LYNN L. WOLFF

DRAWING ON AND DRAWING OUT HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

Comics and Archives

In comics and graphic novels, visual and discursive modes of representation interact. While aesthetically complex, such works nevertheless may appear easy to understand, since they offer up multiple points of access for a broad public. As readership expands and as comics and graphic novels become an established field of scholarly inquiry, the medium of comics still struggles for recognition as an art form. Seen as a disposable product for popular consumption and disregarded, if not discounted, as a form of »low culture,« comics have not been archived and exhibited in the ways that other cultural products have.[1] This has been changing, however, evidenced in initiatives by both individuals and institutions.[2] The digital age presents new avenues for connecting dispersed collections and for creating collaborations between libraries and museums, institu-

1 Focusing on the material aspect of the medium with regard to archival practices, comics librarian Randall W. Scott writes, »Part of the reason that comics are not collected must be the inconvenience of the format. They are fragile, they are printed on bad paper, and if you want to read newspaper strips efficiently you have to clip them out or photocopy them.« Randall W. Scott, Comics Librarianship. A Handbook. Jefferson, North Carolina 1990, 15. The works examined in this article – not comic strips or comic books, but graphic narratives of higher quality production value – have smaller print runs than pop culture products, but they are nevertheless intended for a broader readership and are produced in more accessible formats than artists' books.

2 Many private collections formed the starting point for institutional archives. This was the case at my home institution: Michigan State University Libraries' Special Collections houses the world's largest, publicly available collection of international comic art, a rich resource of comics, graphic novels, and comics scholarship that started from the purchase of one individual's collection. https://lib.msu.edu/murray-hong-spc/comicart This institutional resource is at the heart of a thriving comics studies ecosystem that has been an important catalyst for my own work and the work of colleagues across multiple departments who teach and research in the fields of comics studies and visual studies more broadly. For additional background on the connections between private collections and institutional archives, see Margaret Galvan, »Archive.« Keywords for Comics Studies. Edited by Ramzi Fawaz, Shelley Streeby, and Deborah Elizabeth Whaley. New York 2021. 24–27; and Comics & Archive. Edited by Felix Giesa and Anna Stemmann. Berlin 2021.

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tional archives and private collectors. On the perhaps not too distant horizon, one could imagine ways to create an overarching interconnected digital archive of global graphic narratives with the goal of making collections more accessible to multiple users, from members of the general public to researchers in a variety of fields. Here, libraries and museums serve as role models for the way they create spaces where a diverse public benefits from multisensory learning. This article positions itself in an interim phase of this development, taking stock of existing projects as a way to explore future possibilities.

Although comics have not been a focal point of the materials collected by the Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach (DLA), the archive has shown an openness and commitment to taking comics seriously. In addition to collecting comic adaptations of literary works, comics have also been featured in both the exhibition and research activities of the archive. In the 2017 catalogue of the Literaturmuseum der Moderne's exhibit *Die Familie, ein Archiv*, Andreas Platthaus, feuilleton editor of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* as well as longstanding advocate and astute analyst of comics, offers a sweeping history of the medium. Playing on the central idea of the exhibit – the interconnectedness of family, literature, and the archive – Platthaus makes the strong case for comics as a legitimate child of literature (»ein legitimes Kind der Literatur«) due to the power of their narrative form.[3] As the keynote speaker of the 2024 DLA conference »Comic & Graphic Novel: Erzählen in Bildern,« Platthaus provided examples of the power of the images in comics to declare with more urgency the need for the DLA to define a collection strategy that expands the past practice of focusing on literary adaptations of classic works.[4] Rather than aiming at breadth, I would suggest a collection strategy that focuses on depth, selecting works that display visual and narrative complexity, offer thematic and theoretical connections to archival practices, and present possibilities for networked connections with other archives.

The starting point for the 2024 conference forcefully asserted that comics warrant archiving, thereby signaling a promising development for the scholarly study of this medium. Such a shift in the practice of archiving comics, should be seen alongside the expanding notion of what comics are: moving beyond the association with superheroes or »funny pages« to longform single-author publications on serious themes, there is now the broader understanding of comics as

3 Andreas Platthaus, »Auf dem Weg zur Veronkelung. Vermeidung und Notwendigkeit von Familienstrukturen im Comic.« Die Familie. Ein Archiv. Edited by Ellen Strittmatter. Marbach am Neckar 2017. 40–53, here 40.

