

art spiegelman

**FOR DASHIELL, NADJA & FRANÇOISE**

THANKS to my associate editor, Hillary Chute, and to Bill Kartalopoulos for the indispensable help in shaping and realizing this project; to Jonathan Bennett for lending his design skills; to Si Spiegelman and Andrew Zelby for sharing family history; and to Jesse Fuchs for help in curating my sketches. Special thankx to Pantheon's cracker-jack head of production, Andy Hughes; to Dan Frank, my editor at Pantheon, as well as his assistant, Jillian Verrillo...and to Françoise, my muse and lifelong editor.

I'm overwhelmed by the generous dedication and expertise of Ryan Nadel (and his cohorts at 8Leaf Digital, Ian McDonald and Tony Cheung) who made the DVD possible against all odds. Thanks as well to the Vancouver Centre for Digital Media (and of course to Bob Stein and his crew at Voyager for their original Maus CD-ROM).

**METAMAUS** © 2011 by art spiegelman  
All rights reserved. Published in the USA by Pantheon Books, a division of Random House, Inc., New York, and in Canada by Random House of Canada Ltd., Toronto.

Pantheon Books and colophon are registered trademarks of Random House, Inc.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
Spiegelman, Art\*MetaMaus / Art Spiegelman\*p. cm.  
ISBN 978-0-375-42394-9

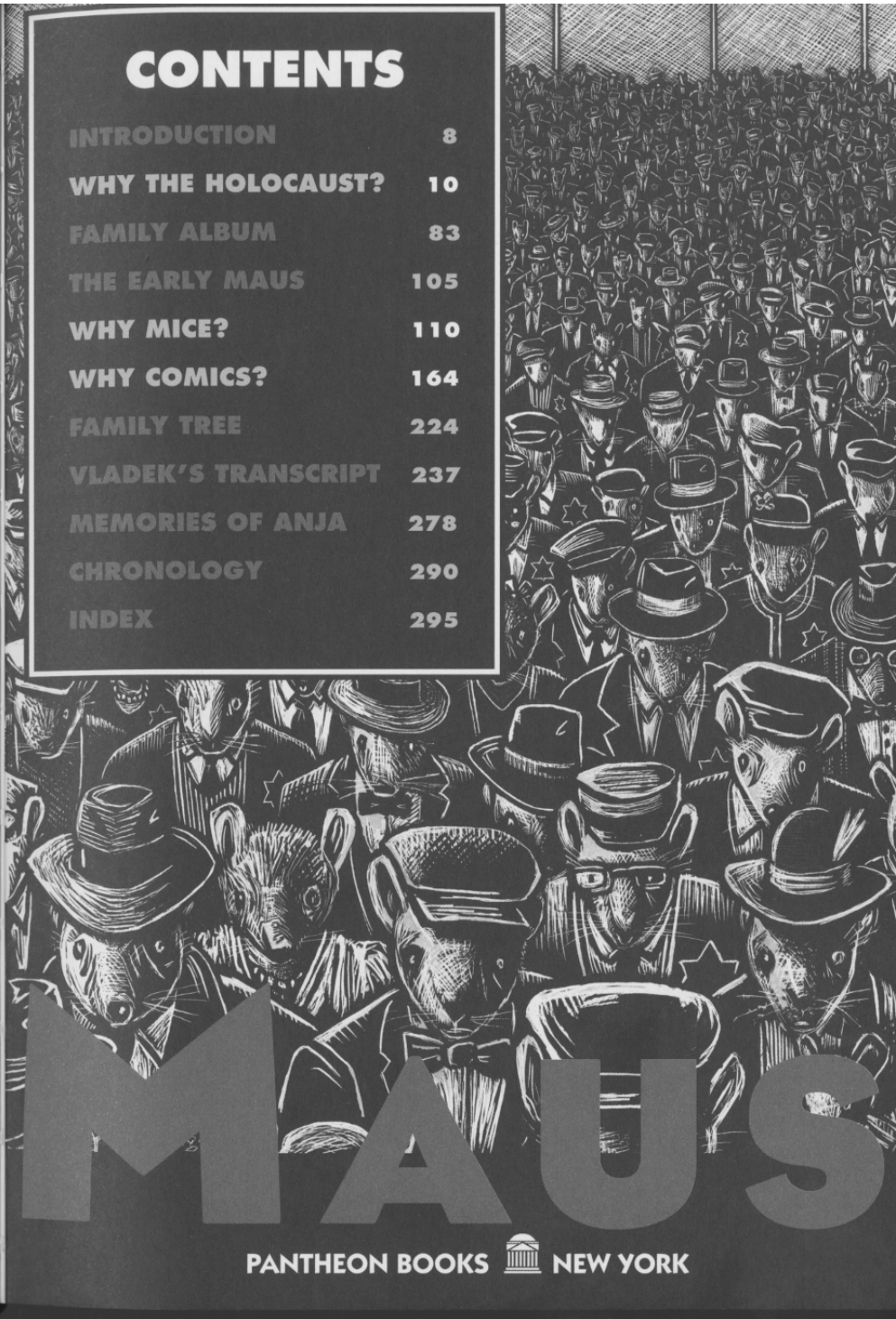
1. Spiegelman, Art. 2. Spiegelman, Art, Maus.  
3. Cartoonists—United States—Biography.  
I. Title. PN6727.S6Z465 2011 741.5092—dc22[B]  
2010052045

