reality effects,” or static included merely to convince the reader that what is happening is “real.” For Barthes, however, this tends to be an element of “realistic” fiction, which wishes its readers to read it as transparently mimetic (as in his reading of *Sarrasine* in S/Z). Woolf’s static is not part of a realist aesthetic and serves different purposes.

26. This is not peculiar to Woolf, of course, since many modernist works are dedicated to the minutia and “unimportant details” of existence. However, Woolf’s concentration on narrative’s role in creating traditional history and oppression makes a reevaluation of the “static” in this novel worthwhile.

27. See Friedman and Wallace for the connection between antinarrativism, lyricism, and pre-Oedipal modes of narration in Woolf. As both authors explain, psychoanalytic models of masculine desire are based on the concept of a male infant’s initial desire for the mother, which is then redirected towards alternative objects, none of which can ever completely substitute. This leads to a desire that can never be completely satisfied, but which is forever delayed, consummated, resituated, and pursued anew. This is then reflected in models of narrative like those of Scholes, Brooks, and the Barthes of *The Pleasure of the Text*. The pre-Oedipal focus on lyric, as discussed by Friedman and Wallace, posits a feminine desire for the mother that is not necessarily foreclosed as it is in the Oedipal scenario. This model rejects the notion that all desire must mimic masculine Oedipal progression and in doing so suggests an alternative to narrative itself. As both Friedman and Wallace observe, Kristeva’s semiotic register, as opposed to the symbolic, reflects this vision of the lyric. While Friedman sees Woolf’s reliance on the lyric as a statement of feminism versus male-dominated traditional plot, Wallace is less convinced, noting how an overreliance on lyricism does not allow for entry into the social world as it currently exists, avoiding the problems and concerns of real-world feminism. Particularly interesting as countertexts to critics who see lyricism as opposed to Oedipal desire are Abel and de Lauretis. Also, see Dubrow, who rejects the claim that interplay between narrative and lyric must necessarily be antagonistic, exploring the ways in which they build upon and supplement one another. She also provides a useful overview of previous readings of lyric.

28. For useful overviews of Bergsonian philosophy, see Kolakowski, Mullarkey, and Deleuze. Also see the collection *Key Writings* and its introduction by Pearson and Mullarkey.

29. The accusation that Bergson allows for two incompatible worlds is common among his critics. Nevertheless, Bergson attempts “to show that realism and idealism both go too far, that it is a mistake . . . to make of [matter] a thing able to produce in us perceptions, but in itself of another nature than they” (*Matter and Memory* 9).

30. It is this element that is underplayed in the somewhat similar reading of Woolf via Bergson provided by James Hafley, who discusses the “freedom” of the present without reference to its important materiality (185).

31. Russell asserts that Bergson’s fears are unfounded because knowledge of the future does not determine it, just as present knowledge of what happened in the past does not cause that past (Banfield, “Tragic Time” 53).
32. See Zwerdling (both sources) for this type of reading.

33. Historical progression toward a prolonged “Present Day” section is also present in *The Years*, following ten years after *Orlando*. Here too, the novel covers a lengthy period of time in a fairly chronologically progressive fashion. This “present” section is again the longest, providing a glimpse of “frozen time” to counter the narrative progression of the rest of the novel. “I want the present,” says Eleanor Pargiter, reflecting, perhaps, Woolf’s own desire to arrest that singular moment (336).

34. I am only passingly familiar with the film and will not engage with the distance between Žižek’s reading and *Stromboli* itself. The model for the notion of symbolic suicide for Žižek is Antigone, whom Woolf references as a model for passivity and the Society of Outsiders in *Three Guineas* (18) and which plays a significant role in *The Years* in Edward Pargiter’s translation. See also DiBattista (193) and Wiley (5).

35. In actuality, there is some difficulty in attributing the latter passage cited to La Trobe. It may, in fact, be Isa, as the lines occupy a paragraph between one clearly expressing La Trobe’s mind and one that does the same for Isa. The overlap serves to formally cement the connection between the two women.

36. For a useful parallel reading of this scene, see Sears, who compares it to a sixties “happening” designed to shock the audience for “therapeutic or terroristic ends” (227).

37. There have been several readings of the novel as embodying a new language, although not in precisely these terms. See Ames (“Carnivalesque”), Brownstein, Eisenberg, Scott, and Vandivere.

38. Several critics of the novel note the importance of this diary entry. In particular, see Hussey (248–49n8), Joplin (91), Watkins (358), DiBattista (221), and Zwerdling (“Between the Acts” 226). Lucio Ruotolo’s reading of this section of the novel is an important precedent for my own (226–27). See also Cuddy-Keane (“Politics” 281).

39. The irony of this moment is personal for Woolf, whose husband Leonard was intensely committed to the League (Zwerdling, *Virginia Woolf* 283, 292; MacKay 233)

40. The purpose of Lacanian psychoanalysis is to bring the patient attached to “Imaginary” ideal images of himself properly into the Symbolic by allowing him to transform self-descriptive statements from “empty speech” into “full speech” or into an “intersubjectively intelligible narration of his past” (J. Lee 42). That is, the dialogue between the analyst and analysand need not necessarily capture the past with factual accuracy, but it must convert the fragmented and alienated identity into a coherent, shared, and narratable story, bringing the analysand into an intersubjective community and out of a narcissism linked to the Imaginary.