4 Platthaus noted the DLA's holdings of about 600 works from the 130 years of comics history, most of which are comic adaptations of literary works.

a medium, a complex form of sequential narration told through the combination of text and image, as defined by Scott McCloud.[5] Similar to this parallel development – increased attention to the question of archiving comics, alongside the expanding notion of what comics are – I would like to suggest another connection, namely the new attention to drawings as a form of visual testimony to the Holocaust[6] and the way graphic narratives can expand our understanding of Holocaust literature. In the following, to explore the connection between comics and archives, within the framework of considering how institutions might archive comics, I will highlight graphic narratives, graphic memoirs specifically, from the German and American cultural contexts that engage with memories of the Holocaust, as they are recorded and recounted in a variety of forms, such as handwritten and typed accounts or audio-video interviews. In drawing on and drawing out archival sources, Holocaust testimonies in particular, many of these works become familial archives with broader implications. Beyond such works that are rooted in individual family histories, there are works that explore the history of a collective and have both a pedagogical dimension and an archival connection.[7] All these works raise questions about archiving comics: What would it mean to not only archive the text and images of published works but to also find ways to digitally connect to the archival material the artists used to create the works. That is, how would it help an analysis of these published works, if we had the »Vorlagen« – the sketches, outlines, and other material used in the creation of these works? Looking at digital archives and exhibitions of graphic narratives can provide some answers to these questions and ideas for possible futures for interconnected comics archives as well as ways to further exhibit and make such works more widely accessible.

5 Scott McCloud, Understanding Comics. The Invisible Art. New York 1993.

6 Some of the major contributions that argue for the historical and aesthetic significance of graphic narratives include Hillary L. Chute, Disaster Drawn. Visual Witness, Comics, and Documentary Form (2016); Shoah et Bande Dessinée, the catalogue from the 2017 exhibit at the Mémorial de la Shoah in Paris; Jörn Wendland, Das Lager von Bild zu Bild. Narrative Bildserien von Häftlingen aus NS-Zwangslagern (2017); Beyond MAUS. The Legacy of Holocaust Comics, edited by Ole Frahm, Hans-Joachim Hahn, and Markus Streb (2021); and Rachel E. Perry, »Not by Words Alone. Early Holocaust Graphic Narrative as a ›Minor Art.‹« Images. A Journal of Jewish Art and Visual Culture, vol. 16, no.1 (2023), 131–157.

7 See for example the graphic history Oberbrechen. A German Village Confronts its Nazi Past. Stefanie Fischer, Kim Wünschmann, and illustrated by Liz Clarke. Oxford 2024. The book is intended to not only tell a microhistory of the Holocaust but to also show readers how history is written. To this end, it contains original primary sources, which are translated into English.

Comics as Archives

Alongside the specific practical questions around archiving comics and graphic novels, one can also consider how such works deal with archives in a practical sense as well as how they deal with the notion of the archive more broadly. That is, how such works employ, thematize, and visualize archival research and archival sources.[8] There are several examples in the contemporary context, and from the German context specifically, I would highlight Birgit Weyhe's *Im Himmel ist Jahrmarkt* (2013), Nora Krug's *Heimat. Ein deutsches Familienalbum* (2018), and Bianca Schaalburg's *Der Duft der Kiefern. Meine Familie und ihre Geheimnisse* (2020).[9] In these autobiographical texts, the narrators both show and tell their archival work, and the resulting books can be seen as attempts to create an individual archive of their families' histories. All three artists are investigating the experiences of their family members during the Second World War, focusing in particular on the possibility that their relatives were actively involved in the perpetration of the Holocaust. By placing an emphasis on their grandparents and, by extension, their grandparents' generation, these three artists, as members of the »third generation«, are exploring the historical, cultural, and material legacies of National Socialism for German society. In researching, reconstructing, and reimagining both the transmission and repression of familial memories, these artists – Weyhe, Krug, and Schaalburg – connect their personal stories to larger political histories. In illustrating collective memory, these graphic narratives in turn become documents of cultural memory that make further engagement with German memory culture possible.[10]

8 One could draw fruitful parallels here to both literary works and films. For a rich study of such examples, see Dora Osborne, What Remains? The Post-Holocaust Archive in German Memory Culture. Rochester 2020.

