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Writing as Therapy:
The Impact of the Holocaust Trauma on Two Generations of Authors

Prohlášení:

Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci zpracovala samostatně a použila jen prameny uvedené v seznamu literatury.

Souhlasím, aby práce byla uložena na Univerzitě Palackého v Olomouci a zpřístupněna ke studijním účelům.

V Olomouci dne

.....

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Abstract

This diploma thesis deals with the analysis of the literary works *Maus* and *The Painted Bird* with special focus on how traumatic experience of the Holocaust reflects in the work and lives of the authors – Art Spiegelman and Jerzy Kosiński. The thesis mentions topics such as trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder, stages of depersonalization of the prisoners in concentration camps, writing as therapy and comic book therapy and in addition to the practical analysis of the books it also provides a few ideas how to use these works of literature in education.

Key words

Maus, *The Painted Bird*, Art Spiegelman, Jerzy Kosiński, the Holocaust, trauma, posttraumatic stress disorder, writing as therapy, comic book therapy

Motto:

*“When everything is gone, and you don’t
have anything, what is left is hope”*

(Toivi Blatt in Rees, 2005, p 256)

Introduction

There are many events in every nation’s life that are forgotten or that people try to forget about. However, this should not be the case of one of the most significant events of the 20th century. When I spoke to people that visited Auschwitz and the museum in some of them told me that it was so terrifying that they did not want to hear anything more about this dreadful part of history. There are people from the younger generation who think of the Holocaust as of something that happened very long time ago, thus does not really concern them. Lord Baker (in *The Telegraph*, 2011) expressed his opinion that schools should focus on teaching the story of their own country rather than to teach about the Second World War and the Holocaust. He said: “I would ban the study of Nazism from the history curriculum totally. It doesn’t really make us favourably disposed to Germany for a start, present-day Germany” (*The Telegraph*, 2011).

However, I disagree with these opinions. I think that this topic should be discussed with every following generation – to pay tribute to the victims of this genocide and to try to prevent the future from repeating itself. I have chosen this topic because of this reason and because I think it is important to talk about it. And if there is a negative attitude towards Germany because of teaching about the Holocaust, it should only be a bigger challenge for the teacher to present these events in such a way that does not allow for this kind of reaction. Germany should not be blamed for the wrongs of the past nor should we use this as an excuse not to talk about the Holocaust. Such attitude seems disrespectful to all those who lost their lives and to those who had to and still have to live with its consequences.

Another reason for choosing this topic is that I have always been very interested in psychology and literature which is why I would like to link these interests together to think about the Holocaust from a slightly different point of view.

In my diploma thesis I am going to focus on the ways of dealing with traumatic experience. Writing is a powerful therapeutic tool as it can provide the writer with much needed distance from the events experienced and it is often much easier to express oneself in a written form than in spoken one. I have chosen to write about two writers that both use animal symbolism in their

books – in *Maus*, nations are represented as animals which should serve as a metaphor and *The Painted Bird* is also full of animal imagery which, however, is more allegorical (Kolář, 2004).

Arthur Spiegelman has contributed to the Holocaust literature by retelling the story of his father who was imprisoned, among other camps, also in Auschwitz. Not only people that directly experience a stressful event can suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder but also their beloved who share this weight with them which is something I want to convey in my thesis. I am going to elaborate on how tragic events and Spiegelman's traumatized parents influenced the authors' perception of reality, relationships and life as such. Spiegelman belongs to the following generation that was influenced by these events through their parents' lived out trauma (parents often pass on their traumas and fears on to their children who then have to deal with situations that exceed their capabilities (Porterfield, 1998, p 86–87). The second author I am going to write about – Jerzy Kosiński – **directly experienced the horrors of the Holocaust, though not specifically the horrors of concentration camps.**

In the theoretical part of the thesis the writers' biographies will be mentioned and I am going to focus on the topic of trauma, on the origins, symptoms and development of posttraumatic stress disorder and the means of coping with it. I would also like to comment on the ways of dealing with the experience of a concentration camp as this topic is important for the analysis of Spiegelman's *Maus*. The last topic I would like to focus on in the theoretical part is writing as a means of therapy and comic book therapy. Extra material is provided in the appendix – photos of Jerzy Kosiński, Art Spiegelman and his family together with a few Spiegelman's covers for *The New Yorker* are to be found there.

The practical part of this work should contain the analysis of both pieces of work – of *The Painted Bird* and *Maus* – with special regard to the reflections of traumatic experiences in it and also a few ideas of implementing these books into education (extracts for reading activities are provided in the appendix). When analysing Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, there will be a special focus on his father's personality and the problems in their mutual relationship as he also can be considered to be the author of the book. This fact and the comic form of the work is the reason why *Maus* will be given more space in the thesis. Later on, the relationship of Spiegelman with his mother and brother together with regard to the therapeutic quality of creating this piece of art will be mentioned. Firstly, the verbal component of the work will be commented on starting with how Vladek's trauma influenced his son and how Art Spiegelman dealt with his mother's death and his sibling rivalry with his "ghost brother". Later on, also the graphic component is going to be briefly discussed.

As for Jerzy Kosiński, he is a controversial figure and there are many speculations about his war experience which is why he is going to be perceived from more points of view. He experienced terrible things – either during the war in reality or in his mind where he still felt like “a wandering child” (Jong on Bookmarks Special, 2014) and these will be discussed in connection to how they influenced him and the creation of *The Painted Bird*.

Theoretical Part

1 The Authors' Biographies

1.1 Jerzy Kosiński

Jerzy Nikodem Kosiński (born Józef Lewinkopf) was born on 14th June, 1933 in Łódź, Poland. He was an American writer whose work is thought of as a sociological study of individuals in controlling society. He was only six years old when he was separated from his parents because of the outbreak of the WW2. He was forced to wander around Poland and Russia living under the threat of being captured by the Nazis (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2015). In his book *The Painted Bird* (1981) it is also stated that at the age of nine he lost the power of speech in confrontation with a hostile peasant crowd. Later on, after the war, he was reunited with his parents and placed in a school for handicapped. Subsequently he regained his speech in a skiing accident (*The painted Bird*, 1981). However, in a Bookmarks Special's documentary (2014) it is stated that a recent research shows he survived the Holocaust with his parents (except maybe a few months apart), people who knew his family claim that Jerzy was not popular with other children – he was very serious and didn't like to play with them – he was only observing. In 1942 the family moved to the south of Poland which probably became the model for the landscape of *The Painted Bird*. Many families did not want to take them in but there were always some who did even though they could have been killed for that. The family had to change their name and pretend to be catholic – Jerzy Kosiński was also an altar boy for some time (an experience that he mentions in *The Painted Bird*). He was a friend of Roman Polanski who had to hide without his parents during the war so there were some speculations that the story of *The Painted Bird* is actually about him. However, Polanski says that they never talked about the war together (Bookmarks Special, 2014).

From 1950 to 1955 Jerzy Kosiński studied at the University of Łódź, getting a diploma in political science and history, and from 1955 to 1957 he was the professor of sociology at the Polish Academy of Sciences (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2015). Meanwhile, he plotted his escape – he needed an official sponsors so he created four fictitious members of the Academy of Science to act in this capacity and after two years of correspondence with various government agencies he obtained an official passport to visit the United States (*The painted Bird*, 1981). His plan worked and in 1957 he emigrated from Poland to the United States (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2015). Kosiński wandered widely through the United States as a truck driver, a parking lot attendant,

a portrait photographer etc., studying English whenever possible (*The painted Bird*, 1981). He also managed to graduate from Columbia University and in the sixties he published his first two nonfictions *The Future Is Ours*, *Comrade: Conversation with the Russians* and *No Third Path* under the pen name Joseph Novak (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2015). After his publishing debut he met Mary Weir (the widow of a steel magnate from Pittsburgh), they dated for two years and got married after the publication of Kosiński's second nonfiction book (*The painted Bird*, 1981). However, four years later their marriage ended and two years after that Mary died of brain cancer (Routh, 2007). A different point of view was offered by David Hill who mentioned that Mary was an alcoholic and that she actually committed suicide (Bookmarks Special, 2014). In 1965 Kosiński published *The Painted Bird* – a fictionalized retelling of his wartime experience. *The Painted Bird* (1981), chapter "On Kosinski", includes his comment on this book:

At first, I considered writing a novel about my immediate American experience, the dimension of wealth, power and high society that surrounded me, not the terror, poverty and privation I had seen and experienced so shortly before. But during my marriage I was too much a part of that world to extract from it in the nucleus of what I felt. As a writer, I perceived fiction as the art of imaginative projection and so, instead, I decided to write my first novel about a homeless boy in war-torn Eastern Europe, an existence I'd once led and also one that was shared by millions of others like me, yet was still foreign to most Americans. This novel, *The Painted Bird*, was my gift to Mary, and to my new world. (*The painted Bird*, 1981)

However, there were many speculations about the autobiographical features of the book. Sloan (N. D.) wrote that Kosiński had a tendency for pathological lying. He stipulated it was caused by the fact that Jews had to learn not to be themselves during the war. Kosiński's father invented a new identity that allowed his family to survive the Holocaust. Sloan claimed that Jerzy Kosiński's psyche was damaged by the urgency of living in disguise – as Jurek Kosiński, a Catholic. He had to hide that he was different – not unlike like the boy in *The Painted Bird*. He saw this as an explanation of Kosiński's lack of truth – survival depended on suppression of truth (Sloan, N. D.). Other speculations appeared when the Polish researchers angrily opposed the information that Kosiński underwent a separation from his parents and had to wander throughout Poland as was already mentioned – they claim that he and his family moved from Łódź (where the Łódź ghetto and nearby Chelmńo extermination camp claimed hundreds of thousands of lives) and lived as Catholics under the protection of Poles (Routh, 2007). Ted Field (2014) saw his creation in a different way – he says that Kosiński felt the truth was relative and that fiction and his life should merge. Fiction was so important for Jerzy and Jong perceived his creation

in such way that he felt like a wandering child inside and that he did not have to experience it literally (Bookmarks Special, 2014). These different opinions and views are to be discussed more thoroughly in the practical part of the thesis.

Shortly after Mary's death Kosiński began a relationship with Katherina von Fraunhofer (a descendent of the Bavarian aristocracy), after twenty years together they got married and four years later, in 1991, Jerzy Kosiński committed suicide at the age of 57 (Routh, 2007). Katherina (Kiki) was very devoted to him and they lived for each other – Dr. Brzezinski stated that his creativity depended on being admired and supported and that Kiki played a very important role in this (Bookmarks Special, 2014). Photos of Jerzy Kosiński and his wife are available in the appendix (Appendix A: Photos of Jerzy Kosiński and Katherina von Fraunhofer).

In 1968 Kosiński published the winner of National Book Award called *Steps* and three years later another famous work which was also made into a movie (he himself wrote the screenplay) – *Being There* – followed. Later on, Kosiński became a member of several Polish-Jewish foundations and was elected the president of the American branch of the international writers' organization PEN (1973–1075) (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2015). Kosiński lectured at Yale, Princeton, Davenport and Wesleyan University and he also appeared in the movie *Reds* (Dudziak, 2003).

1.2 Art Spiegelman

Art Spiegelman (born Itzhak Avraham ben Zeev) was born on February 15, 1948 in Stockholm and became an American author whose Holocaust-related comic series *Maus* helped to establish comic book storytelling as a sophisticated literary medium (Ray, 2015). Art Spiegelman's parents, Vladek and Anja, survived the Holocaust and Spiegelman (2009) said that after the war they lived in Stockholm where his father worked as a salesman but Anja wanted to go to America so when Art was a little child, they moved to New York USA (Spiegelman on Orbit 48). There he was strongly influenced by the *MAD* Magazine. He mentioned that it first introduced him to the world of media and to the life in America – he used to think that it was an acronym for Mum and Dad (ABC RN, 2013). "I'd studied *MAD* like some kids studied Talmud" (Art Spiegelman on UWTV, 1991). Superhero comics were significant as well – Art Spiegelman claimed that he learned to read thanks to the Batman comics (Art Spiegelman on Al Jazeera, 2015). By the age of twelve, Art was creating his own cartoons and when he was thirteen he drew illustrations for the school newspaper (Biography, 2015). Spiegelman attended the New York City's High School of Art and Design from 1965 to 1968 which he left without getting a degree after his mother committed suicide and he also began to explore the alternative

comics' scene, especially the work of R. Crumb (Ray, 2015). In 1966 he started working for Topps Gum Co. where he stayed for nearly 20 years (he created novelty cards, stickers and candy products) (Jewish Virtual Library, 2015). A few pictures of the *MAD* Magazine can be found in the appendix (Appendix B: *MAD* Magazine).

Ray (2015) wrote that in 1972 Spiegelman published two strips – *Maus* (originally a three-page story included in Justin Green's *Funny Animals* anthology) and *Prisoner on the Hell Planet* (an attempt to somehow grasp his mother's suicide). In 1980 Art cofounded *Raw* – an underground comic anthology – with his wife, Françoise Mouly. In December 1980 he resumed the story of *Maus* which he linked to the experience of his parents during wartime. He published the first half of *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History* in 1986 and the other one, *Maus II: A Survivor's Tale: And Here My Troubles Began* in 1991 (Ray, 2015). Spiegelman (1991) commented on his choice to write about this topic explaining that he wanted to make a “long comic book that needed a bookmark and would ask to be re-read” and he wanted to tell a story worth knowing, worth reading. He had no context of what had happened to his parents and what he actually knew about the WW2 and the camps which is why he tried to discover the truth. This, of course, meant doing a thorough research. Spiegelman travelled to Poland and Germany to retrace his family and he mentioned that the fact he found drawings of survivors (that depicted the daily life in a camp) was of high significance to him and his work (in order to be able to draw all the details he needed to know specifically how the camps looked like, what were the prisoners wearing and many other facts). He also recalled that his memory of Birkenau is especially strong as he found it “the most haunted place he ever walked through” (UWTV, 1991). The success of *Maus* earned Spiegelman a Pulitzer Prize in 1992 and a solo exhibit in the Museum of Modern Art. Moreover, *Maus II* became The New York Times' bestseller, in 1996 the two volumes were published together and they have been translated into more than 25 languages (Ray, 2015).

Spiegelman's contribution to The New Yorker magazine is also worth mentioning as it was a big part of his life – he started writing and drawing for The New Yorker in the 1990s (Jewish Museum, 2016). Some of his well known covers are kiss on Valentine's Day depicting a Hasidic Jew kissing a black woman (a reference to the riots that took place in one neighbourhood of Brooklyn), a female construction worker feeding a child or his September 24, 2001 cover reflecting the September 11 terrorist attack (Al Jazeera, 2015). Spiegelman and Mouly saw the first plane crash into the North Tower and hurried to get their two children safely home from school – Spiegelman dealt with this devastating experience through drawing (Butnick, 2013). After this he returned to a personal narrative needing to fully focus on creating the famous work

In the Shadow of No Towers (meditations on mortality and the consequences of the terrorist attack) (Ray, 2015) but he left *The New Yorker* also because he did not want to become “*The New Yorker’s Art Spiegelman*” (Al Jazeera, 2015). The covers that were mentioned above are available in the appendix (Appendix C: Art Spiegelman’s *The New Yorker* covers).