41. For more traditionally Lacanian readings of the novel, see Brownstein and Busse.

42. This brief discussion of Lacan’s and Derrida’s treatment of time is not meant to configure either thinker as politically inactive or retrograde. Rather, what I wish to indicate here is how Woolf’s resistant politics is based upon a complex allegiance to materiality, historical reference, and (therefore) presence, and how Derrida’s is based on the “non-presence” of the present moment (see Bennington 128–40, esp. 137).

43. For an overview of the practices and discourses of feminism that precede and accompany Woolf’s writing of *A Room of One’s Own*, see Zwerdling (*Virginia Woolf* 210–42).
44. Dasenbrock’s sense of Kuhn as a radical relativist is not unchallenged. For an overview and discussion of Kuhn’s philosophical position, see Nickles. Likewise, as noted above, the later Foucault is more interested in human agency than he is in *Power/Knowledge*, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, or *Discipline and Punish*.

45. See Zwerdling (both sources) for an example of the pessimistic view. More optimistic readings often focus on the novel’s status as “comedy,” which provides a final unity that resolves the novel’s deep and insistent conflicts. In these readings, the continuity between these peasants and the villagers in the present day provides a source of festive continuity and unity (see DiBattista, Little, Barrett, and [in slightly different ways] Esty and Cuddy-Keane (“Politics”)).

**Chapter Two**

1. Among those who mention White specifically, and postmodern historiography more generally, are Brewer and Tillyard, Acheson, Tange, Irish, and Cooper (“Imperial Topographies”).

2. Tamás Bényei notes that there are two dominant strands of Swift criticism. The first focuses on *Waterland* and reads Swift as a postmodern purveyor of historiographic metafiction, while the second looks at Swift’s work *in toto* and reads it in a more realist and ethical light. In the first group are Hutcheon, A. Lee, Irish, Cooper (“Imperial Topographies”), Wells, Price (*History Made*), Landow, Schad, Higdon, Acheson, Bedggood, Brewer and Tillyard, and Todd. In the second are Poole, Wheeler, and Bényei himself. Most similar to my own reading are those by Decoste, Craps, and Lea who, to my mind, combine the two strands.

3. For a definition of “classical” history, see Foucault (“Nietzsche”). Foucault argues that “classical” history attempts to present history as unified and comprehensible. In doing so, it erases the past rather than preserving it.

4. For a brief look at how *Waterland* appropriates and parodies Victorian narratives of progress through the Atkinsons, see Landow (204–5). My own extended discussion follows.

5. See Foucault’s *Madness and Civilization* and *The History of Sexuality*.

6. The idea that Victorians saw their own age as one of historical progress is a common one but was challenged then as it is now. Nevertheless, many contemporary theorists find that the Victorians tended to have a faith in history itself as a realization of historical process and progress, which is met by increasing skepticism in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Hegel’s notion of the Spirit of History is, of course, central here. For an interesting account of how the Victorian view of historical “progress” was constructed, see Crosby.

7. For a reading of the novel from a Freudian perspective, see Wells (67–80).

8. White makes little distinction between the “literary” and the “fictional.” Indeed, at one point, White refers to the capacity to make meaning from history as a “literary, that is to say fiction-making, operation” (“Historical Text” 85). Literature and fiction are not, of course, mere synonyms, given the modes of literature that are potentially nonnarrative (like lyric poetry) or which may make explicit truth claims. These distinctions are not important to White in this essay, but they do play a role later in this book.

9. Swift’s need to *use* a metaphor to express the notion of the historical real
leaves his novel (and my argument) open to the standard poststructuralist critique that any notion of reality is itself a trope, or imbricated in tropology. While I do wish to challenge such a claim eventually (see chapter 4), my primary goal here is to note that, while it may be possible to “deconstruct” Waterland, the novel is not itself (or not merely) a deconstruction of history as many critics have suggested.

10. See Price (History Made 220–30) for an extensive discussion of the ways in which Waterland refuses the dichotomy of the two different ways of “making history.”

11. For additional Lacanian readings of the novel, see both Lea and Murphy.

12. See Wells for an alternative account of these moments, deriving from Benjamin, via the quotation that serves as an epigraph to this chapter. Žižek also links the psychoanalytic model of “the return of the repressed” with Benjamin (Sublime Object of Ideology 141). Wells’s application of these ideas to Waterland has some similarities with my own, but she offers narrative as the means by which these moments can occur, rather than that which impedes them (84–85).

13. There is some ambiguity as to whether or not Dick is, indeed, “too big.” Crick is not actually present for Mary’s sexual tutoring of Dick. He then, not surprisingly, gets suspicious and jealous of their encounters. He is quick to note that the “too big” story is merely Mary’s version of events (261). Crick’s suspicion is passed to the reader because he is the narrator and we have no outside corroboration of Mary’s story. This confusion does not, however, necessarily obviate the significance of Dick’s impotency, since the confusion itself leads to the abortion of the child, lending symbolic truth to Dick’s impotence, even if Mary’s explanation is suspect.

14. I do not here suggest that the Freudian model is a natural and/or essential one. Rather, it is clear that Swift self-consciously explores and exploits Freud to comment on the nature of mysteries, secrets, and narratability.