9 For an elaboration on this argument, see Lynn L. Wolff, »The Book as Archive. Metaphors of Memory in Contemporary Graphic Memoir by Birgit Weyhe, Nora Krug, and Bianca Schaalburg.« Gegenwartsliteratur 23 (2023), 133–163. Nora Krug's Heimat straddles the German American context, as German and English language versions were published simultaneously. Even though Krug chose to write the work in her second language – American English – before rewriting it in her native language of German, the works could be viewed as »concurrent originals«. See Lynn L. Wolff, »Self-Translation in Nora Krug's Transcultural Graphic Memoir Belonging / Heimat.« Comparative Aspects in Comics Studies. Translation, Localisation, Imitation, and Adaptation. Edited by Juliane Blank, Stephan Packard, and Christian A. Bachmann. Berlin 2025. 25–44, here 31.

10 See Jan Assmann, »Communicative and Cultural Memory.« Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook. Edited by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning. Berlin/New York 2008.

Graphic narratives that engage with archives and that can also be seen as personal archives exist in the American context as well, but in contrast to the above examples from the German context, these works both draw on and draw out testimony to explore stories of survival and the after-effects of the Holocaust on subsequent generations. Martin Lemelman's *Mendel's Daughter* (2006) tells the story of his mother's survival, based on her testimony, which Lemelman integrates verbally and visually in drawn reproductions of both photographs and the video cassettes on which he recorded his interviews with her in 1989 (see figure 1). Amy Kurzweil's *Flying Couch* (2016) and Solomon J. Brager's *Heavyweight. A Family Story of the Holocaust, Empire, and Memory* (2024) similarly integrate the testimony their relatives gave. In the case of Kurzweil's grandmother, this is her oral testimony, recorded and archived by the Voice/Vision Holocaust Survivor Oral History Archive at the University of Michigan in 1994, as well as a typed documentation of her interview[11] (see figure 2). In the case of Brager's great-grandmother, her testimony was recorded and archived by the University of Southern California's Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive in 1996[12] (see figure 3), and one of her granddaughters interviewed her on audio cassettes as well.

These graphic narratives draw on materials held in institutional archives as well as materials from familial archives, including official documents and individual accounts as well as personal ephemera, like letters and photographs. Following a logic of collecting and ordering centered around a person and including materials they created as well as materials created about them, these authors in turn create not only a graphic narrative but an archive with which they are able to construct and deconstruct familial narratives while interrogating how these narratives intersect with larger histories. In this way, these contemporary graphic narratives illustrate Sara Callahan's observation that the »archival turn« in contemporary art is indeed »still turning.«[13] Or, in the words of Dora Osborne, »The archive has become a dominant trope for thinking about the mediation and representation of the past – in other words, for memory.«[14] In all these graphic narratives, from both German and American contexts, we see how

11 Lily Fenster – November 8 & 10, 1994. https://holocaust.umd.umich.edu/fenster/ Accessed 15 January 2025.

12 Ilse Halpert, Interview 11603. Interview by Joan Benbasat. Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, 30 January 1996. https://vha-usc-edu.proxy1.cl.msu.edu/testimony/11603. Accessed 15 January 2025.

13 Sara Callahan, »When the Dust Has Settled. What Was the Archival Turn, and Is It Still Turning?« Art Journal 83.1 (2024), 74–88. https://doi.org/10.1080/00043249.2024.2317690

14 Osborne, What Remains?, 19.

Figure 1: Drawing on and drawing out video testimony in Gusta and Martin Lemelman's Mendel's Daughter (2006), p. 5

the archive is more than a trope – it is a source and resource – and we see how the work becomes a new archive of family history.