In 2000 Spiegelman and his wife also launched *Little Lit* – a comics anthology that gathered work from comics creators Neil Gaiman, Chris Ware and Daniel Clowes and also works of children’s authors such as Maurice Sendak or Lemony Snicket (Ray, 2015).

As for his personal life, Spiegelman (1991) said that he was not very close to his parents; he perceived that the distance between them was not caused only by the war experience but also by the fact that his parents were older than Art’s friends’ parents. He felt as an outsider and he describes an interesting case of rivalry with his brother Richieu who passed away when he was four years old. The ghetto where he was kept for a while was being cleared out and his mother’s sister poisoned her children and Richieu in order to save them from a cruel fate. Spiegelman felt that he would never be able to live up to his brother in his parents’ eyes. Also the attitude of Vladek and Anja to the suffering they went through was different. Anja had an urgent need to share and to talk about the wartime experience while Vladek did not understand why would anyone be interested in such events – it was in the past. However, he told Art when he was an adult. When Spiegelman started to interview his father he felt that they had at least some kind of relationship, if only one of interviewer and interviewee – they finally found a common ground. In 1968 his mother committed suicide – she came from a big family and she lost everyone which caught up with her at the end (UWTV, 1991). Before his mother’s death he experienced a nervous breakdown and was treated in the Binghamton State Mental Hospital for a month which cut his university studies short (Jewish Virtual Library, 2015).

Art Spiegelman married his wife, Françoise Mouly (a publisher and writer), in 1977 and they live in Manhattan together with their two children Nadja Rachel and Dashiell Alan (Thomson, 2005). Photos of Spiegelman and his family are available in the appendix (Appendix D: Art Spiegelman and His Family).

2 Dealing with Traumatic Experience

In the following chapter the topics of trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder are going to be discussed in order to gain a better insight into the complex nature of these phenomena. It also serves as a basis for better understanding people who experienced a traumatic experience and, for the purposes of the thesis, for better understanding the influence of trauma on the lives and work of the chosen writers.

2.1 Trauma

Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event and immediately after such event shock and denial typically appear (American Psychological Association 2015). Among emotional and psychological symptoms of trauma we can include anger, sadness, mood swings, denial, self-blame, anxiety, feeling of disconnection and numbness (HelpGuide, N. D.) The victim can redirect such overwhelming emotions towards his/her close ones (family, friends, partners) which is why traumatic experience influences also people around the victim (PsychGuides, N.D.). As for the physical signs, they usually include nausea, paleness, racing heartbeat, insomnia, pains, muscle tension and poor concentration. The victim may also suffer from panic attacks. These symptoms usually last from a few days to a few months – gradually fading as the person processes the trauma (HelpGuide, N. D).

2.1.1 The Dimensions of Traumatic Experience

Wilson (1989) found that traumatic events have many different dimensions (11), for instance the degree of life threat, bereavement, displacement of a person from their community or exposure to death, dying and social chaos. The degree of moral conflict of the situation, the duration and severity of the stressors and the role in the traumata (agent/victim) has a significant role as well. Traumatic events can be classified according to the level to which the dimensions above exist in it and the more of these are present in a trauma, the bigger potential there is for a pathological outcome. Each of these stressor dimensions can be connected to post-traumatic symptomatology. Traumatic events can be experienced either alone or as a community-based experience. When the trauma is individual, the victim may feel helpless, terrorized, vulnerable and at the mercy of fate. In groups, the social-psychological processes may operate (contagion, rumours, identification with the perpetrator etc.). When trauma affects an entire community, it can produce many secondary stressor experiences (victims are exposed to high degrees of death

and destruction which eliminates sociocultural support systems needed for recovery). Single-stressor events are rare (mostly accidents, explosions) while multiple stressors are very common (warfare – life threat and exposure to death and injury dimensions) (Wilson, 1989, p 8–9).

2.1.2 Treatment

In order to heal from a traumatic experience, one must face the unbearable long avoided feelings because otherwise they are going to return over and over again and become less controllable. Trauma healing involves processing trauma-related memories, learning how to regulate strong memories and building or rebuilding the ability to trust others which should re-establish the physical sense of safety (HelpGuide, N. D.). The concrete therapy approaches are to be described in the following subchapter about posttraumatic stress disorder as they overlap.

2.2 Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

Causes of PTSD were first documented during the WW1 when soldiers developed shell shocks from trenches, however, the condition was not officially recognized as a mental health condition until 1980 (NHS, 2015).

When a person is in danger, it is natural to be afraid. Fear triggers various secondary changes in the body in order to prepare the organism for defending itself or avoiding the danger. However, when speaking about posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) this reaction is somehow damaged or changed. People suffering from PTSD feel stressed or scared even when they are no longer being threatened. Posttraumatic stress disorder develops after such a terrifying experience that could physically harm or actually has harmed someone. It can also develop in witnesses of harmful event or when something severe happens to loved ones. PTSD was brought to attention in relation to war veterans, nevertheless, anybody who experienced some traumatic event (rape, torture, kidnapping, muggings, natural disasters or various accidents) can be affected by it (NIMH, 2015). After such an event one often experiences psychological re-enactment (nightmares, painful memories even though being engaged in an activity) and many people have to deal with strong flashbacks (Sternberg, 2001, p 521).

Porterfield (1998) mentioned that during the last few years various surveys have been carried out and it is known that plenty of people (ambulance drivers, abused women and children, victims of natural disasters and many others) suffer from PTSD but they do not seek help as they do not know about this diagnosis. According to the American Psychiatric Association, every tenth American suffers from this disorder and many others have at least a few of its symptoms. If we

were to decide what is the difference between stress and trauma we would have to consider the duration of the unpleasant symptoms and their severity. Everybody has experienced a stressful situation – these situations that arouse unpleasant feelings and also a physical response (sweating, pounding heart, muscle tension, tremor, nausea and others) are called stressors. When we experience some stressful event we feel uneasy but once we overcome it our feelings disappear. However, sometimes the stressful event can be so grave and hurtful that it has long-term consequences. We call such an event trauma. Trauma is a basic precondition for the development of PTSD (Porterfield, 1998, p 11–13).

2.2.1 Causes of PTSD

There are two types of possible causes of PTSD which are genetic causes and those based on brain areas. In connection to the genetic causes, lately many scientists have been focusing on genes that play a role in creating fear memories because understanding how fear memories are created might help with intervention. Their study mentions for example stathmin which is a protein that we need to form fear memories or GRP (gastrin-releasing peptide) which is a signalling chemical in our brain that is released during emotional events. Regarding brain areas, studies are carried out to locate parts of the brain that are involved in feelings of fear and stress, which would help the researchers to understand the causes of PTSD. One such part is amygdala that plays an important role in emotions, learning and memory and also in fear acquisition (learning to be afraid or learning not to fear). The prefrontal cortex area of the brain is responsible for storing extinction memories and blunting the original fear (it is also involved in decision-making and judgement). Individual variations may set the stage for posttraumatic stress disorder without actually causing any symptoms. Environmental factors (childhood trauma, head injury, history of mental illness) may increase the risk by affecting the early growth of the brain. Personality and social factors also influence how people adjust to trauma. Further research may show which combinations of these or other factors could be used to predict who is likely to develop PTSD after traumatic event (NIMH, 2015).

2.2.2 Symptoms

There are three typical kinds of symptoms which have a tendency to appear when one is suffering from PTSD. Firstly, there are re-experiencing (intrusive) symptoms which include flashbacks, bad dreams and frightening thoughts. Secondly, we can observe avoidance symptoms that manifest as a tendency to stay away from places, events, objects that remind one of his/her

trauma, as feelings of emotional numbness, strong guilt and depression or it might result in the loss of interest in one's favourite activities and troubles with remembering the traumatic event. And finally, hyperarousal symptoms tend to occur as well. This category includes feelings of constant tension, problems with sleeping and being easily scared (NIMH, 2015).

The symptoms mentioned above are going to be discussed more profoundly.

Porterfield (1998) wrote that intrusive symptoms lead to re-experiencing the lived-out traumatic event. One of such symptoms can be frightening dreams and nightmares in which the traumatic event appears over and over again. These dreams can be so strong that they provoke physical response, for example nausea. Persons suffering from fearful dreams can scream or even crush things around them – wives of soldiers fighting in Vietnam testified that their husbands even tried to strangle them at night trying to defend themselves against imaginary enemy. During the day patients are often haunted by repeated flashbacks that are followed by strong feelings of fear, anxiety or guilt. Sometimes the memories awakened can be so vivid that one can stop live in reality and starts behaving as if the traumatic event was still going on (Porterfield, 1998, p 16–17).

Porterfield (1998) also pointed out that avoidance symptoms manifest in people trying to avoid any memories connected to the traumatic event experienced as it evokes negative feelings and, in time, they can avoid also activities and situations that remind them of the trauma. They can stop occupying themselves with their hobbies or even stop going to work. They are often not able to plan their future and so they can be mistaken for patients suffering from depression. Severe emotional damage can cause mental and emotional apathy. After a serious traumatic experience people can shut out their feelings – for instance a formerly loving and caring parent can change into a distanced and indifferent one. Such people can feel cut-off from the others; this process is called alienation (Porterfield, 1998, p 18–19).

And finally, according to Porterfield (1998), hyperarousal symptoms cause the state of constant hypervigilance in which the organism makes sure it is prepared to defend itself or escape from a critical situation. Hyperaroused people often have to deal with sleeping disorders, they cannot concentrate and permanently expect danger. Physiological reactivity may be accompanied by symptoms such as nausea, tremor, faintness or hyperventilation (Porterfield, 1998, p 19–20). Among other related symptoms we might also find alcoholism or drug abuse as they offer an escape from reality and from the feeling of discomfort.

2.2.3 Reaction of Children and Adolescents

Typically, symptoms such as bedwetting and forgetting how or being unable to talk appear (this symptom in particular is connected to Kosiński's *The Painted Bird*). Children often act out the scary events during playtime, being unusually clingy with a parent or adult person (NIMH, N. D.).

Porterfield added a few more and she also included troubles with sleeping, behavioural problems (increased aggression – stress causes biochemical changes in brain), regression (bedwetting, lisping, thumb sucking etc.) and thoughts of death (Porterfield, 1998, p 82–85).

2.2.4 Parents Suffering from PTSD

Porterfield (1998) noticed that if one or both parents undergo a traumatic experience and suffer from PTSD, the whole family is affected. In 1985, Rosenheck and Nathan proved that the daughters and sons of Vietnamese veterans had similar stress reactions to their fathers. If PTSD is not treated, the probability of the same problems increases with both the other parent and the children. Most of the time is devoted to dealing with the traumatic problems and there is not enough left to take care of the children, the partnership and the family as such. The finding that PTSD afflicts whole families is rather new and so far has not been studied in more detail but the interest in this matter is increasing (Porterfield, 1998, p 93–95).

Furthermore, Porterfield (1998) wrote that children and adolescents that live with their parents suffering from PTSD mostly do not know what it is like to live in a normal family. They consider their parents symptoms as normal, they can feel something is wrong in their family, however, they do not know what specifically. Children from such families may grow up with the feeling of shame or helplessness or they are angry with their parents and feel guilty about it. Sometimes they can feel like they are invisible and neglected because the parents' problems are in the centre of attention; such children can also have low self-worth, blaming themselves for their parents' problems (Porterfield, 1998, p 97–98).

Finally, Porterfield (1998) explained that parents with PTSD cannot predict when the intrusive thoughts appear and they feel they are losing control of their lives. In such case, children can never know how their parents will behave in confrontation with different situations in life, thus they are distrustful to their family and the world around. Trauma often becomes a secret that the family is ashamed of and tries to deny it as a result of avoidance symptoms. Children do not get enough emotional support from their parents and often feel lonely (Porterfield, 1998, p 99–100). Portney (2003) pointed out that these parents are also less able to react optimally

during common developmental crisis and help their children understand the world around. They have difficulties with modelling a healthy sense of identity, autonomy and they can interfere with the child's developmental process (Portney, 2003).

Portney (2003) remarked that the post-Holocaust era gave rise to the literature on the intergenerational impacts of parents' trauma. After Niederland described the Holocaust syndrome (1961), Rakoff informed about the transmission of the trauma onto the second generation and since then many articles have been published on this topic (Portney, 2003). Berger (1997) wrote in his book *Children of Job: American Second-Generation Witnesses to the Holocaust* about Danieli's four types of families of Holocaust survivors which are victim families, numb families, families "who made it" and fighter families. Each of these families has a particular atmosphere. Most survivors ended up forming victim or numb families. In victim or numb families children do not hear many details about their parent's experience while in fighter families offspring hears more about it. Children from the families "who made it" claim to feel cheated of their heritage – their parents are more adapted and tend to deny what had happened. She, however, claims that this classification should not represent pure, exclusive types but it should rather express the effort not to view the families of the survivors as a homogenous group (Berger, 1997). Yehuda also found out that the healthy children of the Holocaust survivors are more likely to develop PTSD after experiencing a traumatic event (in Portney, 2003).

The topic of the influence of trauma on the whole family will be further discussed in the practical part of the thesis, especially in connection to the Spiegelman's *Maus*.

2.2.5 Treatment

Not everyone develops PTSD – symptoms usually occur within three months of the accident (but often emerge years later) and at least one re-experiencing symptom, three avoidance symptoms and two hyperarousal symptoms have to last for more than a month (NIMH, 2015)

Porterfield (1998) stated that many people with PTSD avoid professional help because they do not want to relive the trauma and talk about it. They are afraid of the intrusive symptoms that most likely appear. In addition, as a result of avoidance symptoms, they search for guilt in the world around and not in their trauma – the world is chaotic and they are alright. Another aspect that forces them not to seek help may be the fear that there is nothing that could help them or that they failed to help themselves. It is important for these people to have someone close who accompanies them, who listens, offers support and understanding (Porterfield, 1998, p 107–109).

First of the most common means of treatment is psychotherapy which is a treatment by talking. It can be individual or in a group and usually takes from six to twelve weeks and more. CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) is often used (NIMH, 2015). It focuses on managing the problems by changing how one thinks or acts. Another therapy that can be used is EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing) which involves side-to-side eye movements while recalling the traumatic event; it may help the malfunctioning parts of brain (the hippocampus) to process unpleasant and stressful memories. Medication is also a frequent method of treatment, especially antidepressants like paroxetine, sertraline or mirtazapine, however, it should go hand in hand with psychotherapy (NHS, 2015).

Talk therapies help patients to learn about their trauma, to learn how to use relaxation and anger management skills, to identify and deal with guilt, shame and help to change how people react to their PTSD symptoms (NIMH, 2015).

Porterfield (1998) pointed out that it is also important for the people that live with someone suffering from PTSD to take care of themselves as such situation is difficult for all the participants. They should not forget to live their own lives, keep in touch with friends, focus on their needs and wishes and they should try not to feel guilty for the trauma (this feeling is quite common with adults as well as with children (Porterfield, 1998, p 110).