15. Several readings of Waterland see Dick to be a representative of the Real, in his brute physicality and connections to the natural world (see Price, History Made 244 and Lea 90). I agree with these readings only insofar as we acknowledge the real’s link to the failure of narrative. See DeCoste for a reading of Dick congenial to my own.

16. Here, the etymological link of “boxes” and “books” is important in tying together their mutual capacity to reveal secrets. See D. A. Miller (Novel and the Police 216). For more on the gothic in Waterland, see McKinney (822).

17. It is Mary’s womb that is described as an “empty vessel” and which, like the “wide empty spaces” of the fens, is continually associated with reality. The contradiction of “nothing” being associated with the real has been noted by several critics as evidence of the novel’s refusal of historical reference. It is fairly clear, however, that the “nothing” referred to in the book refers to lack of meaning, not the lack of material existence. As Crick asserts, “Women are equipped with a miniature model of reality: an empty but fillable vessel” (239). The “fillable” nature of “nothing” suggests how people attempt to inflict meaning upon reality, but the reality of the real remains. See Price (History Made 236–58).

18. See Warhol, Winnett, and Farwell for objections to models of masculine narrative desire. See also the work of Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray for critiques of Freud’s masculinist tendencies.

19. This scene is often taken by critics to be an expression of the novel’s typically postmodern refusal of clear-cut origins, providing an alternative explanation for
Mary’s barrenness. The fact that the eel episode chronologically precedes the pregnancy indicates, however, how Swift contrasts the “fairy tale” explanation of the eel on the lap, with the reality of the abortion. The latter is clearly the cause of Mary’s later inability to conceive.

20. Damon Decoste also insightfully sees the distinction between curiosity and desire as central to the novel’s initial definition of “history”—not merely narrative but also, more fundamentally, “inquiry,” a pursuit of truth that never ceases (395).

21. Swift’s writing shows a near obsession with the idea of adoption and other forms of “surrogate parenting” and their relative reality. In addition to the novels discussed in this chapter, Last Orders (1996) explores the relationship of an adoptive son to his recently-deceased father. More recently, Tomorrow (2007) revolves around the revelation to a pair of twins that their father is not “real” and that they are instead the products of *in vitro* fertilization.

22. For a more complete discussion of historical reference in its relation to the Holocaust, see chapter 4.

23. For the possibility of encountering the real, even in narrative, it is useful to consider Fredric Jameson’s *The Political Unconscious*, wherein he argues that “language manages to carry the Real within itself as its own intrinsic or immanent subtext” (81). Nevertheless, Jameson does insist on history itself as “outside the text,” “for it is fundamentally non-narrative and nonrepresentational” (82). Because of this contradiction, Jameson admits that we can only encounter the Real (“asymptotically”) “by way of prior (re)textualization” (82). The referent of history, then, is not a mere articulation of textual functions, but may only be encountered through representation. It can never be reexperienced in its totality, but it can be encountered.

24. For a complementary, and insightful, view of *Waterland* that explores convincingly the dialectical nature of reality and representation in *Waterland*, see Craps (and particularly his discussion of Catherine Bernard’s earlier treatment) (79–85). Bernard’s discussion of the contrast between the “realistic,” chronological narrative element of the novel and the formal elements that deny the easy transparency of the former are similar to my own appropriation of Terdiman. Craps’s conclusion that the ethics of the novel lie in its effort to “bear[ . . . ] witness to a traumatic history in the hope of preventing it from returning with a vengeance” (103) is, however, problematic. Rather, it is the inevitability of history’s return that makes an ethical examination of the past possible.

25. Foremost among “postmodern” readings of *Ever After* is that of Holmes. Lea, Malcolm, and Craps all provide more nuanced accounts but still insist upon various versions of the novel’s postmodernism.

26. More generally, the Victorian era is a site of frequent postmodern visitation. A. S. Byatt’s *Possession* (1990) is also a case wherein the Victorian past is a signifier of the reality that can still “possess” us in the present.

27. Again, Hutcheon and Alison Lee label Fowles’s work as “historiographic metafiction.” Malcolm Bradbury also reads *The Magus* as postmodern, as do Salami and Cooper (*Fictions of John Fowles*).

28. It is (again) possible to argue that Fowles’s novels, in this way, perform their own interpellation of the reader, but it would nevertheless be inaccurate to portray Fowles as a postmodern deconstructor of history.

29. This line in *The Magus* is virtually repeated in *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, wherein Charles’s first encounter with his daughter is described as “history reduced
to a living stop, a photograph made flesh” (458). These moments, like the frozen moments in Between the Acts, can be read as "moments of being" where past reality (history) is made materially present.