One further example from the American context is worth highlighting in more detail: Ari Richter's *Never Again Will I Visit Auschwitz* (2024). Richter's work departs from the above examples insofar as he does not draw on materials held at institutional archives. Rather, he uses documents from his own familial archive, starting with the materials written and collected by both of his grandfathers, whom he describes as »amateur family historians.«[15] In his graphic memoir, Richter tells the story of four generations of his family, from pre-war

15 Ari Richter, Never Again Will I Visit Auschwitz. A Graphic Family Memoir of Trauma & Inheritance. Seattle 2024, 35.

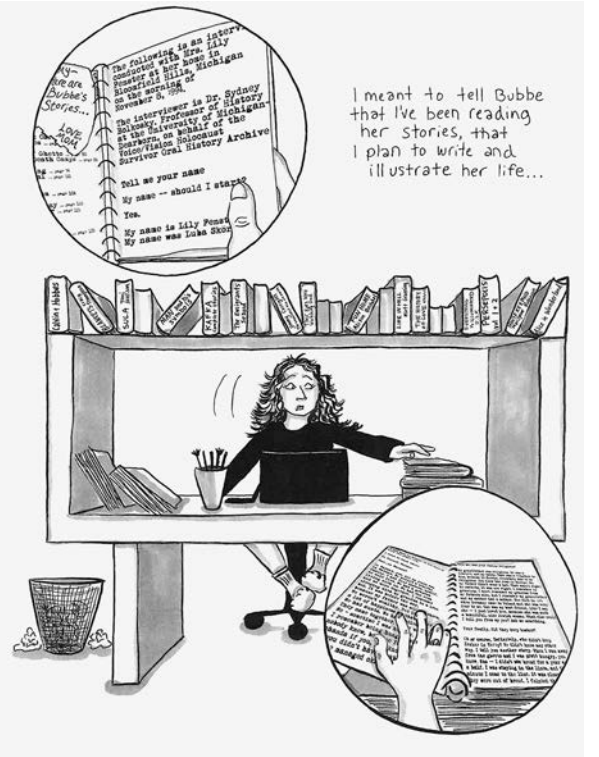

Figure 2: Drawing on and drawing out testimony in Amy Kurzweil's Flying Couch (2016), p. 50

Germany to the current moment of rising antisemitism in the United States. This is both Richter's own story of growing up in Florida and a story of Jewish American assimilation, and it provides a larger history of Jewish persecution during the Holocaust, seen through his family's stories: while some members of his family were able to escape the Holocaust, the majority perished. Richter describes his work as an »intergenerational collaboration«, as opposed to an illustration of others' stories, and this collaboration across time is accentuated through the different styles of visual storytelling that vary depending on the source material for each story.[16] Yet, there is a consistent sense of visual depth to the pages due to the mode of creation: most of the images in the work were cre-

16 Ari Richter, virtual book discussion, Leo Baeck Institute, 27 March 2025.

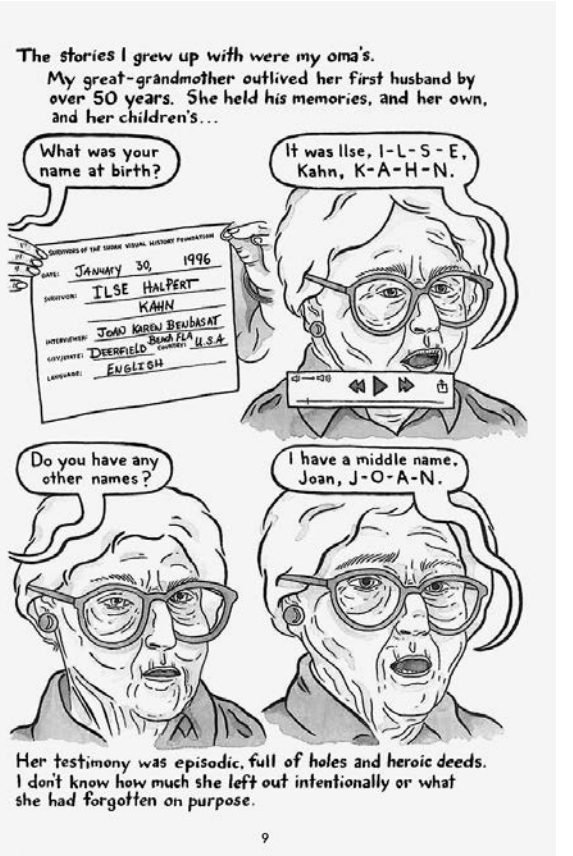

Figure 3: Pointing to archival absences in Solomon J. Brager's Heavyweight (2024), p. 9

ated digitally with multiple layers. Such digital files may lend themselves to easier access by scholars interested in examining the genesis and development of the text.