3 Psychologist Experiences the Horrors of Concentration Camps

Stages of Depersonalization

This chapter's purpose is to bring one closer to understanding the actual experience of prisoners and the psychological impact of the terrible conditions in concentration camps on the prisoners' personalities and psyches as it is essential for the analysis of Spiegelman's *Maus* that is set in such place. A unique insight into these traumatic events is given in a book written by a psychiatrist who, himself, experienced the imprisonment in the Theresienstadt, Auschwitz and Dachau concentration camps. Victor Frankl was a neurologist and psychiatrist who is well known for his correspondence with Sigmund Freud and the *American Journal of Psychiatry* mentioned that his work is maybe the most significant thinking since Freud and Adler (Victor Frankl Institut, N. D.). He founded Logotherapy which is a therapy based on the premise that everyone is motivated by the "will to meaning" (Viktor Frankl Institute of Logotherapy, N. D.).

Frankl (2006) distinguished three stages of the prisoners' psychological reactions which are: the stage of admission to the concentration camp, the stage of living in the camp and the stage after being released from the camp. In the first stage, shock typically appeared. After travelling in horrible conditions in the cattle trains and not knowing what would happen to them or where they were heading, the prisoners saw the camp – the barbed wires, the watchtowers and the exhausted and neglected people. However, there were also some better looking prisoners that aroused belief and hope in the newly arrived ones that they would be alright, that they would survive. Nevertheless, after the first selection, people quickly realised the severity of their situation (Frankl, 2006, p 19–21). Silvia Veselá described her experience and the complete humiliation that they had to undergo as soon as they arrived at Auschwitz – not only having their heads shaved and being stripped naked but the doctor's medical examination deprived young women of their virginity as well (Veselá in Rees, 2005, p 141). Victor Frankl (2006), too, described the situation when, completely naked, they had to wait for the showers – knowing they did not have anything else except their bodies any more. Illusions disappeared one by one and most of them tried to compensate with gallows humour. Frankl expressed his surprise over what human being can bear – the bad hygiene, cold, lack of sleep and food and agreed with Dostojevský who defined a man as a being that is capable of getting used to anything (Frankl, 2006, p 25–28).

According to Frankl (2006), the second stage (life in the camp) was characterized by the change of reactions. After the shock came the phase of relative apathy and the necrosis of the spirit. There also appeared thoughts and feelings that the new prisoner tried to eliminate – the

boundless desire for his/her closest ones and revulsion (to all the surrounding ugliness and brutality that contributed to the paralysis of normal emotional reactions). At the beginning, the prisoner was unable to bear the sight of his fellow prisoner's torture; however, a prisoner in the second stage of his psychological reaction did not look away. He became apathetic and calmly observed. Such insensitivity was a necessary protection of the prisoner's soul (Frankl, 2006, p 31–32). Toivi Blatt (Blatt in Rees, 2005) communicated the same state of mind after being imprisoned in the death camp Sobibór and witnessing his family going to their deaths. He said:

I didn't feel anything. I'm still thinking about this. You see, if one of my parents had died earlier – two days earlier – it would have been a terrible tragedy. I would cry day and night. And now in the same hour and the same minute I lost my father, my mother, my ten-year old brother and I didn't cry. I didn't even think about this. Later, when I was looking at people, nobody cried. (...) It's like nature protects us – took us away from the reality of our feelings. (Rees, 2005, p 258)

Frankl (2006) added that the mental life of a prisoner was restricted to primitive desires (dreams about food, cigarettes, bath) and, from the psychoanalysts' point of view, he regressed. Even sexuality disappeared because of hunger; the value of things that did not concern survival was decreased. However, such fate did not befall the matter of religion and politics. The improvised prayers and masses were, according to Frankl, the most impressive. Another interesting observation of his was that sensitive people with a rich spiritual life handled the situation in the camp better as they could escape to their spiritual freedom. Furthermore, due to the fact that a prisoner was constantly surrounded by many people and by suffering, a burning desire for loneliness and solitude was quite common. The essential key to survival was the attempt to find purpose. Frankl wrote that once they discovered the sense of suffering, they did not have the need to displace it. Equally important was to find something to live for as the thoughts of suicide were not unusual among the prisoners (Frankl, 2006, p 38–46; 62; 91–92).

Viktor Frankl (2006) expressed that after being released from the camp, feelings of disillusionment came – prisoners were unable to understand that it was over and they were unable to feel joy. He described this state of mind as a complete depersonalization – everything seemed unreal, unbelievable. Prisoners, who could not leave the place ruled by power and violence, applied such attitudes even after being released – the experienced horrors became an “apology” for any bad deed done in a free world. Frankl explained that only slowly is a person convinced that no one has the right to do wrong even if he suffered greatly. Except for the personality deformations there were two more experiences that could put one's character in a great danger. These

were bitterness and disappointment which could be rooted in the fact that no one was able to understand the level of the prisoners' suffering and also in the fact that one could survive only thanks to thoughts of reunion with his closest ones but found out there was no one left. Every prisoner knew that there was no such happiness in the world that could expiate all the suffering. However, Frankl wrote that in every freed prisoner's life there will be a day when he will look back and he will not be able to understand how he could ever endure such a misery – it will seem like a bad dream. And he will not be afraid of anything anymore (Frankl, 2006, p 100–105).

4 Writing as Therapy

In the following chapter the matter of writing as a therapeutic method will be discussed more thoroughly. The creation of art has many functions and one of them is therapeutic. We can perceive it as “sublimation” – psychological transformation of the author’s emotions and also as a possibility to give our thoughts some kind of form which allows self-knowledge (Botton, Armstrong, 2013, p 26, 44).

Adrian Fulham (2013) stated that psychotherapy is often called the “talking cure”, whether the approach to therapy is Freudian, Jungian or any other – most healing processes involve conversation. However, there is another therapy that has been known for many years which is writing as therapy. In the last few decades the therapeutic power of writing has been found. Older people are encouraged to learn to write and to tell their story which is a task that involves introspection – the effort to find meaning in the past events and to examine it from various angles. To see causes and effect can increase self-understanding. Writing can also be redemptive because almost always it involves dealing with a change (Adrian Fulham, 2013).

Margarita Tartakovski (2015) wrote that people often think that writing is only for writers yet it can be beneficial for all of us. She mentioned Elizabeth Sullivan’s words that it cultivates the ability to observe thoughts and feelings which can lead to key insights. It creates the mind-body-spirit connection. There are three types of writing that anyone can try, first of which is free write. Free writing means that we write everything that comes to our mind without any kind of censorship. Another technique is pen poetry. “Poetry is a natural medicine; it is like a homeopathic tincture derived from the stuff of life itself – your experience” (John Fox in PsychCentral N. D.). And finally, one can also try to compose a letter – Sullivan suggested writing a short letter to a loved one or to somebody one has unfinished business with (Tartakovski, 2015).

According to Jim Pollard (2002), therapeutic writing has helped groups as diverse as Vietnam veterans, psychiatric prisoners with personal trauma and it helped ease the symptoms of illnesses such as asthma and arthritis. More recently, it helped students from US to come to terms with what had happened on September 11. So far, the most research into the benefits of writing has been carried out in the US (University of Texas). However, nowadays the Arts Council of England participates as well. Researcher Gillie Bolton shared her experience; when she was in a bad psychological state, her husband suggested writing an autobiography. She wrote it like a story and also as a poem. She came to understand what had happened to her. She also mentioned why she did not seek a therapist – she said that she could believe a piece of paper

more. There is also the advantage that you do not have to share what you have written. Bolton was a research fellow in medical humanities (University of Sheffield) and she used therapeutic writing in reflective practice seminars with medical and health professionals (Pollard, 2002).

Expressive writing is an interesting method, it is focused on personal and emotional writing without paying attention to form or other writing conventions like spelling, punctuation (Evans, 2012) and it is suggested how expressive writing can be used as a therapeutic tool for survivors of trauma or in psychiatric settings. In the past 20 years literature demonstrated the beneficial effects that writing about a traumatic or stressful event has on health – both emotional and physical. The first study on expressive writing by Pennebaker and Beall in 1986 revealed that “writing about a traumatic experience was associated with both short-term increases in psychological arousal and long-term decreases in health problems” (RCPsych, 2005).

The research on the impact of trauma on survivors and individuals with specific psychological difficulties yielded mixed results. Studies that had experienced a trauma proved a better health condition, PTSD symptomatology and other aspects of psychological health but not all studies show such benefits. Limited benefits were obtained in case of psychiatric prison inmates, victims of natural disaster and people who had recently experienced a breakup and expressive writing was found harmful for adult survivors of childhood abuse as well as for some of the Vietnam veterans (RCPsych, 2005).

In conclusion, writing can serve as a means of therapy and offers a unique way to express oneself. Even though therapy is usually not the main purpose of the author and his literary work, its final impact can be one of dealing with something troubling the author’s mind. In case of Jerzy Kosiński, his conception of reality was quite peculiar and it mingled with fantasy so it is not clear whether his work of art reflected reality or whether it was fiction. However, his mind and personality surely is reflected in his creation and by giving a certain form to his thoughts and feelings he might have dealt with his traumatic war experience through this particular creative medium. In case of Art Spiegelman, not only the usage of words as a therapeutic tool will be discussed but the usage of pictures and graphic portrayal as well.

5 Comic Book Art Therapy

Comic books have come a long journey in the past few decades. They are more unique and the format also became the subject of study (Shippey, 2012). Mathew Muholland pointed out that comic books became deep and complex works because their creators started to reflect their life experiences in them— they began to use these events to relieve themselves of intense and troubling emotions. In a way, such artworks became possible forms of therapy as well as art (Muholland, 2004). Also in the case of Art Spiegelman one might say that he reflected his experience in his work – for instance his way of dealing with September 11, as was mentioned earlier (*In the Shadow of No Towers*) and his comic book *Maus* might be seen as searching for a part of himself, for discovering the truth and the effort to deal with his personal battles (growing up in confrontation with his younger brother, problematic relationship with parents).

Muholland (2004) expressed his faith in the use of comics as a form of healing. He himself used his own comic book characters to deal with difficult situations in his life. Through the character he created as a child he could show who he was and who he would like to be. As an adult he had to face death in his close family, relationship problems and he decided to create a book that would serve as therapy. He created a character that was like him in every aspect, with the same pains and fears. The story evolved into a morality tale in which the character always did what was correct. He lost many close people but he came to terms with the difficulties, he found the strength. Muholland did not finish this story as getting past the grief was more important. Furthermore, partly inspired by *Maus*, a programme at the University of Illinois promoted that youth created autobiographical comics – recognizing the strength of this form. This program was developed by the artist Heather McAdams. The cartoons that students and teachers created allowed to re-examine important and memorable moments in life. Comic book creation as a therapy tool is particularly useful to children – it is familiar to them (Muholland, 2004).

Art Spiegelman's comic book is going to be discussed more thoroughly in the practical part of the thesis. Not only his choice to write about such a serious topics which served as a therapeutic tool to discover his position in the family and, in a way, to articulate thoughts and feelings that burdened him but also his means of depicting the characters will be analysed.

Practical part

The following chapter is going to deal with the analysis of the impact of the Holocaust trauma on the lives and work of Art Spiegelman and Jerzy Kosiński – in particular of how trauma reflects in the books *Maus* and *The Painted Bird*. It will also provide a few ideas how these literary works might be used in the teaching process.

The authors bear some similar traits – both of the books were not accepted very well, especially by the Poles as their depiction is not very flattering. Spiegelman's *Maus* was also criticized for being created as a comic book – some people thought it is not appropriate to depict such a serious topic in this genre. And also Jews themselves sometimes found being depicted as mice insulting – in a conversation of Neil Gaiman with Art Spiegelman at the Sosnoff Theatre (2014), Neil Gaiman mentioned that his cousin, a holocaust survivor, hated *Maus* because of the mice metaphor and because she thought it was ridiculous to portray such topic as a cartoon. But she also told him about how Nazis called them rodents – and Neil Gaiman realised she failed to see the connection, the purpose of the animal metaphor (Sosnoff Theatre, 2014). Jerzy Kosiński's book became even more controversial – for some time it was banned in Poland and Poles considered it slanderous to their culture (Encyclopedia, 2009).

We can find similarity also in the use of animal images although both authors perceive it in a different way. Kosiński uses the animal imagery as a parallel between the animal and human behaviour, animals have more allegorical meaning in his conception – he transfers the animal qualities onto humans (for instance the animal images evoke the animalistic behaviour of the peasants, cannibalistic rats and hawk attacking pigeon are depicted as a parable to the war period) (Kolář, 2004). Spiegelman uses animals rather metaphorically. In an interview he mentioned Hitler saying that Jews are a race but not human and comparing them to vermin which gave Spiegelman the idea to portray people with animal faces. Moreover, animal heads are neutral and lead the reader to projecting his own imagination of the faces into them, thus draw him deeper into the plot (UWTV, 1991).

The way in which the authors use animal images is one of the many differences and another, perhaps the most striking one, is also their way of depicting reality. As was already mentioned, Spiegelman wanted to find the truth, he wanted to find out what really happened – he travelled to Poland and Germany in order to make sure that his depiction of concentration camps and everything else will be true to reality (UWTV, 1991). He also interweaved his father's story with scenes from his own life which, too, made his work authentic. However, Kosiński's *The Painted*

Bird became controversial, among other reasons, because of the fact that no one knew what actually happened to him and his family during the war. Kosiński himself propagated that the story in the book was his own and Dr. Brzezinski (on Bookmarks Special, 2014) speculated that he did it because it made him more special. However, as was mentioned before, recent studies show that he spent the wartime quite differently. Ted Field's words are maybe the most appropriate to be mentioned here again – Kosiński felt the truth was relative and his life and fiction merged. He did not see much difference in it (Bookmarks Special, 2014).

6 Art Spiegelman's Maus

This part of the thesis is focused on the analysis of *Maus* and the impact of the Holocaust trauma on Art Spiegelman and his family – mainly his father, Vladek, as both can be considered to be the authors of this book. Firstly, the verbal part of *Maus* will be commented on and later on the graphic part is going to be analysed together with the style and the reason for depicting the characters the way that Spiegelman portrayed them.

The process of the creation of this book was already mentioned in the theoretical part of the thesis which is why only the plot will be briefly described in the following lines. *Maus* depicts Art Spiegelman interviewing his father, Vladek, about his experience as a Holocaust survivor – from the life before the war up to the liberation and to the life in New York. We can find two timelines in the story – the past and the present which interweave. The story opens with a scene when Art is a child and comes to his father telling him that his friends left without him when his skate came loose and his father reacts with these words: “Friends? Your friends? If you lock them together in a room with no food for a week, then you could see what it is, friends!” (Maus, 2003, p 5–6)

Thereafter, we find ourselves in the Rego Park, where Vladek lived, and he starts telling Art about his life before the war – how he met his wife, Anja, how he served on the frontier against Germany and later was captured by Germans and taken as a war prisoner. He managed to run away in a disguise as the persecution had already started and reunited with his family. He tells Art about the worsening conditions, about how he and Anja had to hide in Sosnowiec and how they were tricked, captured and taken to Auschwitz. Further ahead, Vladek talks about the conditions in Auschwitz and explains how he managed to survive there and in Gross-Rosen and Dachau as well – in places where the prisoners were moved to at the end of the war. The story of the war ends with Vladek and Anja's reunion. As Vladek's story unravels we also get to know more about Art's life and about his problematic relationship with his father as scenes from reality are depicted, too. Another interesting part of the book is *Prisoner on the Hell Planet* which offers the view of Art's mother's suicide. The book closes with Vladek lying in the bed and telling Art: “I'm tired from talking, Richieu, and it's enough stories for now” (Maus II, 2003, p 296). The last thing we get to see is Vladek and Anja's tombstone.