www.pantheonbooks.com Printed in China  
9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 First Edition

**META**

**CONTENTS**

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>WHY THE HOLOCAUST?</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>FAMILY ALBUM</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>THE EARLY MAUS</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>WHY MICE?</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>WHY COMICS?</b>	<b>164</b>
<b>FAMILY TREE</b>	<b>224</b>
<b>VLADEK'S TRANSCRIPT</b>	<b>237</b>
<b>MEMORIES OF ANJA</b>	<b>278</b>
<b>CHRONOLOGY</b>	<b>290</b>
<b>INDEX</b>	<b>295</b>



**MAUS**

PANTHEON BOOKS  NEW YORK

The interviewer has just asked:

"An early review of Maus by Adam Gopnik, in the New Republic, compared your use of mice with the Bird's Head Haggadah. What do you think of that?"

### Der Vampire



Vom Teufel in die Welt gesetzt er fliehet die Vögel quält und heult

It's brilliant. I hadn't known about that Haggadah, but the reference seemed dead on. The same piece also academically traced my work back to the roots of Italian caricature, which was interesting to me but had no resonance with the junk culture I'd actually grown up with and avoided my actual influences as if they were inconvenient turds in the middle of the living room. But Gopnik's point about the Bird's Head Haggadah was a fundamental one: depicting humans was proscribed in much of Jewish tradition; like drawing Mohammad, it grew out of the commandment against making graven images of God. So some cagey medieval scribe had set out to decorate a Haggadah without breaking the commandment about



having any other god but God and did it by representing all of the figures as animals. I think the essay referred to it as a way of "drawing something too sacred to show" and in *Maus*, Gopnik described what I was doing as showing something too profane for depiction.

Despite my shoddy religious training, I was aware of this commandment, if only from looking through my mom's shelf of bestselling novels when I was growing up. There was a book by Chaim Potok called *My Name Is Asher Lev*, about a Hasidic boy who grows up to become a great painter, how he had to break away from his religion in order to become a figurative artist. So I was aware, even in my teens, that the project that was most consuming in my life was to make as many graven images as I could, and on some level, that probably helped fuse that mouse face onto my work even though I was totally unconscious of that aspect of what I was doing.



TOP: "The Vampire—Let loose in the world by the Devil, he incites and torments the people," by Fips for *Der Stürmer*, 1934.

LEFT: Detail from the Bird's Head Haggadah, Mainz, c. 1300 (© The Israel Museum, Jerusalem).

RIGHT: Drawing by Fips for *Der Stürmer*, 1937. (Label on sack: "Property of the people—Not for Jews.")



**How did you decide to draw cats specifically and create the cat/mouse metaphor?**

The cats and mice just came as a set, part of all the Tom and Jerry comics and cartoons that I grew up with. One problem I had was the disparity of scale of the creatures.