As indicated in the subtitle, *A Graphic Family Memoir of Trauma & Inheritance,* this work explores issues of inheritance – both scientific (the idea from epigenetics that trauma is inscribed and transmitted genetically) and cultural (the example of collecting and hording as a trauma response, of which there are many examples in Richter's family). Once others find out about his »family research project,« aunts, uncles, and cousins are eager to send him what they have.

Figure 4: Drowning in ephemera in Ari Richter's Never Again Will I Visit Auschwitz (2024), p. 55

While »drowning in ephemera,« as Richter describes and depicts it, these materials in fact make it possible for him to create this work.[17] (see figure 4) As he recounts it, had his family members not saved so much stuff and written down everything they went through, he would not have been able to do the necessary research to tell their stories in the form of graphic literature. The drive to research, to comb through first-person documents, turned him into a »keeper of trauma,« and since the publication of the work, he has entrusted many of these

17 Richter, Never Again, 55.

materials to other institutions, including the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Jewish Museum Berlin, the Leo Baeck Institute, and the Florida Holocaust Museum.[18] This interesting reversal of the location of documentary materials is also what opens up the work to potential archival interconnections.

Digital Archives and Exhibiting Comics

In the examples above, graphic narratives by members of generations born after the Holocaust not only draw on and draw out Holocaust testimony, but they also testify to the legacy of Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, the groundbreaking autobiographical comic about growing up as a child of Holocaust survivors. The foundation of this work was formed by Spiegelman's interviews with his father and his own research into the Holocaust, both the history and visual representation of the Holocaust. In an assessment of this exemplary artistic documentation of the complicated relationship between Holocaust survivors and their children, Platthaus emphasizes Spiegelman's development from the original three-page short comic to the nearly three-hundred-page work, »um alles zu erzählen, was ihm an der Geschichte seiner Eltern wichtig war.«[19] *Maus*, of course, does not tell everything, nor can it, and the publication of *MetaMaus* (2011),[20] is further evidence of how narratives of the Holocaust and graphic narratives more broadly resist closure, in the sense of a finite or contained narrative, which will be explored in more detail below. »Closure« is also comics theorist and comics artist Scott McCloud's key concept to capture how readers observe the parts of a comic while perceiving the whole. According to McCloud, this cognitive process allows readers to connect separate moments »and mentally construct a continuous, unified reality«.[21] There is some irony in the term »closure«, since it is intended to refer to the proclaimed power of comics to open up to multiple interpretations.[22]

18 Richter, virtual book discussion.

19 Platthaus, »Auf dem Weg zur Veronkelung,« 48.

20 MetaMaus (2011) is a collection of extensive interviews that comics scholar Hillary L. Chute conducted with Art Spiegelman over several years, revolving around three key questions: Why the Holocaust? Why Mice? Why Comics?

21 McCloud, Understanding Comics, 67.

22 Hillary L. Chute also emphasizes the capaciousness of the comics medium. With reference to Roland Barthes, she states, »Writing in 1970, before any critical appreciation of comics in the U. S. academy, Barthes identifies comics as a form that opens up the field of meaning through its dual inscription and mobilization of time.« Hillary Chute, Disaster Drawn. Visual Witness, Comics, and Documentary Form. Cam-

Both *Maus* and *MetaMaus* are relevant here with regard to questions of archiving and exhibiting comics. As Elisabeth R. Friedman writes, »In documenting the process of representing *Maus*, *MetaMaus* invites a rethinking of what counts as an archive, and, by extension, what counts as history.«[23] Friedman provides a detailed account of these two works alongside a discussion of the exhibition »The Road to *Maus*« from the early 1990s that presented Spiegelman's artistic process and the CD-ROM *The Complete Maus* that was then expanded as the DVD included in *MetaMaus*. Friedman not only sheds light on Spiegelman's »fantasy of an unlimited archive« that would collect everything related to the creation of *Maus*, but she also points to the technological limitations and potential for obsolescence of these digital formats.[24] The DVD that accompanies the print publication of *MetaMaus* is physically embedded in the cover of the book and holds Spiegelman's sketches and the recordings of his conversations with his father, as well as other source material. While the book *MetaMaus* together with the DVD component may offer a model of a combined analog-digital method of archiving of comics, the technical volatility and history of certain media raise serious questions of how archives might collect, preserve, and present such materials.[25]