Chapter Three

1. See also Warhol ("Neonarrative").
2. Robyn Warhol argues that labeling something a “dream” or “imagination” might not be disnarration if these events happen in the mind of a character ("Neonarrative" 229). The label would still apply to Fowles’s novel if he were to retain “the last few pages . . . are not what happened” without adding the subsequent qualifier.
3. For other readings of form and fragmentation in the novel, see Gorra, Rege, Briggs, and Wilson.
4. Eventually we learn that neither Aziz nor Naseem (later called the Reverend Mother) are biologically related to the narrator, due to Mary Pereira’s swap of Shiva’s cradle for Saleem’s. Aziz is, of course, named after the doctor in E. M. Forster’s A Passage to India, one of a number of literary “grandparents” to Rushdie’s novel.
5. Even before his final explosion, Saleem begins to “fall apart.” He loses a tonsure of hair to his teacher, Emil Zagallo, and the tip of a finger to some Cathedral school bullies (265–69). Both incidents reflect the division and re-division of India by Partition, the Bangladesh war, and the separation into linguistic states.
6. Critics have taken this injunction seriously, uncovering additional errata, some made by Rushdie himself. See Gorra, Brennan (Salman Rushdie), and Kortenaar (Self 229–51).
7. As Stanley Wolpert writes, “Fear motivated millions of Indians to greater efficiency. Police were free to do as they liked. . . . A chill climate of silent terror gripped many Indian homes” (qtd. in Kuchta 213–14). Later editions of Wolpert tone down the implicit critique of the Emergency (Wolpert 397–404). For a more complete discussion of the Emergency and its intersections with Midnight’s Children, see Kuchta (211–14).
8. The “black and white” nature of Indira’s Emergency is linked also to the positive and negative effects of the British Raj through the metaphor of Indira’s “centre-parted” hair (460), which matches that of the novel’s symbolic English colonist, Methwold.
9. Rushdie’s essay “Attenborough’s Gandhi” is similarly a critique of a “false history” perpetuated by the film Gandhi. One key coordinate of this deception is the effort in the film to distance Britain as a whole from the horror of the Amritsar Massacre. In Gandhi, General Dyer is treated with only horror and disdain upon his return to England, suggesting that while Dyer’s actions were unforgivable, England itself had a more enlightened view of India. In truth, Dyer received a hero’s welcome, indicating the extent of British racism. For this reason, Rushdie argues, “artistic selection has altered the meaning of the event. It is an unforgivable distortion” (Imaginary Homelands 103).
10. For more readings of Midnight’s Children as postmodern history, see Birch, Hutcheon (Politics of Postmodernism 63–76), Booker (“Beauty and the Beast”) Shepherd, Kane, Goonetilleke, and Kortenaar (Self 167–189). For counterarguments, see François, Ghosh, Merivale, Barnaby, and Brennan (“Cultural Politics”).
11. Rushdie’s magical realism is different from that of Márquez in that Saleem is always apologizing for the extravagances of his narrative, while Márquez almost always presents “magical” occurrences as normal (Kortenaar, _Self_ 26, 230). Márquez’s version is also heavily indebted to the oral tradition, while Rushdie’s seems to be more textually based, despite his own claims for the influence of orality (Rushdie, “Midnight’s Children” 7–8).

12. Wolpert’s _A New History of India_ is frequently cited as either a source text for _Midnight’s Children_ or as an example of the kind of historical account that Rushdie parodies. See Lipscomb and Kortenaar (“Midnight’s Children”).

13. Walcott’s claims that the Caribbean has nothing to do with history in “The Muse of History” and “The Caribbean Culture of Mimicry” is initially belied here, but _Omeros_ ’s ultimate rejection of metaphor is accompanied by a rejection of history in keeping with these essays.

14. My reading of _Omeros_ and metaphor can be productively supplemented by Melas.

15. See Sanga (4) and especially Fenwick for a further reading of metaphor and metonymy in Rushdie.

16. This cry for literal interpretation occurs several times throughout the novel. The degree to which the audience is supposed to take Saleem himself literally is, however, questioned at various points. It is possible to read all of the fantastical elements of the novel as emanating from Saleem’s diseased mind. Rushdie discusses this possibility in “Adapting Midnight’s Children” (Step Across This Line 72). See also Kortenaar (_Self_ 229–51).

17. See Guha, particularly the introduction.

18. For instance, Sheikh Abdullah survived long after Independence and Partition, only the idea of an undivided India died (Parameswaran 23; R. Clark 66).

19. For Rushdie’s sustained attacks on Hindu communalism and the effacement of Muslim efforts at cooperation and support of a unified India, see the “Riddle of Midnight” ( _Imaginary Homelands_ 26–33), Chauhan (209–12), “God in Gujarat” ( _Step Across This Line_ 345), and _The Moor’s Last Sigh_. See also Trousdale.

20. As usual, there is some ambiguity to Rushdie’s assertions of a limit to the changeling side of human subjectivity. The Moor elsewhere asserts the value of precisely these principles in his commentary against the Hindu cult of Ram (351). Likewise, Aurora da Gama functions as a positive counterbalance to Uma, as she comes to see artistic hybridity as an ideal in itself. Still, while Rushdie’s aversion to monolithic personality and community is well commented upon, his aversion to the infinite delights of proteanism is less widely acknowledged.

21. Characters from early Rushdie novels increasingly recur in later ones, raising the question of the importance of these interconnections. Likewise, Rushdie comments on Gabriel García Márquez’s fictional world of Macondo, stressing that it should not be seen as “an invented self-referential closed system” ( _Imaginary Homelands_ 301–2), contradicting some elements of fictional worlds theory. He points out that Márquez is not writing about a fantasy world but “about the one we inhabit” ( _Imaginary Homelands_ 128). The same is true of Rushdie.