6.1 The Holocaust and Vladek Spiegelman

Kolář (2013) mentioned that many survivors had to deal with the feelings of guilt because they survived while others have not. Art's psychotherapist, Pavel, suggested the same state of mind with Vladek, however, he pointed it out because of the possibility of Vladek transferring his sense of guilt on Art (Kolář, 2013, p 6). Therefore, in order to understand the impact and transfer of the Holocaust trauma on Art Spiegelman and his work through his parents, we first have to understand how it influenced his father.

When the reader sees Vladek's reactions and behaviour in the scenes from the present time, one can notice that he was never able to leave the past behind. He lived as if he was about to find himself in war or in a concentration camp again. As he grew old he developed numerous unpleasant and bothersome traits – he was too thrifty, pedant and authoritative and these traits often complicated his relationship with Art (Kolář, 2013, p 10). Art complains about Vladek's constant anxiousness and he reacts to his wife's words that he behaves like this because of Auschwitz by comparing him to other survivors that are not so difficult to live with (Maus II, 2003, p 182). In Vladek's case such striking change of personality could be connected to the act of forgiveness. Eva Kor, a Holocaust survivor that forgave former Auschwitz guard – Oscar Groening, shared her wise words of explanation:

As long as we understand my forgiveness that the victim has a right to be free, you cannot be free from what was done to you unless you remove from your shoulder the daily burden of pain and anger and forgive the Nazis – not because they deserve it, but because I deserve it. (Daily Mail, 2015)

She understood that grudge and hatred hurt the one that is burdened by it the most and that the only way to leave the past behind is to get rid of such strong feelings. Because as long as they endure in one's mind they prevent one from letting go of the traumatic memories. Vladek's striking change of personality might be influenced by the fact that he was not able, he was not prepared to let go of what happened to him and his family and allowed the traumatic experience interfere with his life and his relationships with others. Nevertheless, he probably realised how important it was to let go. In chapter five, *Maus I*, he talks with Art about *Prisoner on the Hell Planet*, a comic about Anja's death that he accidentally found and that made him cry and Art apologizes to him for causing him pain. Yet Vladek responds to Art in this way: "It's good you got it outside your system. But for me it brought in my mind so much memories of Anja" (Maus I, 2003, p 106).

It looks like he became aware of the importance of talking about these things – he did not go to a therapist because he did not feel comfortable with sharing his personal experience with a stranger but Art provided him with a unique opportunity – to spend some time together with his son and to finally express his war experience.

As early as in the first scene can we observe the manner in which Art's childhood was affected by his father's war trauma. The passage has already been mentioned earlier – Spiegelman comes to his father with a problem (his friends leaving without him) that he needs to solve, however, all he lives to see is his father trivializing his trouble and comparing it to a “real problem” that is rooted in the past when he had to undergo the tough conditions of a concentration camp. For a small child these indications of an outlived terror without knowing any context must have been confusing. A child comes to his parents for consolation when something bad happens to him and expects to be taken seriously. A parent discussing this problem with him and comforting him gives the basis for further mental development of the child – the basis for the evolution of feelings of safety and being able to trust people. A traumatized parent that evinces symptoms like traumatic reliving, emotional numbness and dissociative phenomena does not support his child to develop such sense of safety and predictability in the world (Portney, 2003). Even the reader is quite shocked by Vladek's reaction which suggests his constant re-living of the past experience. The inability to live in the present day is common when it comes to the Holocaust survivors. As Frankl said – the prisoners were unable to understand that it was over and it was extremely difficult for them to integrate into the society again and behave as if nothing had happened. Nobody could understand the measure of suffering and very often there was no family member left to talk to (Frankl, 2006, p 100–105).

In chapter two, *Maus I*, we find ourselves observing Vladek counting his pills. Art asks him why he has to eat so many of them. Vladek replies: “It's 6 pills for the heart, 1 for diabetes and maybe 25 or 30 vitamins. For my condition I must fight to save myself. Doctors, they only give me junk food” (Maus I, 2003, p 28).

For the Holocaust survivors there was one necessary condition to fulfil in order to live through the war which was the will to live. Frankl mentioned that it was essential to find something to live for, those who gave up often ended their own life (Frankl, 2006, p 90–91). Also Sabina Miller, a Holocaust survivor, describes the desperate struggle to stay alive: “I wanted to survive,” she says. “I wanted it for my family, to be able to say who we were, what we did, what we gave. I wanted to do this. And I just wanted to live” (Miller, 2015).

This short passage of the book implies Vladek's constant battle for survival – he was not able to go back to his life before the war. He was not able to abandon the habits he had to learn

in the concentration camp and that enabled him to survive. Living in such terrible conditions and having to fight for everything, every minute of every day, surely left a mark. Such strong will to live is an interesting phenomenon which cannot be found with every person. It is described as the determination to live regardless of extremity and severity of situations (Psychology Dictionary, N. D.). The will to live and to survive is strong if one has the right mindset and a positive attitude (Grohol, 2009).

As was already mentioned, a certain regression of prisoners appeared in a camp – their desires became mostly basic (food, bath) (Frankl, 2006, p 39). However, mind and thinking can surely be restricted as well – if one outlives such degrading and terrifying conditions it is, in a way, thanks to the limitation of one's mind down to a simple goal. The main goals of each day were to survive and to have something to eat, to wear.

Vladek's persistence to keep these habits, to live from one moment to another in order to survive could be a sign of intrusive symptoms of PTSD which manifest by memories so vivid that one can stop living in reality and starts behaving as if the traumatic event was still going on (Porterfield, 1998, p 18–20). In many scenes from *Maus* the reader can notice that Vladek behaves as if he still lived under threat, anxiously guarding his property and keeping an eye on everything around so that nothing would go to waste. It is surely important to value food and all that one is fortunate to have, yet there is something pathological in the way Vladek clings on to things. This need may have come from the painful memory of times of shortage which still endured in Vladek's mind and soul. Kolář (2013) also pointed out that Vladek's testimony fits van der Kolk and van der Hart's concept of traumatic memories – a traumatized person can tell a story of traumatisation with a mixture of past and present. The present is typically full of guilt, uncertainty and doubts and past schemes determine the interpretation of present times (Kolář, 2013, p 10).

Nonetheless, the constant struggle for survival might also be rooted at the very core of his personality and national inheritance. Vladek acted rather as a reasonable and sensible person than a philosopher or an artist which allowed him to focus on the strategies and practical actions that led to his survival. Carl G. Jung spoke about personal unconscious which does not derive from personal experience but is inborn and rests on a deeper layer which is called collective unconscious. Collective unconscious is universal and contains modes of behaviour that are the same in all individuals (Jung, 2015). From this point of view, Vladek's personality and will to live might have even been influenced by the national Jewish inheritance – this long persecuted nation had to develop some strategies and characteristics that ensured survival. In the history of the Jewish nation two

streams were visible – one that fought against oppression and one that adjusted. To illustrate with an example – as soon as the first century there was not only one opinion how to deal with the Roman supremacy as one stream tried to cooperate in order to survive and the second one tried to fight against their oppressors (Holocaust, 2011). Throughout history we can observe the efforts of majority to suppress this nation and so it was only natural that it had to learn to adjust to the constantly changing circumstances. Vladek seemed to have great skills when it came to adapting to adverse conditions and he did not hesitate to seize every opportunity to last out yet another day. Not only can it be connected to his personality but also, in a way, to his cultural heritage of an unceasing struggle for survival that grew stronger when exposed to extreme conditions.

To demonstrate Vladek's atypical reactions to some ordinary situations we may look at chapter three, *Maus I*, where Art is having dinner with Vladek and Mala and recalls how he always had to eat everything that was on the plate: "Mom would offer to cook something I liked better but pop just wanted to leave the leftover food around until I ate it. Sometimes he'd even save it to serve again and again until I'd eat it or starve" (Maus I, 2003, p 45).

In chapter three *Maus II*, Vladek and Art also argue about food – Vladek offers him some food to take back home because he cannot eat it himself, however, Art refuses and tells his father just to forget it while Vladek react with these words: "I cannot forget it.. Ever since Hitler I don't like to throw out even a crumb" (Maus II, 2003, p 238).

Vladek's economical attitude towards life was evident even when it came to the matter of money. In chapter four, *Maus I*, he argues with his son about hiring someone for fixing the drain pipe which is unacceptable to Vladek and he rather fixes it himself even in his condition than having to pay for it (Maus I, 2003, p 75). He also struggled with Mala, his second wife that was a survivor, too, and who complained that he did not support her financially enough. Vladek was somewhat paranoid and he had the feeling that she wanted all his money for herself. He tells Art: "She wants that I give nothing for my brother in Israel, and nothing for you – three times already she made me change over my will" (Maus I, 2003, p 129).

We can notice that Vladek's personality was affected in the matter of trust. War forces everyone has to take care of himself/herself. In chapter five, *Maus I*, Art asks his father if Vladek's distant family would help him (when they were in the Srodula ghetto) if he had paid them but Vladek reacts with these words: "At that time it wasn't anymore families. It was everybody to take care for himself!" (Maus I, 2003, p 116).

No one was to be trusted in such extreme conditions and Vladek and Anja had a first-hand experience with this – they were tricked by a smuggler and taken to Auschwitz. They managed

to survive, Anja mainly thanks to Mencie (a Hungarian prisoner) and Vladek as he took care of her even there. He showed cleverness, intelligence and a surprising ability to adapt, to always find ways to get some extra food and a better job – other times he was just very lucky. He quickly realised that he had to take care of himself and he advises his wife, to do so as well, when she tells him that she brings her friends scraps from the kitchen: “Don’t worry about friends. Believe me, they don’t worry about you. They just worry about getting a bigger share of your food!” (Maus II, 2003, p 216).

These words may seem harsh but it was a necessary precaution. Vladek knew that Anja was very weak and she was placed in Birkenau which was the worst place to be. Moreover, one cannot say that Vladek lost his sense of humanity and was selfish – he helped his friends and inmates when he had the chance.

Vladek’s relationship with Mala appeared to be very problematic, not only because he did not believe her but he compared her to Anja and he had difficulties accepting that she was different. Vladek and Anja’s relationship was special – they went through the troubles together. Anja suffered from depression and often wanted to end her life but she did not, knowing that Vladek was there for her. Even when she was in Birkenau he was a great support to her. They were the greatest motivation to each other and it was essential to find a motivation to tirelessly struggle for survival. Even after her death, Vladek still kept her pictures and clothes and told Art that had she been alive, he would be completely different (Maus I, 2003, p 69). It seems that the decision to marry Mala was supported by rational reasons and maybe by the need not to end up alone. It was a marriage full of arguments. Mala was traumatized by the awareness that she was an insufficient substitute for Anja (Kolář, 2013, p 10) and Vladek’s opinion that she could not replace Anja made it even worse for her – he even complained about marrying her: “Why, Artie, why I ever remarried? Oy, Anja! Anja! Anja!” (Maus I, 2003, p 129).

With his wife committing suicide, Vladek also lost a friend to whom he could talk. He felt alone even though he lived with Mala – in one scene of chapter three he tells Art that he has no one to talk to except for him (Maus I, 2003, p 69). However, Art does not want to listen to his father at that moment. The distanced relationship between father and son manifests in many situations but in this scene the reader feels that there is a strong connection between them and that Art is probably the only person Vladek still trusts. There are more situations when the reader witnesses the actual depth of their relationship even though it appears to be hidden most of the time. In chapter four, *Maus II*, when Vladek is not well and hopes to continue telling the story the following day, Art replies that he does not have so much time and that he will come

the following week. He apologizes for making him talk so much but Vladek reacts with these words: “So, never mind, darling. Always it’s a pleasure when you visit” (Maus I, 2003, p 277).

However, it is also obvious that Vladek often got back to Richieu in his memories and he felt a very strong connection with him – possibly because Richieu went through the same and he could have been more like his dad had he survived. Furthermore, Vladek seemed to blame himself for not saving him – he was convinced that his wrong decisions caused Richieu’s death (Kolář, 2013, p 10) and he could not pull himself away from these thoughts. Art was, in a way, forced to choose a different path and because of not sharing the common history it was more difficult for him to integrate into his own family. Even in the last chapter, when Vladek asks Art to stop recording and tells him that it was enough stories, he addresses Art as Richieu. Art’s fight with his “ghost brother” is going to be discussed further ahead.

Another eye-catching feature that still persisted within Vladek was that he often searched for things that could come in handy once because in a concentration camp everything one found could have meant survival. In chapter five, *Maus I*, he and Art walk to the bank and Vladek sees a telephone wire on the ground, picks it up and he says: “This is very hard to find. Inside it’s little wires. It’s good for trying things” (Maus I, 2003, p 118). Art asks why he cannot just buy the wire but Vladek thinks it is unnecessary to buy something you can find.

Vladek’s and Anja’s experience profoundly influenced the life of their family. When Art was a child he did not know much about his parent’s experience – if we were to decide which type of family the Spiegelman family appeared to be based on Danieli’s types of survivor families, we could liken it to the most common type of victim and numb families. In such type of families children did not know much about the war memories of their parents (Berger, 1997). However, in Art’s family this position changed when he became an adult and his father shared the testimony with him. For Vladek, this experience of reliving the past and talking about the horrors of it might be perceived as a therapy. Victims often do not seek professional help because they do not want to relive the traumatic situation but talking about it definitely helps. Furthermore, having the opportunity to talk to their closest ones whom they trust may be of significant importance.

Talk therapies in general help patients to learn about trauma, to identify and deal with guilt, shame and help to change how people react to their PTSD symptoms (NIMH, 2015). Art provided his father with such “talk therapy” and Vladek became more open with his son, expressed how important he was to him. At the beginning, Art comes to visit his father after a long time because they “weren’t that close” (Maus I, 2003, p 13). In the interaction of father and son there were not many manifestations of their affection, nonetheless, as the story continues

and Art visits his father more often, the reader can observe how important these visits become to Vladek and how he wants to have someone to talk to, to trust to be near him. In chapter three, *Maus II*, Art and his wife, Françoise, visit Vladek for a few days but when they tell him they want to leave in a day he is very disappointed and react with these words: “Then better if you didn’t come, now I got used a little to having you together by me” (*Maus II*, 2003, p 237).

Art also began to see his father differently and truly realised how incredible it was that he survived. In the end the reader has a feeling that, even though Vladek’s physical condition was getting worse, he finally started to let go of the suffering he had to undergo and was prepared to stop talking and go to sleep.

6.2 The Holocaust and Art Spiegelman

Family is the most important factor in the development of children and has a significant impact on their personality and psychological health – parents’ mental health might be an important factor influencing a child’s mental health (Wang and Zhou, 2015, p 2).