Concerns for archiving comics do not only arise after a work has been published, but rather such considerations can also coincide with and inform the creation of works, as in the case of the large-scale project »Narrative Art &

bridge 2016, 24. On »closure« as a counterintuitive term, cf. Astrid Böger. »Life Writing.« Handbook of Comics and Graphic Narratives. Edited by Sebastian Domsch, Dan Hassler-Forest, and Dirk Vanderbeke. Berlin/Boston 2022. 201–218, here 204.

23 Elisabeth R. Friedman, »Spiegelman's Magic Box: MetaMaus and the Archive of Representation.« Studies in Comics, vol. 3, no. 2 (2012), 275–291, here 277.

24 Ibid., 285–286.

25 The digital and online presentation of German-Jewish artist Charlotte Salomon's Leben? Oder Theater? – a tour-de-force combination of image, music, and text – presents a further case study for such archival considerations of graphic narratives. Similar to the attempts to digitally archive and document Spiegelman's creative process and the layers of his work, the Jewish Historical Museum of Amsterdam, which holds Salomon's works, published her œuvre on CD ROM and also made it available online as a way to present both her paintings and the transparent overlays she used. See Charlotte Salmon, The Complete Collection. Amsterdam 2002 and https://charlotte.jck.nl/ On the affordances of the digital format for scholarly engagement with Salomon's work, Friedman writes, »Due to preservation concerns, this technology is one of the few ways researchers can view the entire work Life? or Theater?, including the relationship of the transparencies to the gouaches.« Elisabeth R. Friedman, »The Virtual Archive and the Missing Trace. Charlotte Salmon on CD ROM.« Invisible Culture. An Electronic Journal for Visual Culture, vol. 12 (2008), 1–7, here 1.

Visual Storytelling in Holocaust & Human Rights Education,«[26] led by Charlotte Schallié at the University of Victoria (see figure 5). This project has already yielded significant publications and pedagogical initiatives, while also documenting and exhibiting the creative process of co-witnessing in a way that can serve as an inspiration for archival institutions. Here I will highlight the research project's first publication, *But I Live. Three Stories of Child Survivors of the Holocaust* (2022), for this work offers further ways to think about the connections between comics and archives and how comics can serve as archives. This book, a collection of co-created visual stories of child Holocaust survivors, brings together the present and the past, memory and history, and it encapsulates the larger archival project, from which artists, survivors, scholars, and students can draw both knowledge and inspiration. As stated in the afterword, »These illustrated stories are a physical, graphic medium of embodying old memories conveyed and captured through drawing in the present, and as such, they create a new archive for future readers to consult that go beyond the collections created by perpetrators; they also gesture towards the countless silent voices and memories already gone.«[27] In this way, the volume contributes to discussions of gaps in the archive: how any archive is always inherently fragmentary, and how in every archive there is an interplay between presence and absence. In a further sense, and this is most relevant to the present discussion of comics and archives, the project follows an impulse of self-documentation and archiving, »Through the support of libraries and archives, the work surrounding this project (drafts of drawings, film, and audio files) will be preserved at the University of Victoria Libraries for future researchers to consult.«[28] The concluding sentiment expressed in the afterword – »The stories of the survivors, however, *live on* through this publication.«[29] – could be applied to all the graphic memoirs I have considered in this article, illustrating how graphic nar-

26 The project website https://visualnarratives.org/, which grew out of the original project https://holocaustgraphicnovels.uvic.ca/index.html, can be considered a digital archive: It documents the origins and development of the project and its global reach beyond the Holocaust, and it also provides extensive educational resources for continued scholarly and pedagogical engagement.