22. For a reading of this passage similar to and supplementing my own, see Su (560–61).

23. For a diametrically opposed interpretation of this passage, see Booker, “Beauty and the Beast” (983). Booker claims that Saleem’s confession of his lie
invokes the (in)famous “liar’s paradox,” although my understanding of this paradox involves someone who claims to always lie (not who claims to lie just once).

24. India (especially Bombay) is also configured as a land of hybridity, while Pakistan is one of “purity,” but in accord with the other associations of Pakistan, this “purity” can only be a lie (see Rushdie, Imaginary Homelands 67 and “Midnight’s Children” 4). As such, the two nations are better seen as competing versions of hybridity (Kortenaar, Self 220).

25. See Harrison (58) and especially Batty for discussions of Rushdie, storytelling, and the 1,001 Nights.

26. Strand argues that the MCC’s status as representative of Indian multiplicity is undercut by Saleem’s decision not to delineate the separate voices of the conference (262). Strand claims that this “paradoxically gives the children a homogeneous quality” (999), but his critique is too broad. Saleem delineates not only the powers of the children but also their genders, classes, castes, and geography, if not each child’s name and individual history.

27. Rushdie’s interest in a third principle also crops up in The Ground Beneath Her Feet, in which the Anglophile Darius Cama proposes something similar.

28. See especially Kortenaar, who argues that “the reader is free to prefer Shiva to Saleem as the mirror of India. But the concern for order is valuable . . . and we readers cannot but opt for order over chaos. There is no absolute reason to choose Saleem, but no reader will choose Shiva. The historian offers order and narrative. His enemy . . . seeks only chaos” (“Midnight’s Children” 57, Self 199). This claim is not quite accurate, as I will show.

29. Here is another historical error. Jajit Singh Aurora, not Manekshaw, accepted Niazi’s surrender.

30. It is worth noting that the optimism that could be associated with the assignment of these attributes to Aadam Sinai is undercut by his reappearance in The Moor’s Last Sigh. Adam, the spelling of his name Westernized, departs from the novel into prison, convicted on a variety of counts including “corruption, drug-smuggling, arms dealing, money laundering, and procuring” (Moss 126; Moor’s 370).

31. It is this “naïve” belief in the possibility of objectively speaking for the subaltern voices of India that draws Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s ire in “Can the Subaltern Speak?”

32. See Brennan (Salman Rushdie) and Gorra for readings that, to varying degrees, agree with Naipaul.

33. See Strand and Brennan (“Cosmopolitans and Celebrities”) for similar critiques of Rushdie’s bourgeois sympathies.

34. Wilson does attempt a brief interpretation of this passage.

35. The pairing of the Widow (or the goddess Kali) and Parvati-the-Witch (or the goddess Parvati) establishes a similar parallel, as they too together represent creation and destruction.

36. For an extended discussion of this passage, see Price (“Salman Rushdie’s”). For Rushdie’s own discussion of Indira’s opportunistic deployment of her last name, see “Dynasty” (Imaginary Homelands 50).

37. Strand rather forcefully misreads this passage when he argues that Rushdie himself configures Gandhi as “rural, handicraft-loving, etc.” (979). See also Rushdie’s more recent essay, “Gandhi, Now” (Step 165–70).

38. My use of this term obviously relies on the groundbreaking work of Edward
Said in *Orientalism*.

39. Rushdie makes a similar, less convincing, case for his portrayal of the prophet Mohammed in *The Satanic Verses* in several interviews (see Chauhan).

40. Here, I keep Frank Kermode's distinction between myth and fiction in mind. Kermode suggests that fiction is always acknowledged as untrue in the conventional sense, while myth, although often more outlandish, is often seen as containing elements of truth or reality that are transhistorical. Rushdie's work suggests that history and myth can coexist despite Kermode's (and Barthes's similar) claims that histories are fiction and History is a myth.

41. See Needham for a similar account of Rushdie's devotion to “bagginess” in the context of *Shame*.

42. Critics have attacked Rushdie's use of “magical realism” as part of the exoticizing of the East, collaborating with the Orientalism he critiques. Rushdie replies to this accusation in “Adapting Midnight's Children,” noting that “Western critics tended to focus on its more fantastic elements, while Indian reviewers treated it like a history book” (*Step* 72). That is, the view of the book as “exotic” derives more from the reader's position than from anything intrinsic. This does not quite address the charge, leveled influentially by Brennan, that the novel panders to the Western audience, self-consciously selling its own cosmopolitanism. While these critiques have some validity, Rushdie's opposition to Orientalism and his mockery of overtly “mystical” efforts to tackle political problems makes me more inclined to see how Rushdie's form contributes to those politics.

43. While Saleem refers specifically to men, Rushdie's fictional practice indicates not only an avowed feminism but also a correlation between the position of the post-colonial subject and the position of women. Still, Rushdie's deployment of gender and his construction of women over the course of his oeuvre are contradictory. For an excellent overview of these issues in Rushdie, see Hai. See also Grewal, Krishnaswamy, and Mann.

44. Price's essay is typical in its assertion of Rushdie's efforts to deconstruct positivist accounts of history. In doing so, however, he positions Rushdie as antagonistic towards a type of history that seeks to “preserve the ‘historical truth,’” favoring instead the mode of the artists who “explore the myriad dimensions of past experience” (“Salman Rushdie’s” 104). In ceding the former type of discourse, Price indirectly suggests that Rushdie cannot assert anything about historical accuracy. It is thus a bit of a surprise when he claims that Rushdie's focus on the common and the everyday is somehow more accurate than other types of history. Price does qualify this claim by asserting that this view is solely from Saleem's perspective, but we would do well not to cede the discourse of accuracy to those with a naïve trust in transparent referentiality.