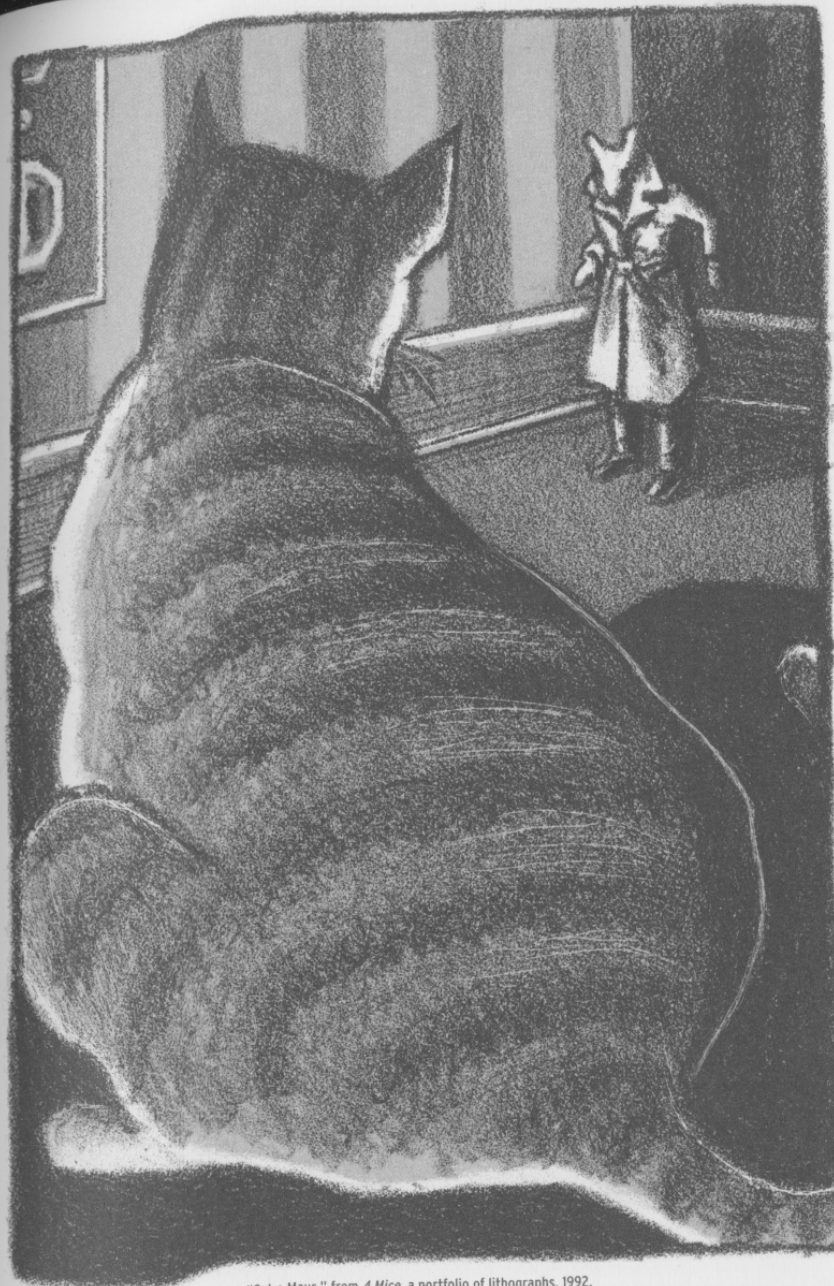
Tom and Jerry are not, on any level, equal. Tom looms large and even if Jerry is a smart, crafty little creature, he only comes up to the top of Tom's paw. When I began work on the long *Maus* my first impulse had me drawing large cats and small mice. By the time



TOP: Sketchbook drawing, 1991. ABOVE: "Mouse, Tefillin, Cat, and Traps," a RAW postcard, 1979.

I solved the problem to my satisfaction, I'd minimized the disparity, so that the cats and mice became, more or less, overt masks. I liked working with a metaphor that didn't work all that well though I certainly didn't want my metaphor to work as an endorsement of Nazi ideology, or as an implicit plea for sympathy, like, "Aw, lookit the cute defenseless little mouse." To equalize them in scale didn't mean to give them equal power, but it didn't put the mice necessarily at the total biological disadvantage that the metaphor otherwise implies.

In the three-page "Maus" I was interested in class and racial oppression. It was my hippie self that first steered me toward the black rights thing and then eventually left me by default with the Nazi/Jew thing. What's most curious and interesting about that first attempt is that I managed to almost totally deracinate it. The references to the Jews are as *die Mausem*. The references to the Nazis are as *die Katzen*. The factory that my father works in, in the ghetto, is not presented as a shoe factory, but a kitty litter factory.



"Cat + Maus," from *4 Mice*, a portfolio of lithographs, 1992.



that there should be midrashes and midrashes of commentary around commentary—that's swell. But when the focus is on questions about theological issues, I'm less interested than when the interrogations are focused on the "reality-based" world that a lot of us still live in.