The transmission of the wartime experience across generations became a crucial part of the survivors’ children’s identity and their “Jewishness” and Art’s story confirms that also generations that did not survive such terrors can “inherit” the trauma of their ancestors (Kolář, 2013, p 2). Elmwood (2004) noticed that the central problem of identity in *Maus* is Art’s effort to find his place in a family from which he was absent and he becomes a member of the family through this narrative – he negotiates a position of a “transmitter of family history” in a family into which he is finally integrated even though he did not experience the Holocaust (Elmwood, 2004, p 1, 11). However, his parent’s trauma had a great impact on him and as was mentioned earlier, children that grow up with parents suffering from PTSD may feel helpless, ashamed or they can be angry with their parents and feel guilty about it – their parent’s problems seem to be in the centre of attention therefore a child can feel neglected and “invisible” (Porterfield, 1998, p 97–98).

Art’s piece of work mirrors the complicated relationship that he had with his father and his effort to make sense of what was happening in his family. Sometimes he appears to lack empathy for his father’s suffering but he also has to deal with a trauma – his state of mind could be described by the LaCapra’s term “muted trauma” (Kolář, 2013, p 2). Marianne Hirsch introduced the term “postmemory” in connection with this topic – traumatic events are grasped indirectly by the second generation (children get to know their parents’ story from narrations), they live in the shadow of traumatic memories to which they have only limited access (Hirsch in Elmwood, 2004, p 4). Postmemory reflects the level of identification with those who have a first-hand experience,

it often manifests by feelings of displacement and absence which can result in an identity crisis. *Maus* became such synthesis of memory and postmemory (Kolář, 2013, p 3).

Art was profoundly influenced by his parents' trauma, his dreams and fantasies bear witness to what was happening within his mind. In chapter one, *Maus II*, he describes his childhood fantasies to his wife:

I did have nightmares about S.S. men coming into my class and taking all us Jewish kids away. Don't get me wrong. I wasn't obsessed with this stuff. It's just that sometimes I'd fantasize Zyklon B coming out of our shower instead of water. I know this is insane, but I somehow wish I had been in Auschwitz with my parents so I could really know what they lived through! I guess it's some kind of guilt about having had an easier life than they did. Sigh. I feel so inadequate trying to reconstruct a reality that was worse than my darkest dreams. (*Maus II*, 2003, p 176)

We can observe that he always felt like an outsider, not able to relate to the members of his family. Vladek's transmission of the survivor's guilt is noticeable in Art's words that he feels guilty for having an easier life while Vladek may have felt the same way about him surviving while his family and friends did not.

Art and Vladek's relationship was very complicated, disturbed by Vladek's exaggerated and burdening habits and personality traits. The reader feels an insufficient mutual understanding of the father and son – Art was not able to fully grasp his father's personality marked by trauma and was troubled by this knowledge, he wished to know what truly happened to him and who he was. However, his father's distanced relationship did not allow such understanding and Vladek seemed to be even more lost when it came to making sense of his son's personality.

One could notice the competition that was going on between them. In chapter five, *Maus I*, Art expresses how annoyed he was when his father showed off his dexterity, demeaning his own skills: "He made me completely neurotic about fixing stuff (...) One reason I became an artist was that he thought it was impractical – just a waste of time. It was an area where I wouldn't have to compete with him" (*Maus I*, 2003, p 99).

The competition between father and son is, in a way, inevitable – a son learns from his father but at some point he wishes to set himself apart and create his own self. For the development of a healthy confidence he needs not only competition but also support which was not, in this case, a very common practice. When the competitive side of men becomes too dominant, a child may develop a feeling of shame and low confidence (Bolton, 2012). Art was overshadowed by his father and wished to separate himself from him by doing the exact opposite of what his father

did. He needed a place that would be only his, where he could be free of such competition and where he could re-build his cracked self-confidence. Art complained about their relationship and belittled his own accomplishments when comparing the incomparable – his father's achievement of surviving Auschwitz and his own life (Kolář, 2013, p 7).

Art did not seem noticed much by his father, for example in chapter three, *Maus I*, Art wants to leave but cannot find his coat; later he finds out that his father threw it away because he thought it was too shabby. He gives Art his old jacket which upsets Art very much because he feels like a child and reminds his father that he is 30 years old and that he chooses his own clothes (Maus I, 2003, p 71). This may again be connected with Vladek's reliving the past – possibly because of the shabby clothes he had to wear in the camp he did his best to always look nice and neat and transferred this attitude onto his son as well. The reader is surprised by his behaviour though – it appears that he did not take his son's opinions into consideration, that he knew best what was good for him and what was not. Most parents have difficulties accepting that their child has grown up but they have to learn to come to terms with their autonomy. However, Vladek did not seem to accept Art's autonomy and did not treat him as his equal. Art might have felt “invisible” to his father for not being listened to, thus the need to choose a completely different path and to build up his own life separated from his father's who often made him angry. Yet, he felt guilty for being angry with him and he did not think he was a good son. In chapter five, *Maus I*, Vladek asks him to help to fix the drainpipe but Art remembers how everything he ever did around the house was always wrong according to his father and decides that he would rather feel guilty than having to find himself in such situation again – so he refuses. However, during Art's next visit the reader notices that he does not feel good about what had happened and when he sees his father in the garage, he offers to help him. But this offer is not accepted which even strengthens the feeling of guilt (Maus I, 2003, p 99–100).

However, this transmission of guilt did not concern only Art but also Mala – in chapter six, *Maus I*, she mentions how Vladek always makes her feel guilty about leaving the house even just for a while (Maus I, 2003, p 136). Vladek often evoked feelings of guilt in the people around him – maybe to weaken his own pangs of conscience – and pitied himself for not being understood and being treated badly. This trait put even more distance between him and his family. In chapter one, *Maus II*, Vladek drives away Mala and to ensure that his son will call him he pretends he has had a heart attack. Art feels sorry for him but when he has to spend time with him, Vladek usually makes him feel angry or guilty which is confusing and makes it difficult for Art to make sense of their relationship (Maus II, 2003, p 173–174).

The relationship with his parents becomes even more problematic when we think of Anja and his dead brother, Richieu – Elmwood (2004) wrote that even though Anja was absent from the text, she at least lived in Vladek and Art’s memories but when it came to his brother it was almost impossible to represent Richieu of whom there were no memorial remains, Art knew him only from one photo that his parents had in the bedroom. He appeared in the book as a “site of investment for Art’s anxieties about what he perceives to be shortcomings in his parent’s eyes” (Elmwood, 2004, p 12). This rivalry between Art and Richieu is a significant aspect of the father-son, parent-child relationship. Art felt that his brother was put on a pedestal, idealized and recalls how Richieu was the ideal kid with whom he could not compete: “They didn’t talk about Richieu, but that photo was a kind of reproach he’d have become a doctor, and married a wealthy Jewish girl.. The creep” (Maus II, 2003, p 175).

He thinks about how things would be had he lived – if they would get along and if Richieu would have better chances to deal with Vladek and he says: “It’s spooky, having sibling rivalry with a snapshot!” (Maus II, 2003, p 175).

In Art’s imagination, Richieu was an ally of Anja and Vladek because of their common history and felt that he was the last in the family order (Elmwood, 2004, p 13). In the situation when Vladek calls Art Richieu in the very last panel the reader feels as if Art was some kind of “replacement”. To live in a shadow of a sibling had to be a difficult challenge for a developing child. However, according to Elmwood (2004) Art resisted taking the role of a “surrogate” and rather became a rival but this imaginary sibling rivalry even strengthened his feelings of inadequacy (Elmwood, 2004, p 13). Nonetheless, Kolář (2013) had a different opinion and mentioned psychoanalytic literature which terms such children that had to grow up in the shadow of a dead sibling “replacement children”. According to him, Art was convinced that he was an imperfect surrogate of his older brother. Also the fact that his parents had only Richieu’s photo and not Art’s even deepened his sense of being an outsider (Kolář, 2013, p 5). From Art’s words it seems that he did feel like an inadequate substitute but tried to fight for his unique position in the family. Throughout the story, as Art and Vladek’s relationship took shape and the reader observed Vladek’s need to have his son close to him, he got the impression that Vladek recognized this unique position, however, based on the last words that he said to Art, the reader was thrown back to his painful memory of a lost child which undercut the “happy, happy ever after” ending (Elmwood, 2004, p 14).

An interesting change happens when the reader reaches the part of *Maus* in which the *Prisoner on the Hell Planet* appears. The graphic style is suddenly different, depicting the characters

as humans, not animals. It is a very intimate portrayal of Art and Vladek experiencing the death of Anja. Kolář (2013) wrote that for Art, the memory of the tragedy was still very vivid therefore there was no need to distance himself from it by the animal portrayal of the characters. However, he connected this tragic event with the Holocaust as his mother's death led to the total annihilation of his family (Kolář, 2013, p 3). Elmwood (2004) pointed out that his emphasis on the absence of Anja's diaries and Art's repeated return to his mother's death indicate that paradoxically, it constitutes his connection to the Holocaust.

Art depicts himself as a prisoner – a prisoner in his own body, a prisoner in the traumatized family that was difficult to understand for him. His sense of guilt is even stronger and he blames himself for disappointing his parents, for not fulfilling their wishes. He expresses that this particular night he was coming home from his girlfriend whom his parents did not like, whom they did not approve of – he failed to meet their expectations (Maus I, 2003, p 102). After he is told the terrible news he goes home, expecting to be comforted at least by his father. But for his father this situation is unbearable – Anja was his only link, the only person from the family that survived the same hell that he did and maybe the only one who truly understood him. Art is forced to be stronger, to be Vladek's support. But he needs to be comforted as well, however his father's grief and depersonalization space him out (Maus I, 2003, p 103, 104). And then, at the funeral, a family friend comes to him and tells him: "Now you cry! Better you cried when your mother was still alive! I felt nauseous... The guilt was overwhelming! (Maus I, 2003, p 104).

These words trigger an avalanche of self-accusation thoughts and even paranoia that everyone around thinks it was his fault. And flashbacks from the last time he saw her appear. His mother coming to him, asking whether he still loves her. Art's accumulated feeling of anger and maybe even disgust at his mother's sudden neediness allows him only a curtly reply: "sure.. MA!" A sentence that would haunt him for many years to come. He finds himself in a mental prison: "Congratulations!.. You've committed the perfect crime.. You put me here... Shorted all my circuits.. Cut my nerve endings... And crossed my wires. You murdered me. Mommy, and you left me here to take the RAP!!! (Maus I, 2003, p 105).

Art's remorse was made even worse by the fact that she did not leave any note. Kolář (2013) pointed out that despite his accusation of his mother one should perceive this product of his underground participation in art as an expression of love for her. He also pronounced his regret over what he might have done – he thought about how he could save her had he come home earlier and had he not suppressed his love. He became aware that this alienation from his parents could be interpreted as betrayal. For Spiegelman this creation represented reliving of his family history

that might have therapeutic effect but also caused the tension between him and his father when he accidentally discovered this piece of work. Art's planet is very dark and inhabited by depressed and hopeless people whose visual depiction is even more frightening than the figures from Auschwitz (Kolář, 2013, p 4). In this part of *Maus* Spiegelman gives the characters a concrete shape and the reader suddenly cannot identify himself with them (not as much as with the "blank" faces of mice) as the narrative is very personal and he feels that he witnesses something so very inward and emotional that he should keep his respectful distance from it.

Elmwood noticed that Spiegelman's trauma forced him to return repeatedly to the incompletely grasped event and, according to Freud, the mind obsessively repeats the traumatic experience to master the stimulus additionally by developing the initial anxiety whose omission caused the traumatic neurosis. Re-living the past experience is common when it comes to trauma and Anja's appearances in *Maus* suggest that her suicide is Art's central trauma. We cannot see her through his eyes anywhere else except the *Prisoner on the Hell Planet*, we do not know anything about their relationship – as Dora Apel noted – experience that has not been processed cannot be narrated. We see Anja only through Vladek's eyes in which she seems weak and fragile so the reader wonders how she could overcome such difficult conditions (Elmwood, 2004, p 15, 19). However, she should not be seen as such; even though she might have been fragile, she was able to endure the torture and to find her life purpose again after the war. Even though the trauma caught up with her at the end she also was strong and Spiegelman said that her need to bear witness was probably what kept her going (UWTV, 1991). Yet it might have ended differently had the family coped with the trauma together. Vladek and Anja's different opinions on sharing the war experience caused that Art did not feel included and Anja's need to talk about it was transformed at least into her diaries. Her desire to share this experience with her son is implied in chapter six, *Maus I*, where Vladek tells Art that he burned her diaries but remembers that she said: "I wish my son, when he grows up, he will be interested by this" (Maus, 2003, p 161).

Art feels betrayed and his mother's wish to tell him may evoke the trauma of her death again – he lost the chance to understand the events from her point of view, he lost the chance to make sense of her and their relationship as well. If the diaries still existed he could have included them in his work which might have helped him with reconciliation. He was less successful to find a place for her in *Maus* and thus was less successful in dealing with his grief (Elmwood, 2004, p 22).

6.3 The Graphic Component of Maus

In the following lines the graphic form of *Maus* will be discussed. Spiegelman's reason to write about his father's Holocaust experience has already been mentioned and he thought that comic book would be an ideal medium for this task. He perceives comics as a medium that makes it possible to have various panels, various moments in time simultaneously made present in space – past and present interweave which makes it ideal for the creation of *Maus*, past and present existing next to each other being its main motif (UWTV, 1991). Spiegelman's choice to depict the characters as animals had its important purpose and a psychological effect which is why it should be commented on as well.

Spiegelman made use of animals to represent people of individual nations. Mice represented the Jews, cats the Germans, pigs denoted the Polish, dogs portrayed the Americans, frogs the French and so on (Kolář, 2013, p 3). The decision to portray Jews as mice was connected to Hitler's words about the Jews being a race but not human. They were perceived as rodents which gave Spiegelman the idea to portray them in such a way. Spiegelman's mice are drawn in a simple, iconic style that has more in common with Mickey Mouse than real mice (Kruger, 2015, p 2). This icon method could be explained by Scott McCloud's words on how to understand comics. When we simplify images to their basic meanings, such meanings are intensified. One significant quality of caricatures, of icons is that they are universal. The more we universalize for example face, the more people you can say it depicts (see figure 1).

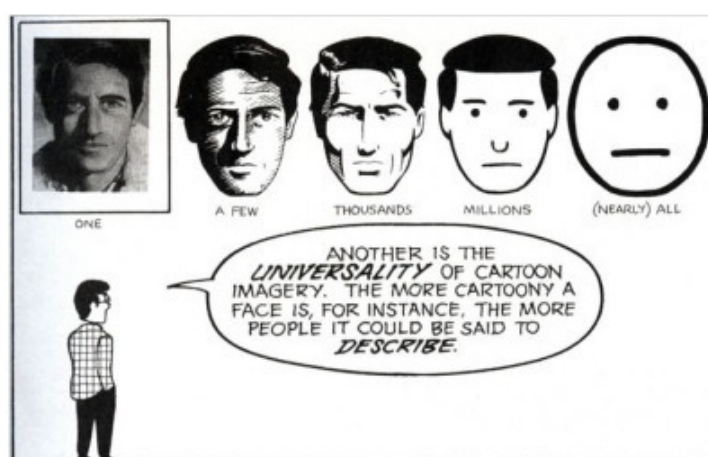


Figure 1: *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, p 31 (McCloud, 1993)

When we talk to someone, we have a certain awareness of our own face but such image is not as clear and detailed as in reality. We see it simplified, consisting only of the most striking features – like a caricature. If we look at a photo or realistic drawing of a face, we see someone

else. But when we see a caricature, we see ourselves. Caricature is a kind of vacuum that absorbs our identity (McCloud, 1993, p 31, 36). Figure 2 depicts how differently we perceive these two facial portrayals.