**Chapter Four**

1. There are some complexities to Anja's diaries. They are not, in fact, what she wrote during her time at Birkenau. Rather, while such diaries existed, they were destroyed, and so the notebooks Vladek destroyed were already a retrospective replacement and might be considered to be even more “distant” from the events themselves (*Maus* 84).
2. For discussions of the Oedipal and/or the “absent mother” in *Maus*, see Laga (80–83), Bosmajian, Hirsch, Elmwood, Glejzer, LaCapra (*History and Memory* 172, 178), Levine, and especially Nancy Miller.

3. Deborah Geis refers to *Maus’s* postmodernism several times (2–3). Likewise, without using the term, Joshua Brown notes how *Maus* offers itself not as a “chronicle of undefiled fact but a constitutive process . . . a construction of the past” (95). Staub also notes how the book focuses on “the uselessness of representations” (35) but distances his reading from postmodernism, per se. Miles Orvell sees the primary objective of *Maus* to be historical accuracy but associates its outer diegetic frame with “postmodernism” (125), before noting how the book as a whole exceeds that label (126). Michael Rothberg also refers to how *Maus* is “haunted by the inadequacy of representation” (669), while Arlene Fish Wilner refers to the book’s “postmodernism” (174), before noting how it contradicts its own claim that “reality’s too complex for comics.” Joshua Charlson notes the contradictions of realism and postmodernism in the book, suggesting that *Maus* does not resolve the contradiction (94).

4. The problem of author intent is a notoriously tricky one over the course of the history of literary criticism and one I fully intend to skirt here. As may be clear, however, I do find it useful to try to determine a governing theoretical point of view in literary texts, particularly as it pertains to the ways in which these texts address my own preoccupations. Whether we call this governing point of view the “implied author,” the “career author,” or simply the “author” is not central here except insofar as I take a slightly different tack in this chapter.

5. Lyotard discusses the paradoxical positivism of the Holocaust denier by noting that a Holocaust denier’s argument is not that we *cannot* know what happened in the past but that we *do* know given the evidence we have available to us: “to identify a site as a gas chamber, [the Holocaust denier] shall accept as a valid witness only a victim of a gas chamber; now, according to [their] adversary, such victims can only be dead; otherwise the gas chamber would not be what it is claimed to be; thus there are no gas chambers” (Lyotard, *Le Différend* 16).

6. Lipstadt blames the willingness of college newspaper editors in the early 1990s to publish Holocaust denial advertisements on the influence of Derrida, Foucault, Barthes, et. al. As Novick points out, however, these philosophers were never cited by editors themselves and likely had little to do with the decision (*Holocaust* 271).

7. Faurisson’s “The Problem of the Gas Chambers” (1978) was one of the initial attempts to deny the Holocaust’s existence in France (Vidal-Naquet ix). Butz’s *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century* (1976) helped inspire the Institute for Historical Review, which was devoted to uncovering the Holocaust as a hoax in the United States. This touched off a brief firestorm of controversy, including the publication of a series of books that denied the deniers (see Stern, Lipstadt, and Vidal-Naquet). For a brief account of these events, see Novick, *Holocaust* (270–72). Faurisson and Butz were preceded by David Hogan’s *The Myth of the Six Million* and David Irving’s *Hitler’s War* (1977).

8. As Joseph Witek observes, the position taken by Adorno is that “to aestheticize . . . the profound evil of the Holocaust is to appropriate for one’s own ends the unique experience of the victims of the gas chambers.” This becomes even more problematic in the case of a comic-book representation, which “might appear as a grotesque degradation of the Holocaust” (97) because of comics’ status as a “low”
form of popular culture. Those few who have read *Maus* as degrading criticize the
use of animal masks/metaphors as potentially collaborative with Nazi stereotypes
(see Harvey 241–45) or as implying a “natural” predator/prey relationship (see
Halkin 55).

9. See much of Dominick LaCapra’s work for an extended critique of the ten-
dency to both hyperbolize the Holocaust’s traumatic inaccessibility and to generalize
its sublimity into a postmodern universal.

10. Poststructuralists rarely configure their philosophy as Cartesian in the way
Ankersmit describes. In fact, rather than suggest that it is impossible for the “subject”
to know the “object,” poststructuralist thought more often argues that that which we
assume to be the “object” or the “essential” truth is actually a product of language
or discourse, a social production, not an individual (or “subjective”) one. As such,
the “object” tends to disappear as mere discursive articulation. As in Ankersmit’s
account, then, the “thing itself” is not evident. This is not necessarily because of the
failings of the subject, however, but because of the “depth” of language.