**Has anyone objected to your use of cats?**

Well, I was once in the airport leaving a book tour in London, when I got a call from Paul Gravett, a comics scholar, who told me, "You know, you're missing Desmond Morris on the radio right now!" I never did hear the broadcast, but what he reported to me was that the zoologist was unhappy about my depiction of the Nazis as cats, saying that *Maus* set the case for ailurophiles back a thousand years to the Middle Ages, when cats were seen as witches' familiars.

The cats are actually the most lovable of the animals in the *Maus* zoo. Right? If you're given a choice of, "Would you rather be

a cat, a mouse, or a pig?" lots of people would say, "Oh, cats sound good." That of course has the advantage of making the reader, in this particular case, complicit with the murderers. Even in the way that they're drawn, the cats have the most human of the faces. The mice have the most abstracted and the least physiologically human representation: the nose is at the bottom, the eyes are at the midway point, and there's no room for that mouth. The pigs have those unsightly snouts. The reader has to reinterpret those signs that



seem to be in contradistinction to the story being told.

**You draw many animals in the book besides mice, cats, and pigs. How did you make those other decisions?**

Well, at a certain point I did feel enslaved by my metaphor. I couldn't just walk away and say, "So all other groups are just gonna have bland human faces, okay?" Each issue that came up required a different solution. One of the first problems was what to do about us Americans—I tend to identify myself more as an American than as a Jew—and in a melting pot like America it's hard to know what animal one might use. Turning again to my simpleminded ur-text of American popular culture: cats chase

mice, and dogs, by God, chase cats—it's a direct food chain. In fact, using pigs specifically allowed for a creature outside that food chain, because whatever other roles the Poles had in World War II as victims and as victimizers, they also were outside the food chain. They were there as witnesses. They didn't create the genocide. It was taking place on their farm, you know, on their turf, and since they were not immediately slated for the same destiny as Jews, they were there as witnesses.



But dogs were easy; it's almost the *Family Feud* answer to what animals come to mind and how do you perceive them. The dogs were the heroic vanquisher of cats, so there was that. Besides, as soon as you're a cartoonist drawing a dog, you've got lots of different kinds of dogs to draw. You've got Collies and Dachshunds and Cocker Spaniels and Chihuahuas and their

FACING PAGE, TOP LEFT: Discarded chapter title for what became "Auschwitz: Time Flies." TOP CENTER: Undated cat drawing, late '70s. TOP RIGHT: Sketchbook, 1978. LEFT: Sketchbook drawings, early '80s.

species or sub-species are much more clearly delineated than cats, even though cat fanciers will say otherwise. Here, the fact that there were so many possible dogs got me to actually verbalize to myself: "Oh, I get it. Americans are a mongrel race, a bunch of mutts." Bill Mauldin's panel cartoons of Willie and Joe—the "dogfaces" of World War II as GIs were called—came to mind as soon as I started trying to figure out what it might mean to draw a dog in an army uniform.

**We have British fish, Swedish reindeer, and a lot of others...**

Right. As the book was coming to a close, I really couldn't have cared less about my metaphor, but I was stuck with it. People would ask me, "Oh, how would you draw us Italians?" and I was always stumped. I just had to deal with each of these issues as they came up, and it led to the whole



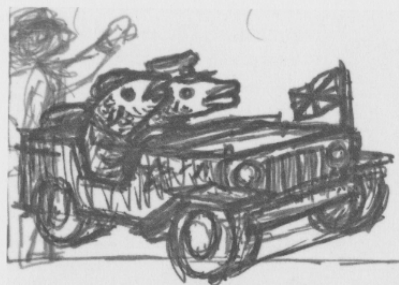
"Them was his exact words—I envy th' way you dogfaces git first pick o' wimmen an' likker in towns."

sequence in *Maus II* of talking to Françoise about how to represent her.

In a way I started reaching for the absurd to make sure one didn't take the ruling metaphor at, um, "face" value. When Vladek looks for Anja after the war, he goes to a large displaced persons center at Belsen. The British are in charge of that

camp. I guess I could have avoided the whole issue since they just appear in the mise-en-scène for a panel or two, but I decided to give the Brits a walk-on part—or, as it finally resolved itself, a swim-on part. I thought about fish and chips, an island culture, fish out of water. All those things just seemed to lead me toward drawing fish without bicycles but with jeeps.