Figure 2: *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, p 31 (McCloud, 1993)

Spiegelman mentioned that the universal depiction made the story more intimate as the reader could project his own imagination of the faces, personalities into the mice heads which are relatively neutral. Spiegelman said that they are virtually blank masks, like Little Orphan Annie's eye-balls which serve as a white screen the reader can project on. The expressiveness is there thanks to the reader's participation. By using animal heads there appeared a certain degree of distancing from the reader's expectations and allowed him to feel something that would otherwise be difficult to experience, it invited him to participate in the story (UWTV, 1991). When the reader experiences the narration of the Holocaust with Vladek, he certainly feels drawn into it and it is easier to imagine that it could be happening even to him. This is one of the reasons why this book is so absorbing and so authentic. What is more, while the mouse heads function as vessels for projection, they also help Spiegelman to distance himself from the war experience. He does not want to be connected with it but simply describes what had happened to his father.

There is an interesting development in Spiegelman's drawings. Kruger (2015) noticed that in the earlier drafts of *Maus*, Spiegelman focused on more realistic representations of mice before he settled for the simpler style. In the prologue, Art and Vladek were shown with facial fur and details which appeared less frequently as the novel progressed (see figure 3).

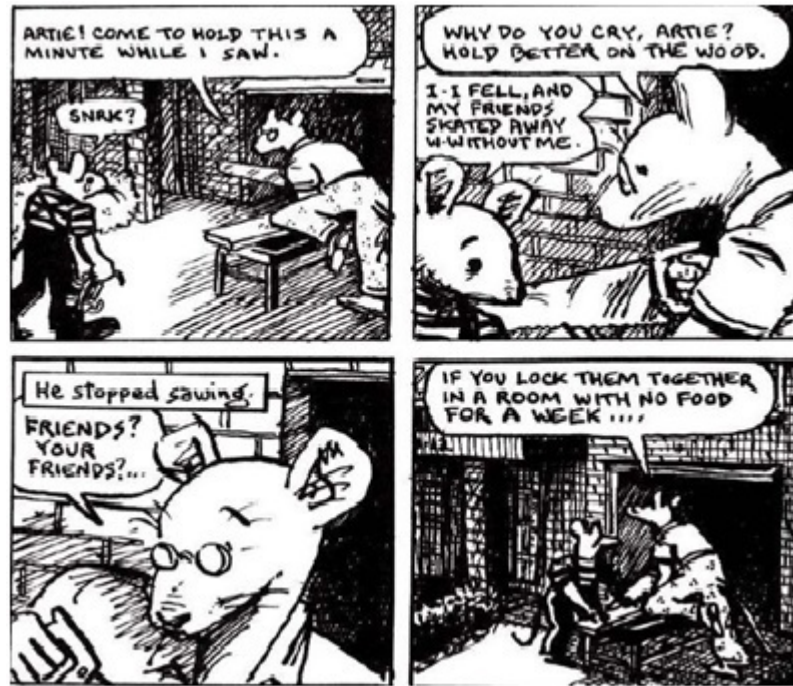


Figure 3: *Maus I*, p 6 (Spiegelman, 2003)

By the end of the first volume only the triangular shape of Artie's head differentiated him from a simplified drawing of a human (see figure 4).



Figure 4: *Maus I*, p 137 (Spiegelman, 2003)

However, Kruger also noticed that while the mice lost their whiskers, the cats never changed and did not become more iconic which prevented the reader from sympathizing with other demographic other than the Polish and German Jews (Kruger, 2015, p 2, 3).

In connection to how a person sees his/her face in a simplified version, McCloud compared faces to masks – masks that face outward and that we wear from the day we were born. They act out our every intended command, however, the image of our face that we see in our mind is not the same as others see us (McCloud, 1993, p 34).

Spiegelman used the mouse faces as masks, sometimes in a literal way. Kruger mentioned Jeanne Ewert's words that the masking function of the mouse heads was more visible when Spiegelman showed the mice that needed to get through by holding pig masks in front of their faces and also in the situation when Art himself appeared wearing a mouse mask (Kruger, 2015, p 3). Yet the masks that he wore in the passages from present time seemed to have a different function than the masks that Jews tried to use to save themselves. The identity was changed – mice hiding under pig's masks were still mice – the reader could still relate to them and they also still expressed the distance that Art put between him and the Holocaust experience. However, in the passage where Art is interviewed by journalists who also all wear masks (German journalists wear cat masks, American ones dog masks), we can see that under them there are human faces (see figure 5). The reality is suddenly not for the reader to relate to, there is no such space left for projection.

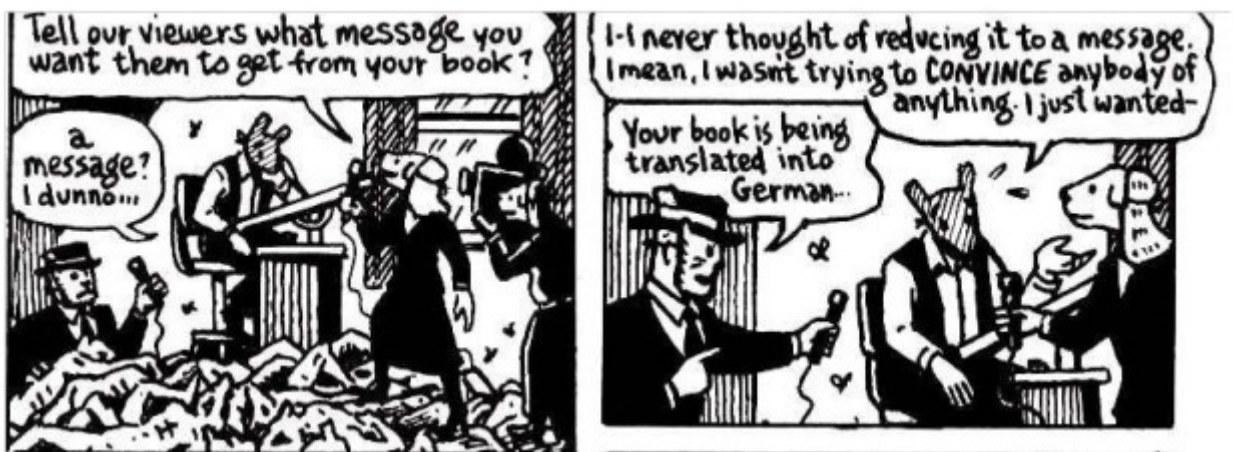


Figure 5: *Maus II*, Spiegelman interviewed by journalists, p 202 (Spiegelman, 2003)

The topic of the story told in present is about Art and his ways of dealing with the past, his ways of finding his and his family's identity and the reader is just an observer. Spiegelman's way of depicting himself changes when he expresses something inner, personal – for example in the *Prisoner on the Hell Planet* he does not work with animal faces but with human appearances, in the passage that has just been mentioned he, again, feels depressed and hopeless depicting himself as a human wearing a mouse mask and, finally, even when he visits his therapist who joins him in wearing this “identity on a string” (see figure 6).



Figure 6: *Maus II*, Spiegelman visiting his therapist, p 203 (Spiegelman, 2003)

The depiction of mice, however, does not seem to be tied to racial or cultural modifiers only. In the second chapter, *Maus II*, Vladek remembers how his fellow inmate claimed to be a German soldier. In figure 7, we can see that in one panel he is drawn as a cat but in every other, including the one where a guard steps on his neck and kills him, he is drawn as a mouse which suggest that the mouse metaphor is mainly rooted in the criterion of victimisation (Kruger, 2015, p 3). This particular portrayal widens the up to now narrow radius focused mainly on the Jews as the victims of the Holocaust. From this moment the reader realises that this mouse metaphor is not restricted to one nation only and his conception of the prisoner's trauma and of the injustice becomes more elaborate. It allows even greater opportunity for projection as the reader can relate more to the characters although being of a different cultural and national origin.



Figure 7: *Maus II*, p 210 (Spiegelman, 2003)

Albeit the therapeutic impact of creating this piece of work was not the main purpose, it surely helped Spiegelman to shed light onto his family's matters and traumas. By giving our traumatic thoughts and feelings a certain shape, by giving them "name" we often find relief and liberation from the wrongs of the past. Dealing with trauma is a long-distance run and not everyone is able to get to the end, to let go of what is bothering one's mind. Even Vladek realised the importance of letting go of things and told his son that it was good that he "got it out of his system". Through this artwork, Spiegelman might have finally found his place in his traumatized family, he established a relationship with his father and by reliving the problematic ties to his mother and brother he came to terms with them at last.

Spiegelman's choice of the comic book medium came from his life admiration of comics and it surely brought a new and refreshing insight into the literature dealing with the Holocaust. His work is remarkable for the level of intimate feelings that he was not afraid to share and also for providing the reader with characters that he/she is able to relate to. Comic books truly have come a long journey and one must agree with Ray and his statement that Spiegelman helped to establish comic book storytelling as a sophisticated literary medium (Ray, 2015).

6.4 Maus in Classroom

This subchapter will briefly mention the reason why reading *Maus* could enrich English, Literature or History lessons at school. Comic books have great potential when it comes to their usage in a classroom. Children enjoy these reading materials as they are very often more appealing to them than books. *Maus* could be perceived as a way to present to children quality literature and, at the same time, their favourite literary medium. Furthermore, this piece of work could nicely connect Literature, History and English lessons and function as a Content and Language Integrated Learning method which is concerned with learning a subject through a foreign language.

In the eighth or ninth grade of the lower secondary school there are very often excursions to Auschwitz as an alternative form of History education. In connection to these excursions and to the topic of the Second World War, *Maus* could provide a deeper insight into the topic. Children, students remember more if they can connect knowledge with personal, inner experience of a person that actually lived through the things that they only know from books which Art and Vladek Spiegelman's story surely provides. For instance, students could learn fact about the war in History lessons (favourably in the English language), practise their English further by reading passages from *Maus* in Literature lessons and then visit Auschwitz itself which would certainly make learning more effective and attractive for them.

Furthermore, *Maus* could also be interesting to read and to analyse in Psychology lessons at pedagogical schools or suitable for students of Psychology at universities when learning about trauma, posttraumatic stress disorder or the transmission of traumatic experiences in families. In the following lines a probable lesson plan will be described.

Lesson Plan: Maus as a Reading Activity in English/Literature Lessons

Art Spiegelman's *Maus* could serve as a basis for project education. Students would be familiarized with Art Spiegelman and his comic book and then would be given a task to read passages from the book in pairs. Each pair would get one passage that should be presented to others – the students would re-create the whole story together after reading their part. The lesson plan described below should be used in the first lesson when getting to know of Art Spiegelman's *Maus*.

- Age group: the 9th grade of lower secondary school, students of secondary school
- Class: maximum of 16 students
- Length: 90 minutes
- Tools: extracts from the book, board, pencils, clean sheets of paper
- Methods: group work, presentation, group discussion

Main goals

- reading comprehension and learning about metaphors (cognitive domain)
- discuss and learn about the Holocaust (cognitive domain)
- students form an opinion of the impact of trauma on people (affective domain)
- students try to draw a comics of their own in order to understand this medium more (psychomotor domain)

Pre-reading activities:

- Brainstorming on the given title after seeing the book's cover.
- Warm-up activity: pages 5 and 6 (*Maus I*, 2003) that have already been mentioned (Art comes to his father with a problem when his friends skate away without him) are cut into individual panels; students make two groups and each group has to put these panels together so that the story makes sense.
- The students are then asked to think about the context – what happened to Artie's father, why does he treat his son in such way, why are the characters portrayed as mice?

Reading:

- Introduction – students are briefly informed about the book’s plot and about the meaning of the mouse metaphor.
- Students quickly skim given pages (see Appendix E: Material for Reading Activity – *Maus*) and try to answer: What is Art’s father’s name? Who is Anja? What happened to them?
- Reconstruction of the story: students are given roles (Vladek, Art, Anja, Mandelbaum, the smugglers, the Nazi and the narrator) and they read the story together.

Post-reading activities:

- In a group discussion students try to think about how the story is going to evolve and what will happen to Vladek and Anja.
- In the last part of the lesson each student thinks about an important event in his/her life and draws a comic story about it.

The text should serve as a part of a Content and Language Integrated Learning method. In History lessons students should study the facts about the Holocaust and the Second World War and they would participate in an excursion to Auschwitz, then they would compare their perception of it with its portrayal in the book.

7 Jerzy Kosiński's *The Painted Bird*

The following chapter is going to deal with the analysis of *The Painted Bird* and how Kosiński's traumatic war experience reflected in his book. His life is still a mystery and no one knows exactly where and how he spent the wartime which is why both known possibilities will be dealt with. Jerzy Kosiński was quite the opposite of earnest Art Spiegelman especially because of his interest in fabrications. He liked to appear as someone quite different and he did not see a clear line between reality and fiction. There were even some speculations about the authorship of his book but these were not proven. A critic once said of Kosiński that he "writes his novels so sparsely as though they cost a thousand dollars a word, and a misplaced or misused locution would cost him his life". He was close to truth: Kosiński took almost three years to write the novel, and rewrote it many times (*The painted Bird*, 1981).

The Painted Bird is a controversial novel describing a six-year-old boy, possibly a Gypsy or Jew, wandering around medieval-like villages and small towns in Eastern Europe during the Second World War. His parents want to hide him and send him to a village from which he, unfortunately, has to run away after his caretaker dies. He wanders from place to place and he experiences dreadful treatment, more often he is tortured and persecuted than taken care of. Not only has he a first-hand experience with evil but he also witnesses the cruel behaviour of the villagers among themselves. We can find a juxtaposition of childhood innocence and the most brutal form of adult experience in the book (Alfonso, 2005, p 3). Behind all this the reader can see indications of the terrors of the war – for instance when the boy sees the transports or when he is hated and feared because of his different appearance.

The reader sometimes has to talk himself into continuing reading as the images are often too vivid, too horrifying. A boy that is well behaved and sensitive at the beginning changes throughout the story and becomes numb in his feelings and even mute because of the trauma that he constantly goes through. He is tirelessly trying to find some order in the world – he attempts to comprehend why people treat him with such heartlessness and what he could do to change it. He tries to find answers in catholic faith, in magic and superstitions and even in the idea of Marxism and Leninism yet he fails to see the silver lining. At the end the reader feels that there is no way back for him and that the terrors marked him forever – he is not able to integrate back into his family that he is reunited with at the end of the war and lives restlessly, finding pleasure in wandering through the night streets.