11. The primary reason for Spiegelman’s deployment of the comic-book form is
because it had always been his medium of choice. It is, however, also an appropriate
one in the sense that Jews were often portrayed as mice, rats, and vermin in cartoon
form in Julius Streich’s Nazi weekly *Der Sturmer*. The other commonly cited source
for Spiegelman’s choice of mice is Fritz Hippler’s equally anti-Semitic film *Der ewige
Jude* (1940), which crosscuts between ghetto rabbis and sewer rats (Doherty 74–75).
The history of “cat and mouse” conflict in comics is also relevant, beginning perhaps
with George Herriman’s *Krazy Kat*. For a discussion of *Maus*’s interaction with the
“funny animal” tradition, see Witek (109–12) and Orvell. For a discussion of the use
of human bodies with animal heads in traditional Jewish art, see Young (“Holocaust”
687) and Gopnik (33–34).

12. For my more extended discussion of *Maus* and race, see Berlatsky (“Memory
as Forgetting” 126–29).

13. Spiegelman transgresses his own metaphor at times, depicting more animal-
istic rats (*Maus* 147), four-legged cats, and questions about whether these animals
“louse up” his metaphor (*Maus II* 43). These deviations serve to draw attention to his
metaphor, revealing it as a construction that can be violated (see Staub 39).

14. Again, I speak here of middle period Foucault. See note 6 of the Introduction
for an explanation.

15. For an account of the racial ascription of the Jews in the nineteenth century,
see Gilman (99–101, 234–43). For example: “Jews bear the . . . stigma of the black
skin of the syphilitic,” and “Jews are black, according to nineteenth-century racial
science, because they are not a pure race, . . . that comes from Africa” (99).

16. See Rothberg for a discussion of how Spiegelman links Vladek’s treatment
of the hitchhiker with Israeli/Palestinian relations. While it is not clear to me that
Spiegelman is explicitly treating Israeli politics here, it is clear that *Maus* points out
how remembrance of a traumatic event can be redeployed for oppressive purposes.

17. It is worth noting that while I tend to read the use of the animal metaphor as
a principally postmodern strategy, Spiegelman insists that the masks actually help us
to see the truth in his depiction. “To use these ciphers, the cats and mice, is actually a
way to allow you past the cipher at the people who are experiencing it” (Witek 102).

18. For further discussion of photographs in *Maus*, see Charlson (109–11),
Hirsch, Hatfield, and Elmwood.
19. The contrast of *Maus* with traditional funny animals like Mickey Mouse necessarily rests on the distinction between the Disney capitalist/corporate machine that exploits everything and anything for profit and Spiegelman’s text, which either draws the line between profit and “art” somewhere (at *Maus* vests, for instance), or, at the very least, expresses some guilt about it. Vladek, portrayed as an amoral capitalist in the pre-war years, believes he is giving Artie a compliment when he compares him to the “big-shot cartoonist” Walt Disney (*Maus* 133), but Artie obviously feels differently. Nevertheless, Spiegelman does articulate parallels between his own mice and those of Disney in the epigraph to *Maus II*, which quotes a mid-1930s German newspaper article’s condemnation of Mickey Mouse and Jews, with both linked to debased amoral capitalism.

20. Bosmajian notes how the desire to have been present at Auschwitz is not atypical for children of survivors. Bosmajian posits that this “insane wish” comes about as a result of the knowledge that the “gap between the experience of the disaster and any mimetic or symbolic construct of it is unbridgeable” (33).

21. The division of memory and history is undercut by some versions of post-structuralist theory, as discussed in this chapter, and is also problematic given Maurice Halbwachs’s notion of “collective memory,” which asserts that no memory is individual but can only be constructed in relationship to communities.

22. In *History and Memory After Auschwitz*, Dominick LaCapra puts the number of Fortunoff testimonies at 3,700 and the Survivors of the Shoah Foundation’s at approximately 50,000 (11). In the ten years that have passed since that book’s publication, at least several hundred more have been added to the Fortunoff testimonies and perhaps several thousand to the Survivors of the Shoah. To link either or both of these collections to a true or transparent touching of the past to the present is, as always, problematic, particularly in the case of the latter, funded by Steven Spielberg and directed with Hollywood logic and production values (Novick, Holocaust 275–76).

23. Nancy K. Miller makes a similar claim about *Maus* when she notes that listening to Vladek’s recorded voice at the *Maus* museum exhibit gives the listener the sense that “the father performs unmediated—to the world” (55). Miller does acknowledge, however, that the impression of the unmediated is, of course, problematic (59n13).

24. Ankersmit distinguishes between a “description” of the past that aims at truthfulness and the “representation” (particularly narrative) of the past that is an argument for how a particular slice of the past is to be defined. Descriptions distinguish between a portion that is referring to reality and a portion that is a property of that referent. So, in “the cat is orange,” the “cat” refers to a real-world object and “is orange” describes one of its properties. Because of the simplicity of the statement, it can be empirically confirmed or denied and is therefore either “true” or “false.” Nevertheless, because of its simplicity, the statement tells us very little about the cat, its origins, its history, its relationships (Narrative Logic, chapters 1–3). Ankersmit concludes that because history aims not only to tell us the factual “truth” of past events but also to orient us towards them and to help us understand their complexities, this model has little utility. It is possible, of course, to imagine a more radical response to Ankersmit that would focus on how a single word in this description (“orange”) can only be corroborated within agreed social and linguistic boundaries, making such corroboration not a confirmation of the statement’s “objective” truth but of social/
linguistic agreement. While there is little doubt that “facts” depend on what social
groups consider factual, it is also true that the discrepancies between such groups are
likely to be more limited when treating such a simple declarative statement. State-
ments of this kind infrequently create the kinds of social and political problems so
central to middle-period Foucauldian thinking, for instance. The orangeness of cats
has rarely been a significant bone of political contention. Other short statements may
be much more difficult to extract from their discursive context, however. Freud’s “a
child is being beaten” or Spivak’s “white men are saving brown women from brown
men” might seem initially to be the kind of factual statement Ankersmit sees as con-
firmable, but they are embroiled in larger cultural narratives that circulate power.
Ankersmit’s broader point, however, is that these larger discourses are precisely that
which we should investigate, both because they create more problems for notions of
transparent representation and because they have greater educational potential (His-
torical Representation 39–48). Ankersmit further argues that narratives/representa-
tions can be “true” even if some of their individual statements are false (Narrative
Logic 58–78).