It echoed some panels in the first book when I first realized there are more than just Poles, Germans, and Jews in the world. When Vladek accompanies Anja to a sanatorium, there are other animals there. There was a goat, rabbits, reindeers



TOP LEFT: Bill Mauldin's WWII dogfaces, Willie and Joe. *Stars and Stripes*, Nov. 1944. TOP RIGHT: A.S. sketchbook, 1983.

or moose . . . I don't know, I think there was a giraffe in the background. It illustrated the possibility of that peaceable kingdom of different animals living side by side.

I vividly remember drawing the sequence where my mother went to see a fortune-teller—I was in a small cabin, deep in the woods of Connecticut that summer.

I prefer to work at night when I can, and these giant moths kept flinging themselves against the glass, trying to get in. Most of them looked like casting calls for Mothra. They were insane and enormous. I got really fascinated by what their faces looked like. And it was at precisely the moment I was trying to figure out how to draw the gypsy, so it was preordained that I'd use gypsy moths.

After the war, Vladek went to Poland, and from Poland to Sweden as a displaced person with Anja. Sweden was quite welcoming to refugees after the war. I thought of



the Swedes as somehow far outside the loop of my Eastern European narrative and finding an animal so totally out of scale with mice, cats, and mutts—those large galumphing and gentle reindeer—struck me as amusing.

There's a point in the later part of the book (page 291) where, after they are free of their captors, Vladek and his friend, Shivek, go to visit Shivek's brother in Hannover.

Vladek said that they had kids, and the brother, who is Jewish, was kept safe by his wife during the war. This was definitely a mixed marriage, so in my book that meant a cat and a mouse coupling. One of the many problems with visualizing Hitler's racist thinking by casting groups as different species, is that different species cannot, of course, reproduce. In fact, Nazi propaganda often depicted the Jew as the wicked seducer of German maidenhood, defiling the Aryan race. So here a Jew and a German have kids. At first I didn't know quite what to do, but drawing some creature that looked like something in



ABOVE (LEFT TO RIGHT): Studies. Fish, page 291; dogs, page 272; gypsy moth, page 293; reindeer, page 285. Detail of draft, page 291.

Die Spinne



Wanda Dyfke blieb im Netz hängen / Von Schmiedelötinnen eingefangen  
 Rechte des Staates der Deutschen / Die macht die deutsche Jugend frei

between a cat and a mouse highlighted the speciousness of demarcating groups of people as separate species.

In your article "Looney Tunes, Zionism, and the Jewish Question" published in *The Village Voice* in 1989,\* you bring up Sartre's point that a Jew is someone whom others call a Jew. We see that reflected in the page where you draw a prisoner first as a mouse and then as a cat.

Yes. The racism was all so arbitrary, even the Nazis couldn't keep it straight. In the camps, different categories of prisoners were marked with different colored triangles on their uniforms. My father told me about a German who had gotten

\*See *MetaMaus DVD supplements*.

dragged into Auschwitz as a "criminal" to be marked with a green triangle, but had somehow been classified as a Jew with a yellow triangle. My very first impulse was to avoid that anecdote—too complicated—but almost immediately I realized that it was better to race head-on into these issues of race and hierarchy. If I'd evaded the issue, one could still take comfort as a non-Jew reading *Maus* that it ain't you. One of the advantages of using these masked figures at all is that it creates a kind of empathic response by despecifying the faces—it allows one to identify, and then get stuck with having to embrace one's own corrupt and flawed humanity.

You're right to spot how important that Sartre quote was to me. My own identification with my Jewishness had very little to do with religion ever since I was thirteen and went out for a slice of sausage pizza in the middle of a Yom Kippur service and wasn't struck down by lightning. Still, I knew I would always be seen as Jewish by others, no matter what my beliefs.

Can you say more about that?  
 You've said that doing *Maus* made you overtly Jewish to the world.

Yes, though it wasn't a big secret to anyone who could read my last name.

Doing *Maus* meant probing at the specific texture of the oppression directed at my own family—no more cozy liberal displacement of the discomfiting aspects of my own past onto a strip about black mice and Ku Klux Kats (though that idea keeps rattling around in my head even thirty years later).