27 Charlotte Schallié, Matt Huculak, Ilona Shulman Spaar, and Jan Erik Dubbelman, »Afterword,« But I Live. Three Stories of Child Survivors of the Holocaust. Edited by Charlotte Schallié. Miriam Libicki and David Schaffer, Gilad Seliktar and Nico and Rolf Kamp, Barbara Yelin and Emmie Arbel. Toronto/Buffalo/London 2022. 183–186, here 184–185.

28 Ibid. 185.

29 Ibid. 185, my emphasis.

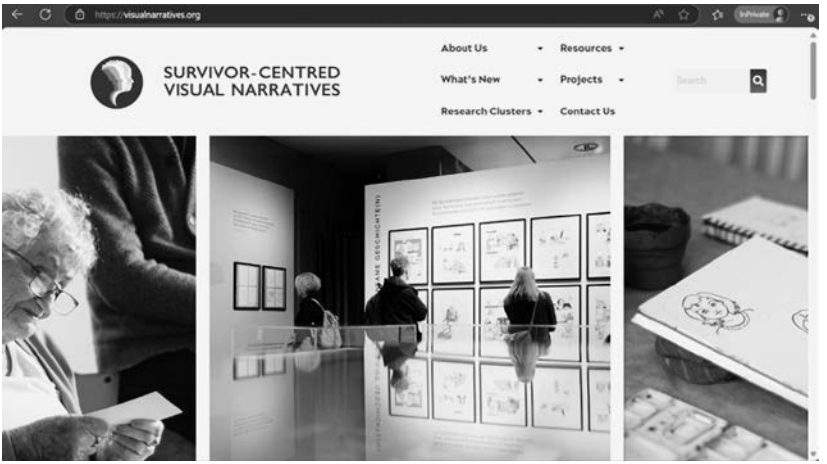

Figure 5: Archiving online in the collaborative project Narrative Art & Visual Storytelling in Holocaust & Human Rights Education, www.visualnarratives.org

ratives open a new phase in the »era of the witness.«[30] The stories, experiences, and memories of survivors shared in audio and video testimony, not only live on but gain new life when they are recounted and remediated in a visual forms. A further illustration of how the collection of stories can serve as an archive and how these testimonies live on is Barbara Yelin's continued engagement with child Holocaust survivor Emmie Arbel. Initially paired up as part of Schallié's project, Yelin and Arbel continued their conversations after the publication of the collection *But I Live*, and their collaboration culminated in a second, much more extensive volume *Emmie Arbel. Die Farbe der Erinnerung* (2023), which embeds Arbel's testimony into an expanded telling of her life story.[31] This work, as in all the graphic narratives of this project, exemplifies how testimony is embodied in the visual representation of the person speaking and how the power of bearing witness is intensified in the dynamic reading process that occurs.

30 Annette Wieviorka, The Era of the Witness. Transl. Jared Stark. Ithaca and London 2006 [1998].

31 Reminiscent of Platthaus' observation that Spiegelman expanded his original three-page version of Maus to a two-volume, three-hundred-page book, Yelin's original forty-page contribution to the collection But I Live quadrupled in size in the stand-alone volume Emmie Arbel. Die Farbe der Erinnerung.

Conclusion: Against Closure

A decade ago, Marianne Hirsch described an interconnected and global vision for the future of memory studies. In the final chapter of her book *The Generation of Postmemory. Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust*, she wrote, »I believe that such an emphasis on connective histories maps a future of memory studies beyond discrete historical events like the Holocaust, to transnational interconnections and intersections in a global space of remembrance.«[32] The abovementioned graphic narratives – from the large scale project »Narrative Art & Visual Storytelling in Holocaust & Human Rights Education« to the more intimate graphic memoir *Heavyweight* – illustrate Hirsch's vision, especially the broader global context in which to understand the Holocaust. There is great potential in the power of digital archives to make further connections possible. To this end, I would like to suggest one way to do this, the inspiration for which comes from the collaborative project between the Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach and the Literarisches Colloquium Berlin, namely the »Hörräume« (audio/listening rooms) that present original texts alongside archival recordings and images, curated around specific themes and hosted under the online portal https://www.dichterlesen.net/raeume/. Using a similar format to the »Hörräume,« one could create virtual »Schauräume« (viewing rooms) that highlight the archival materials and materiality of the comics medium: In the case of the graphic memoirs highlighted in this article, it could be the Holocaust testimonies both in written form and audiovisual formats that the artists draw on and draw out. In her analysis of the »Hörraum« *Unterhaltungen Deutscher Eingewanderten*, curated by Marica Bodrožić and Deniz Utlu, Claudia Breger sees in such a platform the possibility of »non-closure«.[33] Breger is not using McCloud's concept of closure, but her argument is certainly in the spirit of the critical comics studies discourse. Taking seriously the challenge Breger articulates of »reassembling the major archives of German literature and German literary studies with the wealth of materials, the multivectoral flows of tradition, and the synesthetic affordances,«[34] but also expanding the challenge to include