25. Interestingly, as the Complete Maus CD-ROM reveals, these lines are not a
direct quote from Vladek, but are edited and rewritten by Spiegelman. Vladek actu-
ally said “finally I found her. The rest I don’t need to tell you, because we both were
very happy” (Bosmajian 41). While the “happy ending” of the story is still palpably
false, Spiegelman’s addition of “ever after” emphasizes (even provides) the fairytale
feel of Vladek’s conclusion.

26. For a discussion of the problems of providing closure in any Holocaust nar-
rative, see Levine (70).

27. There are some examples of critics relying on outcomes to interpret Maus in
ways similar to Vladek’s emplotment. In particular, Tabachnick suggests that Vladek’s
survival is somehow meant to happen by God, something “proven” by various ful-
filled prophecies in the text. While there is an emphasis on prediction and fulfillment
in these episodes, there is also an emphasis in Maus on the role chance plays in who
survived the camps. Pavel asserts, “It wasn’t the best people who survived, nor did
the best ones die. It was random!!” (Maus II 45; emphasis in original). Given Pavel’s
wisdom throughout Maus, it is more likely that we are meant to see the random
nature of survival than the fated triumph of Vladek.

28. For further commentary on the orchestra scene, see Ewert (both sources)
and Iadonisi (51–52).

29. Nearly all comics theorists note this feature unique to the medium. Scott
McCloud, for example, discusses how comics transform time into space in Under-
standing Comics: “[I]n comics, the past is more than just memories for the audience
and the future is more than just possibilities! Both past and future are real and visible
all around us! Wherever your eyes are focused, that’s now. But at the same time your
eyes take in the surrounding landscape of the past and future!” (104). The surfeit of
exclamation points does not invalidate the claim.

30. Of course, all of these drawings are representations of the past, not the thing
itself, even if they occupy the same diegetic level as the person who creates them.
The blurring of diegetic levels suggests that the past can be made present, but it does
not actualize that suggestion unless we acknowledge that representations can retain
some material portion of that which they represent, a possibility I explore in the next
section of the chapter.
31. Nora ultimately makes a similar claim. While memory and history have become fundamentally separate, he argues that they need to be (re)united in histories that partake of the emotion and the “presence” of memory.

32. Ankersmit argues against the Holocaust being classified as “sublime” or as “collective trauma” because “the perpetrators of this unprecedented crime were vanquished in World War II and because their actions did not and could not become part of our collective future” (Sublime Historical Experience 351). Ankersmit idiosyncratically argues that “Western historical consciousness” was not forced to redefine itself in the case of the Holocaust, allowing the West to “discard” or “neutralize” the event by classifying it only as part of the past and not of the present (351). Ankersmit therefore suggests that the Holocaust is somehow “narratable” because it does not define our society in the present. I disagree strongly with Ankersmit here. Just because the Allies ultimately won the war does not mean that the Holocaust has not been cause for a restructuring of the West’s collective psyche. Rather, I believe it has.

33. Obviously, Maus is “adorned” with pictures and pervasive animal metaphors, but its relative simplicity in terms of drawing style and artistic presentation emphasizes the “mimetic” element of the text and deemphasizes the stylistic complexity and artistic pyrotechnics that can sometimes characterize graphic narratives, including Spiegelman’s earlier works. Witek argues that the “plain understated visual style” (100) reflects Vladek’s narration, but it more closely mirrors Spiegelman’s effort to transmit the facts of the past without the barrier of formal complexity. Joshua Brown further details Spiegelman’s compositional methods and how they lead to a sense of transparent simplicity. Most comics artists draw pages at twice the final publication size, in an effort to get more detail into each panel, to obscure mistakes, and to make the “finished product appear tighter and sharper” (102). Spiegelman avoids this technique and draws Maus at the same size at which it is read. Spiegelman suggests that this is to make the work “more vulnerable” and to “leave me without as many intermediaries between me and somebody reading Maus” (Brown 102). That is, despite the various techniques in Maus highlighting mediation, the drawing and compositional style actually push in the other direction, toward an attempted transparency.

Conclusion

1. For an investigation of the ethics of the postscript in Atonement, see Phelan (“Narrative”).
2. The conceit of the book was admittedly “borrowed” from Brazilian author Moacyr Scliar’s Max and the Cats, in which a Jewish boy is shipwrecked and left adrift on a boat with a panther. Martel’s borrowing led to a brief controversy over Pi’s “plagiarism” (see, for example, Blackstock).