According to Alfonso (2005), *The Painted Bird* is an important recognition of the other victims of the Holocaust – the European outcasts that are hardly ever heard of. It demonstrates

what society is capable of doing to its own kind because of ethnic origin, gender, religious beliefs or sexual orientation. Furthermore she notices that there is a great danger, due to our instinct of self-preservation, of joining in the flock's savage attack on one another (Alfonso, 2005, p 3).

As was already mentioned, Kosiński's war experience still lies in the shadows and there are more possible options. One of them is that he actually experienced the horrors (or similar ones) that he described in the book and the other one is that he spent the war hidden thanks to the Polish villagers who risked their lives for him and his family. This second explanation admits that Kosiński might have had spent some time parted from his parents, however, some Poles strongly opposed the claim that they would treat him badly. Nonetheless, it is possible that Kosiński experienced bad treatment from some of the villagers or at least knew someone who did as such experiences were not rare. Toivi Blatt (Blatt in Rees, 2005) described the change in the attitude of Poles once the German army arrived:

The [Polish] population noticed that the Jews are second class and you can do with them whatever you want (...) In the end I was more afraid of my neighbours – Christian people – than of the Germans, because the Germans didn't recognize [that I was Jewish] and my neighbours did. (Rees, 2005, p 255)

...

Practically every day farmers who lived nearby came with Jews they caught hiding some place in the fields and handed them in for five pounds of sugar and a bottle of vodka. (Rees, 2005, p 263)

The reaction of Polish people was terrifying in the book. Hundreds of Poles were executed for helping the Jews. However, the rest of the population did not help them and sometimes even hurt them as well which resulted from a long tradition of anti-Semitism before the war (Trew, 1999). Also Art Spiegelman's father described how his friend returned home from a concentration camp when the war ended, however his house was already taken by Poles. He did not know where to go and after they threw him out, he stayed the night in a shed behind the house. "The Poles went in. They beat him and hanged him. For **this** he survived..." (Maus II, 2003, p 292).

The main character often wonders why he is so hated by everyone and realises the hatred against the Jews. The reader is shocked at how the villagers in the book blindly followed Hitler's ideology and felt satisfaction that Jews are being punished at last:

Thousands of those killed by gas were not burned but simply in pits around the camps. The peasants listened to these stories thoughtfully. They said the Lord's punishment had finally reached the Jews. They had deserved it long ago, ever since they crucified Christ. (The Painted Bird, 1981, p 99)

They might have found a religious excuse, however, it seemed more like a pretext for satisfying their hunger for revenge. *The Painted Bird* describes the other side of the coin as well – how the villagers themselves were being tormented by the Kalmuks, black-haired black-eyed and dark-skinned men, which would also partly explain the hatred that the villagers felt towards the small boy who was similar in his appearance. It seemed like a never ending vicious circle of violence:

The peasants instantly recognized them. They screamed in terror that the Kalmuks were coming and the women and children must hide before they could be seized. (*The Painted Bird*, 1981, p 184)

...

Some [the Kalmuks] were already drunk. They rushed into the huts and grabbed the women who were not hidden. The men tried to defend them with their scythes. A Kalmuk cut down one of them with a single stroke of his sabre. Others tried to run away but were stopped by bullet shots. (*The Painted Bird*, 1981, p 185)

Kosiński made many enemies by writing this book – mainly of the Poles who felt very strongly about Kosiński's accusations. Nevertheless, it was proved by many survivors that often they were not treated well by them. One can understand that the terrors described in the book can make a nation angry because nothing is black and white and there were many who helped and Kosiński most likely survived thanks to this generosity. However, also cruel things were happening at the same time and not only from the side of Poles but from many other nations. Only the Danes are talked of as the nation that cared for its Jews and did not want to give them out:

Of the European countries occupied by the Germans, only one emerges untainted by the moral corrosiveness of the "Final Solution": Denmark. A concerted effort by the Danish population enabled 95 per cent of the Jews in the country to be spirited away from the Germans. (Rees, 2005, p 268)

And so – this part of history, however difficult, shameful and burdensome, should not be swept under the rug but confessed in order to move on. Moreover, Kosiński's work should not be taken personally and literally as it is, after all, a fiction – Polanski said that Kosiński did not write documentaries, biographies or autobiographies and that he could write whatever he wanted (Bookmarks Special, 2014). In Kosiński's words: "I am a truth, not facts. And I'm old enough to know the difference" (Bookmarks Special, 2014).

Furthermore, Kosiński's conception of reality interweaved with fiction and even though he maybe had not experience such horrors in reality, they could have been happening inside his

child's mind as child's perception is more sensitive to the manifestations of cruelty around. His attitude towards life was very special – Jerzy's life was as if he was living out a novel – with his fondness for playing different characters, writing his own ending by committing suicide. He said that:

The only way to make life meaningful spiritually is take it moment by moment. You can be decent and important to yourself only if you actually grasp what is happening in this very moment since that's all your life is all about. It is not the past and certainly the future as there might not be any future. And so the only way to make sense out of your life is to define it as indeed if it were a novel. (Bookmarks Special, 2014)

It appears that he truly did not care much about reality and he took his life for a novel – a novel can be based on reality but does not have to be completely true. In a novel the experiences can be embellished or exaggerated and they seem so in the *The Painted Bird*.

War is a traumatizing experience, especially for a child and if a child is forced to live in disguise, to reject his/her identity and to even change birth name, it can have a serious impact on the child's psyche. However, some of the ideas in the book surely were based on reality and even though they were probably exaggerated, this escalation could, as was already mentioned, express how a child perceives evil as he/she is usually even more sensitive to it than adults and thus sees it through different eyes. For instance in chapter five of *The Painted Bird*, the boy has to serve a bird dealer and a cruel man, Lekh, who sometimes treats the birds very viciously:

Lekh would turn the bird over and paint its wings, head, and breast in rainbow hues until it became more dappled and vivid than a bouquet of wildflowers. (...) The painted bird circled from one end of the flock to the other, vainly trying to convince its kin that he was one of them. But, dazzled by its brilliant colors, they flew around it unconvinced. (...) We saw soon afterwards how one bird after another would peel off in a fierce attack. (*The Painted Bird*, 1981, p 50)

On the Bookmarks Special (2014), in dialogues with the Poles that remembered the Lewinkopf (Kosiński) family, one of them mentions a man, a bird keeper, Lech, who once painted a crow white and when he released it, the other crows attacked it so he immediately recalled this situation when getting to know the title of the Kosiński's book.

Also the everyday necessity of the boy to hide from Germans reflected Kosiński's war experience and manifested in his life as well. On Bookmarks Special (2014), a friend of his mentioned that Kosiński invited him and his wife for dinner and told them that where he lived, he had a hiding place and that he would hide somewhere in the apartment and that they would not be able to find him. They waited outside for a moment and then came in, looking for him.

Yet without success. And then, Kosiński's wife knocked on a bookshelf and the door popped open and Jerzy Kosiński appeared crouching behind the books (Bookmarks Special, 2014).

The Painted Bird is filled with inhuman treatment of people and animals and this evil severely influences the boy whose morality is not developed yet and thus is more prone to being manipulated, influenced and mentally damaged. Susan Wolf (in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2015) mentioned that people who had a bad upbringing are unable to make accurate normative judgements because they were taught the wrong values. She likens the people who have been taught the wrong values to people suffering from psychosis because they are unable to make accurate judgements about the world (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2015). A child's brain functions like a sponge and the values and morals are created in interaction with people, society. There is no wonder that after what the small boy in *The Painted Bird* experiences, he is unable to go back to normal and that he is marked for life. He knows nothing about the world yet and he is not even able to recognize that his caretaker died thinking that she was only waiting for her skin to change, like snakes do. He is pressured by the society's cruelty and his loving upbringing is suddenly interrupted and replaced with hatred and torment. He does not understand what is happening and tries to find some meaning in what is happening to him. He starts to believe in magic, superstitions and begins to hate himself for his different appearance for which he is so tormented. The change of his personality begins and because he is vulnerable and unknowing, the change is very fast.

McLeod wrote about Kohlberg's stages of moral development – a person goes through stages of moral development and always solves situations in life based on the stage that he reached most recently. There are premoral/preconventional stages that include orientation on punishment/obedience and orientation on instrumental exchange. The second stage, conventional morality, contains interpersonal conformity and law/order societal conformity and the last stage, postconventional morality, focuses either on social contracts or on universal ethical principles. Only a few people reach the last stage and one cannot skip a stage but once one reaches a certain stage, he does not go back to the previous one (McLeod, 2013). When we look at the six-year-old boy we notice that he remains at the first stage of morality – at first he is focusing on avoiding punishment, trying to find out what to do and how to behave and then he moves on to the instrumental exchange trying to figure out what is in the situations for him – what to do to avoid pain and gain pleasure. At the end of the novel the reader feels that the traumatized boy might never move on to another, higher stage of morality because the numbness spreads not only into his behavioural reactions but also into his emotions and feelings and there are only a few things that he truly cares about.

Jong (on Bookmarks Special, 2014) said that Kosiński used his life as the basis for his art. Writing about the fears, terrors and atrocities that he described so vividly in *The Painted Bird* had the maybe also a function, except shocking the society, of a therapeutic means. By giving his thoughts (and maybe experiences) a certain form, he liberated himself and he was possibly able to understand himself better. He found meaning in suffering and, as Frankl said, this was an essential key to survival – once a man discovers the sense of suffering, he does not have the need to displace it (Frankl, 2006, p 91–92). In fact, hearing about Kosiński's life and his love for wandering around the night streets, sometimes witnessing strange things it seems that he was the young boy from the book who needed suffering in his life to remind him that he was alive. Kosiński appeared to be eager to explore the depths of human soul and of all the capabilities (either positive or negative) that he had. Sometimes the reader feels as if he was fascinated by the evil as such, describing it in so much detail and not being afraid of letting it live in his mind and giving it life through writing.

Another thing that marked Kosiński and reflected strongly in his book was also the problematic attitude towards his appearance. The boy in *The Painted Bird* wishes to look like the others, wishes to fit in because his different appearance is the main source of his misfortunes and suffering:

I wondered what gave people of one color of eyes and hair such great power over other people. (...) I dozed off thinking of the inventions I would like to make... For example, a fuse for the human body which, when lightened, would change old skin for new and alter the color of the eyes and hair. (*The Painted Bird*, 1981, p 93)

...

In my dreams I turned into a tall, handsome man, fair-skinned, blue eyed with hair like pale autumn leaves. (*The Painted Bird*, 1981, p 153)

The boy tried to find some meaning in this discrimination and could not come up with an explanation. “Wouldn't it be easier to change people's eyes and hair than to build big furnaces and then catch Jews and Gypsies to burn in them?” (*The Painted Bird*, 1981, p 103)

Katherina, Kosiński's partner mentioned that skiing was probably his very first love – he went to the mountains right after the war and she said that when skiing he felt totally free. She even communicated an interesting thought that Kosiński shared with her – that he became tall, blonde, blue-eyed, short-nosed while skiing, he felt a total liberation (Bookmarks Special, 2014). This suggests that the discrimination caused by his appearance during the war had to be rooted very deeply inside. He also passed on this freeing quality of going down a mountain onto the

boy in the book who, after a skiing accident, is freed of his inability to speak which gives the reader at least small hope that he could move on in his life.

The animal imagery is often presented in an allegorical way. People are compared to animals; even the main character himself appears to be the “painted bird” left at the mercy of its own uncomprehending and cruel kind. According to Alfonso, comparison to animals mirrors the Nazi treatment of Jews as rodents and the Jews self-identification as powerless and inferior beings. Sometimes animal comparisons are used to intensify the cruelty of people behaving like animals – thinking only about themselves, driven by animal instinct and the lowest drives, often sexual (Alfonso, 2005, p 5). “While I thought of the rats who lived with us, Labina and her guest tossed about in the bed, wheezing and fighting, calling on God and Satan, the man howling like a dog, the woman grunting like a pig” (The Painted Bird, 1981, p 173).

Another time animals are perceived more as silent and gentle companions that the boy is able to build a relationship with, that he trusts and understands – he is one of them being as vulnerable as them:

The squirrel visited me daily, sitting on my shoulder, kissing my ears, neck, and cheeks, teasing my hair with its light touch. After playing it would vanish, returning to the wood across the field. (The Painted Bird, 1981, p 6)

...

The horse occasionally stopped and slumped motionless. Then I would put my arm around his neck, hug him, and lift the broken leg. After a while he would start walking again, as if moved by some recollection, by some thought that had temporarily slipped from his mind. (...) Each of his pained neighs shattered me. (The Painted Bird, 1981, p 82)

The depth of the boy’s suffering is even strengthened by the fact that once he finds a friend – even in an animal – this friend dies. Even in these two examples above, the squirrel is killed by the village boys and the horse has to be put down because of his broken leg. Every time the boy opens up and connects with someone, he is hurt. This happens again with his first love – Ewka, he is deeply hurt when he witnesses her being in a physical relationship with a he-goat and with her brother:

something collapsed inside me. My thoughts fell apart and shattered into broken fragments like a smashed jug. I felt as empty as a fish bladder punctured again and again and sinking into deep, muddy waters. (The Painted Bird, 1981, p 157–158)

...

I did not feel pain anymore. (The Painted Bird, 1981, p 161)

The process of him becoming numb is almost finished in this passage. And the only one who was able to awaken feelings in the boy again was Gavrila, a Red Army soldier who took

care of the now eleven-year-old boy and taught him how to read and also the basic thoughts of Marxism and Leninism which is something that finally made sense in the boy's world. Superstitions and faith did not offer him any explanation for his suffering and he became an admirer of the Communist Party and of Gavrila's opinions:

From him I learned that the order of the world had nothing to do with God and that God had nothing to do with the world. The reason for this was quite simple. God did not exist. (The Painted Bird, 1981, p 197)

...

In this world there were realistic ways of promoting goodness, and there were people who had dedicated their whole lives to it. These were the Communist Party members. (...) The Party could see farther than the best sniper. That was why every member of the Party not only knew the meaning of events, but also shaped them and directed them towards new aims. (The Painted Bird, 1981, p 201)

The boy wanted to stay with Gavrila, even though he was reunited with his parents. After everything he went through he was not able to become a son, being cared for which meant also having to obey his parents who were not able to understand him. He felt like an adult and wanted to be free. He was not able to reconnect with his mother and father and he slept during the day so that he could go out at night and live the only way that he learned to live during the past years:

I was asked to deliver small packages to various addresses, avoiding militiamen and plain-clothesmen. When I returned from these missions the women drew me to their perfumed bodies and encouraged me to lie down with them and caress them in the ways I had learned with Ewka. I felt at ease among these people whose faces were concealed in the darkness of night. (The Painted Bird, 1981, p 246)

There is, again a parallel to Kosiński's life as he often wandered around night streets. He said that he often went out around midnight; sometimes alone, other times with some company and Ted Field mentioned that when he took this company on such tours into sex clubs and so on, he mainly did it because he wanted to see their reactions – as it was already mentioned he loved to be an observer. Kiki Kosiński knew that he had many women companions and some of them he took also into an S&M places – one of these companions expressed her thought that she actually felt like she lived one of his books. She also talked about him being hypersexual which would explain his many mistresses that his wife tolerated (Bookmarks Special, 2014) and also his common description of sexual scenes in his books. When Kosiński was asked about the amount of such scenes, he reacted with these words:

I have seen people mutilated, people beaten and people arrested and people persecuted and people prosecuted and I can say that the only human instinct that we have is actually the instinct that brings us together, that is responsible for life. For me sexuality is the instinct to life, it's nothing to be ashamed of. (Bookmarks Special, 2014)

Kosiński's interest in all kinds of sexual manifestations might have been the result of his past experience and it strikingly reminds us of the main character's experiences. His mind was, in a way, twisted when considering the nature of the scenes in the book and also his special liking for experiencing violence and observing it (with regard to his visits of S&M clubs). Roman Polanski (on Bookmarks Special, 2014) mentioned Kosiński's words about love being something totally invented – feelings belonged to the poets according to him. Dora Militaru, a TV producer, pointed out that he did not like to kiss or touch much and that he was not particularly tender. He justified it with the fact that his mother used to kiss him on the lips, possibly implying that there might be a relationship beyond what is normal among them. However, this might have been also another part of his stories of which no one knew whether they were true (Bookmarks Special, 2014).