It has become sort of a given that one of the badges of Jewish identity is pride in one's lox and bagels, and the other given is the fact that they tried to wipe us out and, by God, it'll never happen again! The problem for me is that I have an uncomfortable relationship with all this, because the only parts of Jewishness that I can embrace easily are the parts that are unembraceable. In other words, I am happy being a rootless cosmopolitan, alienated in most environments that I fall into. And I'm proud of being somebody who synthesized different kinds of culture—it is a fundamental aspect of the Diaspora Jew. I'm uneasy with the notion of the Jew as fighting machine, the two-fisted Israeli. I'm a wimp. But I must insist, as Woody Allen once put it, "I'm not a self-hating Jew. I just hate myself!"

FACING PAGE, TOP LEFT: Fips on interspecies racial defilement, *Der Stürmer*, 1934. "The Spider. Many victims get stuck in the web, lured by flattery. Rip up the hypocrite's web so German youth will be free."

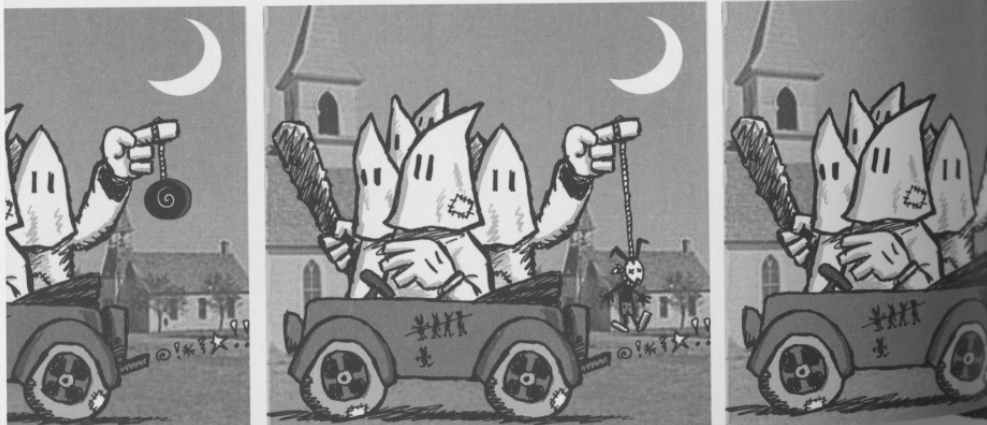
LEFT: Fragment of A.S. storyboard for sequence in HBO's cancelled film project, Paul Auster's *I Thought My Father Was God*, 2004.

ABOVE: Draft for page 242 with crayon marks to indicate page composition.



One of the most striking things about the animal metaphor is how it breaks down...

I guess it's all an inquiry into what it means to be human in a dehumanizing world. When my father told me about his long death march out of Auschwitz near the end of the war, he describes hearing gunshots and then, at some point, he sees far ahead of him, "somebody jumping, turning, rolling 25 or 35 times around and stops." He tells me, "Oh, I said, they may be killed there a dog," because my father



hadn't had that many experiences of seeing people shot close up, if any (although of course he did shoot someone from a distance when he was a Polish soldier). And he goes on to say, "When I was a boy, our neighbor had a dog what got mad and was biting; the neighbor came out with a rifle and shot. The dog was rolling so, around and around, kicking, before he lay quiet, and now I thought, 'How amazing it is that a human being reacts the same like this neighbor's dog.'"

When he told me that anecdote, he certainly wasn't thinking about me telling his story with animal surrogates—but I instantly knew this would become a key page in the story. I worked hard to make the transition between human/mouse and animal/dog as clear as I could. My father describes how "the dog rolled around and around, kicking before he lay quiet," and that is worked out visually as a roll across the page. I didn't try to present it cinematically, which would have been a bit corny,

but I took advantage of the way the eye assimilates a page; it was analogous to showing a human rolling around, fading into a dog rolling around, and fading back into a human as it dies.

**Another page where the human/animal dichotomy gets called into question is the page with the rat in the basement...**

Yeah, that one started as a real stumbling block. I thought, "There goes the whole ballgame." Vladek and Anja are hiding in a basement, and they're temporarily safe. They're lucky to have that storage space to hide in but my mother is terrified because there are rats in the basement, and my father comforts her by telling her, "Oh, they're not rats, they're just mice."

My father told me this anecdote two or three times. And one of the things I kept trying to figure out was how not to queer my representational system and deal with what he was telling me. At first I assumed



I should just show him talking in the present so it wouldn't bring "the rat thing" too much to the foreground. The fact that Vladek and Art are mice—you just don't notice that anymore—and they're just conversing. For a moment I figured, "Maybe I can turn the rat into cockroaches or spiders or something else lower on the evolutionary scale!" but that just was totally dumb, even if it did feel like the only way to keep my conceit from collapsing.