32 Marianne Hirsch, The Generation of Postmemory. Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust. New York 2012, 247.

33 Claudia Breger, »Mobilizing the Archive. Marica Bodrožić and Deniz Utlu's Unterhaltungen Deutscher Eingewanderten.« Germany from the Outside. Rethinking German Cultural History in an Age of Displacement. Edited by Laurie Johnson. New York 2022. 237–259, here 256.

34 Ibid.

graphic narratives and visual forms of storytelling, the idea of a virtual »Schauraum« could also serve as one way to archive comics, driven by the vision to create a digital form that documents aspects of the creative process and enables further engagement with the medium not only by specialized scholars and educators, but also by other artists and beyond to the general reading public.

In his review of Noah Shenker's book *Reframing Holocaust Testimony*, Gary Weissman emphasizes the need to attend to »image, voice, and embodiment« of Holocaust testimonies, noting shortcomings of scholarship that is unable to capture this. He states, »One looks forward to a time when scholarship containing playable video segments will be the norm, as it will require such a multimodal approach to address the video-recorded recounting of Holocaust survivors in all their specificity.«[35] I share Weissman's sentiment, and I see possibilities in digital platforms, like the DLA/LCB collaborative »Hörraum«, that would allow one to watch and listen to the testimonies alongside the acts of close reading and looking that graphic narratives demand. Such a curated digital portal that connects to other archives can help readers and scholars more appropriately engage with multimodal texts in a multimodal approach.

The multiple voices and points of view presented in graphic narratives open up new ways to consider among others: how memories are given shape in word and image, how experiences are transmitted across generations, and how storytelling is a collective act. While graphic narratives that draw on and draw out Holocaust testimony are bound to a historical reality, they also show and foster the power of imagination and creation, inscribing a further level of reflection into the reading process. Claire Gorrara argues in a similar vein in her analyses of graphic novels of the third generation. She states, »This disparate array of materials enables the graphic novelist to bring together historical information and subjective evaluation, constructing an engagement with the past that differs from the evidentiary perspective of the historian.«[36] She also highlights how such works »weave these memory processes into the very fabric of the narrative.«[37] The emphasis placed on individual experience productively challenges traditional forms of historiography by allowing for an empathetic access to the

35 Gary Weissman, »Noah Shenker, Reframing Holocaust Testimony.« American Literary History Online Review, Series XIII (2017), 1–4, here 4.

36 Claire Gorrara, »Recrafting the Past. Graphic Novels, the Third Generation, and Twenty-First Century Representations of the Holocaust.« The Palgrave Handbook of Holocaust Literature and Culture. Edited by Victoria Aarons and Phyllis Lassner, Cham, Switzerland 2020, 575–592, here 577.

37 Ibid.

past. Comics and graphic narratives need to be taken seriously as a form of critical historiography, insofar as they both show and reflect on the reconstruction of the past and the writing of history.[38] Exploring ways of archiving comics and graphic novels is an important step in this direction.[39]

38 Here I am building on my past research that explored the fundamental and sustained tension between literature and historiography, as well as how memory and trauma – experiences that challenge discursive modes of representation – can be captured in new forms. See Lynn L. Wolff, W. G. Sebald's Hybrid Poetics. Literature as Historiography. Berlin/Boston 2014.

39 All images reproduced with the kind permission of the artists: Martin Lemelman, Amy Kurzweil, Ari Richter, and Solomon J. Brager.