Thanksgiving and Christmas—it was kind of horrifying to me, but a useful literary reference point when I had to solve that particular piece of my father's story. So the whole page was built around showing as "rodentized" a rat as possible, showing Vladek and Anja on a page anchored by as unpleasant a rat as I could draw.

I should also point out that once I chose mice, I was sure that some Nazi some-

where would mutter, "Yeah, Spiegelman is just trying to white-wash the Jewish people. They're not mice—they're rats!" I think it's implicit in the choices I made—like that page where Anja's tail is so jarringly ratlike. Here's one place where the rodent is made very clearly ratlike to call their disguise masks into question, even if you'd managed to fall into the dream state that all narrative provides.

What came to the rescue was my comic book reading as a kid, especially Carl Barks' Donald Duck. In that whole universe of Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck comics, one is expected to embrace the ducks and Mickey Mouse as human, but accept that Mickey has a pet dog, Pluto, as well as a pal named Goofy. They're both dogs. And it really was almost like a Zen koan for me as a kid: does a dog have a Goofy nature? And Donald Duck with his nephews, Huey, Dewey, and Louie, would go off to Grandma Duck's farm for turkey dinner on



**You kept lots of pictures of mice and other animals around while you were working. Which ones were especially significant?**

BELOW: Sketchbook strip, Sept. 1977. FACING PAGE, TOP LEFT: Goofy Gander's pet dog chases Peter Pig's sausages. *Goofy Comics* no. 38, 1950. TOP RIGHT: Bottom half of page 149. RIGHT: Study for page 149.





MAYBE YOU SHOULD BOTH SEE A MARRIAGE COUNSELOR.

ACH! I DON'T WANT THAT A STRANGER SHOULD MIX INTO OUR PRIVATE STORIES.



TO A LAWYER I TALKED YEARS AGO... AND RIGHT AWAY HE WARNED TO ME: "VLADEK-WATCH OUT. I SEE THAT THIS WOMAN IS MONEY-CONSCIOUS!"



AND ONCE MALA AND I SAT WITH AUNT HELEN TO HELP AGREE US FOR A NEW WILL... BUT A MONTH AFTER, MALA WANTED AGAIN TO CHANGE IT.



DON'T SEE A THERAPIST ABOUT YOUR WILL... TALK ABOUT HOW TO GET ALONG BETTER.

WITH MALA, IT'S NOT TO GET ALONG. ONLY IT'S THE MONEY!



I GIVE UP... I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY.

YOU SEE? I ALSO DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY!



LOOK. I CAN'T STAY LONG. I NEED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT YOU AND ANJA.

IT'S CHILLY... TAKE ALSO HERE A BLANKET.



NO THANKS.

WE SNEAKED TOWARD SOŚNOWIEC...

IT WAS STILL DARK OUTSIDE... WE DIDN'T KNOW WHERE TO HIDE OURSELVES...

WHAT HAPPENED IN 1944, AFTER YOU LEFT ŚRODULA?



JANINA LIVES OVER THERE.

RICHIEU'S GOVERNESS ALWAYS OFFERED SHE WOULD HELP US.



WE CAME TO HER HOUSE NEAR TOWN... OPEN UP, JANINA! QUICK! W-WHO'S THERE?



MY GOD! IT'S THE SPIEGELMANS!



YOU'LL BRING TROUBLE! GO AWAY! QUICKLY!



FLAM

I'M FRIGHTENED, VLADEK.



MAYBE WE SHOULD TRY MY FATHER'S OLD HOUSE. THE JANITOR HAS KNOWN OUR FAMILY FOR YEARS.

LET'S TRY. WE'VE GOT TO GET OFF THE STREETS BEFORE DAWN!



WAKE UP, MR. LUKOWSKI. LET US IN. PLEASE!!

HUH? W-WHO IS IT?



ANJA! ANJA ZYLBERBERG!



WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, CHILD? IT ISN'T SAFE! WAIT- I'LL UNLOCK THE GATE.

I WAS A LITTLE SAFE. I HAD A COAT AND BOOTS, SO LIKE A GESTAPO WORE WHEN HE WAS NOT IN SERVICE. BUT ANJA-HER APPEARANCE-YOU COULD SEE MORE EASY SHE WAS JEWISH. I WAS AFRAID FOR HER.