Nonetheless, the pre-occupation with sexuality and sexual deviations might suggest an abnormal development of sexuality during childhood. The main character was being exposed to violence and to raw sexual scenes – he was even abused by women (firstly by Stupid Ludmila and then by Ewka) which influenced his perception of healthy relationship between people and the conception of love. According to Evertsz and Miller (2012), children that are abused, exposed to violence suffer from trauma and can have problems such as oppositional defiant disorder, conduct disorder and depression. Unmanaged trauma and stress can lead to cognitive and emotional processing difficulties and lack of trust – exposure to chronic trauma may cause serious developmental and psychological problems for children and their adult life as well (Evertsz, Miller, 2012). As was already mentioned, the loss of speech can appear when a child suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder (NIMH, N. D.) which the main character experienced and it was debated that even Kosiński might have lost his speech for some time, although this was not confirmed. From all the traumatic experiences and violent scenes, sexual violence is probably the most common one in *The Painted Bird* and the reader can just guess whether Kosiński actually witnessed these things that he wrote about. However, his problems with intimacy as for kissing and touching might suggest that his childhood development was somehow disturbed and also his fondness of rough sexual practices seems to be some kind of “replacement” and a way to prove something to himself, and maybe to his companions. Kosiński was also said to be prone to depressions which were likely rooted in his traumatic childhood and which was probably also the reason he committed suicide.

Close calls with death tend to reoccur in his life, starting with the wartime when he had to hide himself from the Germans. Kosiński must have had witnessed the transports. Such scenes are also portrayed in the book, being described vividly and evoking heavy and stifling atmosphere in the reader's imagination:

The peasants watched the trains with curiosity, listening intently to the strange humming sound of the human throng, neither groan, cry, nor song. The train went by, and as it pulled away one could still see against the dark background of the forest disembodied human arms waving tirelessly from the windows. Sometimes at night people travelling on the trains to the crematories would toss their small children through the windows in the hope of saving their lives. (*The Painted Bird*, 1981, p 101)

But this close contact with death did not end with the end of the war – continuing with his first wife's death and with the situation when Kosiński, on his way from Paris to the Beverly Hills home of his friend Roman Polanski and his wife, found out that his luggage was unloaded by mistake in New York and that he had to stay there overnight. That night, in Polanski's household, the Charles Manson Helter-Skelter gang murdered five people and among them was also Kosiński's closest friend (*The Painted Bird*, 1981).

In the end of his life, Kosiński felt depressed and at the age of fifty-eight he finished what a carpenter in *The Painted Bird* tried to do to the small boy: "When I came to, the carpenter was standing nearby preparing a sizeable sack. I remembered that he used to drown sick cats in sacks like this" (*The Painted Bird*, 1981, p 62). In his friend's words, the villagers finally caught up with him and he put a bag over his head and killed himself (*Bookmarks Special*, 2014).

Trauma reflected in Kosinski's life, his mind being shaped by it and the result of this trauma we can observe in his books. We cannot evaluate whether artistic creation (photographs, movie) and writing helped him to get through certain troubling parts of his life as he took his own life at the end. However, it was surely something that he lived for and that allowed him to express himself freely, something that kept him going. A friend of his described his creation saying that books were his children (*Bookmarks Special*, 2014). While reading *The Painted Bird* the reader feels that it meant a lot to him, even from the psychological point of view, as he lived in his novel and he was able to vent everything that was going on in his mind. He was able to give voice to his wartime experience, the closeness of death that followed him and by giving the main role to a small boy, he allowed himself to go back in his memories to those very moments, relive them and possibly leave some of these experiences behind. However, he was marked by it significantly as he was an only a child then and children are influenced by

evil and chaos more for that very reason that they do not have their sense of morality and order internalized yet.

The Painted Bird is a very impressive reading, even awakening. Kosiński's novel offers a unique insight into the Holocaust and wartime through child's eyes and even strengthens one's grief and sense of injustice in realising that he lives in a world in which not even the weakest and the most vulnerable ones are left unprotected from the humans' worst qualities. It also points out the fact that the Nazis were not the only villains of the Holocaust (Alfonso, 2005, p 9).

7.1 The Painted Bird in Classroom

The Painted Bird could also be used to bring one closer the experience of war and it would favourable to compare it with *Maus* because these two books offer two different settings and experiences of wartime. However, it would be better to draw on *The Painted Bird* at secondary schools or universities simply because the scenes in it are often very violent and not suitable for younger students. It is quite necessary to be careful in the choice of the analysed passage and if used with younger students, one should choose such parts that would not describe the worst atrocities that the main character experienced.

The Painted Bird could also provide a background for learning about Jerzy Kosiński in the Literature lessons because his life and personality was influenced by what he had experienced during the war. A project education could be used in which the students would make a research about his life during the war and compare it to some experiences of the main character in the book. Kosiński's controversial character raises many questions which would surely lead to a discussion and thus serve as a tool for the development of the students' critical thinking and their ability to discuss and communicate their opinions.

Eventually, Jerzy Kosiński's work and life could, again, connect topics from psychology and literature, thus serve as a basis for studying the impact of traumatic events on people's life and of possible means of coping with it. In the following lines an example lesson plan will be provided.

Lesson Plan:

The Painted Bird as a Reading Activity in English/Literature Lessons

This topic should be discussed in three lessons at least. After the first introductory lesson for which this lesson plan could be used, students would be asked to search for as many information as they can about the author and then they would compare their results in groups. They

would be encouraged to do the research from more sources and assess the different information they get which could help them develop their critical thinking. If they had Psychology lessons, it would be convenient to discuss how they think the Holocaust trauma reflected in Kosiński's life. The knowledge of the Holocaust should, again, be supported by information provided during History lessons.

- Age group: students of secondary schools (ideally oriented on humanities)
- Class: maximum of 16 students
- Length: 90 minutes
- Tools: extract from the book, board, dictionaries, colours, clean sheets of paper
- Methods: group work, pair work, group discussion

Main goals

- reading comprehension, learning new vocabulary (cognitive domain)
- learning about the Holocaust (cognitive domain)
- students discuss and form an opinion on helping people even if there is danger in it (affective domain)
- students try to write an ending to the story (psychomotor and cognitive domain)

Pre-reading activities:

- Warm-up activity: students should work in pairs – they get a copy of a hand-drawn picture of a dark-haired black-eyed boy and the task of one of them is to describe this picture to his colleague in English, the other one tries to draw the portrait according to the description; later students brainstorm who the boy might be.

Reading:

- Introduction – students are given an extract from the book (see Appendix F: Material for Reading Activity – *The Painted Bird*), quickly go through the first part written in italics and answer questions – where is the boy from? What is happening to him and why? What does he look like?
- Then students read through the rest of the story, they are provided with dictionaries to look up unknown words – these words are then written on the board.
- Students guess what is the title of the book and in groups of 3 – 4 they try to find out what metaphor could be hidden under this title and the story of *The Painted Bird*; then they share their opinions in a group discussion.

Post-reading activities:

- Group discussion about helping people in need even at the costs of being put in danger.
- Students are given a task to try to write how the boy's story will evolve and draw an illustration – how they see and imagine the painted bird.

Conclusion

This diploma thesis deals with the impact of the Holocaust trauma on two generations of authors and their literary work. The main goals were to analyse how trauma reflected in Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and Jerzy Kosiński's *The Painted Bird* and how it influenced their lives as such. Furthermore, the therapeutic impact of writing was mentioned. Both books have a great potential to be used in Psychology lessons when talking about topics such as trauma, posttraumatic stress disorder or the transmission of traumatic experience but also in History, Literature and English lessons.

The theoretical part serves as a basis for the analysis of the works of literature. The practical part of the thesis deals with the analysis of the books – with the reflection of the traumatic experience in it along with its impact on the author's lives and mentions the practical use of the books in the classroom.

Firstly, the textual part of *Maus* was dealt with and secondly the graphic component of Spiegelman's comics was briefly commented on as well. Art Spiegelman experienced the Holocaust through his family which influenced him deeply. Marianne Hirsch called this transmission of trauma as “postmemory” – traumatic events are grasped indirectly by the second generation for example children get to know their parents' story from narrations (Hirsch in Elmwood, 2004, p 4). Spiegelman's life was marked by his father's obsessive behaviour and his constant struggle for survival that was rooted in the wartime experience and also by his problematic relationship with his mother, who committed suicide, and with his dead brother. His father passed on his own feeling of guilt for surviving while others have not onto Art Spiegelman who, too, felt guilty for having a better life than his family. Spiegelman often used artistic creation as therapy – for example his *The New Yorker* cover *In the Shadow of No Towers* reacted on the September 11th and *Maus* also served as a way of coming to terms with his family troublesome history and finding his own place in this family from which he was excluded. Moreover, thanks to creating *Maus* he was finally able to establish a relationship with his father.

Jerzy Kosiński was a man full of contradictions and he did not differentiate much between fiction and reality which is why his book *The Painted Bird* provoked very controversial reactions. Even though in reality he might have not experienced the things that he described, he experienced them in his mind. His traumatic childhood surely had an impact on his writing and on his personal development – possibly it was behind his predisposition to depression which finally caught up with him when he committed suicide. Furthermore, the main character bears similar traits to the author

and at least some of the depicted experiences were indeed based on reality. Also the boy's way of dealing with the trauma was strikingly similar to the one of Kosiński – he also enjoyed wandering through night streets, experiencing peculiar situations and exploring the depths of human soul. Writing could have been a way for the author to come to terms with what was happening inside his mind and all of his artistic creation was everything to him, it kept him going.

Writing is a powerful tool and even though the books' main purpose was not therapeutic for these two authors, they surely had this effect as well. It is a good way of re-experiencing the past trauma in order to understand it, deal with it and move on.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Photos of Jerzy Kosiński and Katherina von Fraunhofer



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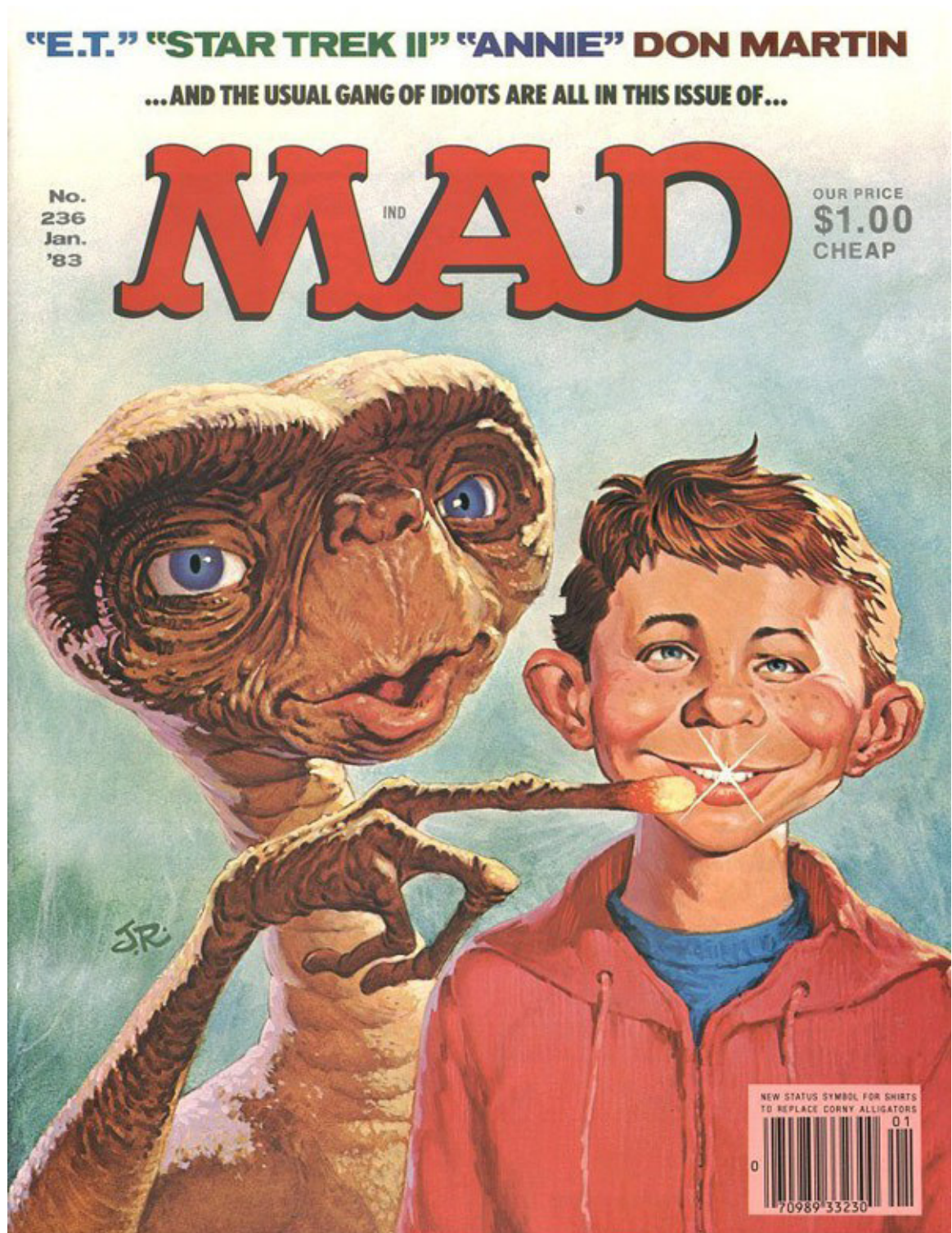


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(Figure 9: *Art Spiegelman*; Lambiek Comiclopedia. Art Spiegelman. *lambiek.net*. [online]. 2016. October 2. [cit. 2016-03-07]. Dostupný z WWW: <https://www.lambiek.net/artists/s/spiegelman.htm>)



(Figure 9: *Art Spiegelman*; LAUTENS, R. Toronto Star. *thestar.com*. [online]. 2014. December 17. [cit. 2016-03-07]. Dostupný z WWW: http://www.thestar.com/life/2015/01/02/three_things_to_do_this_weekend_jan_2_to_jan_4_2015.html



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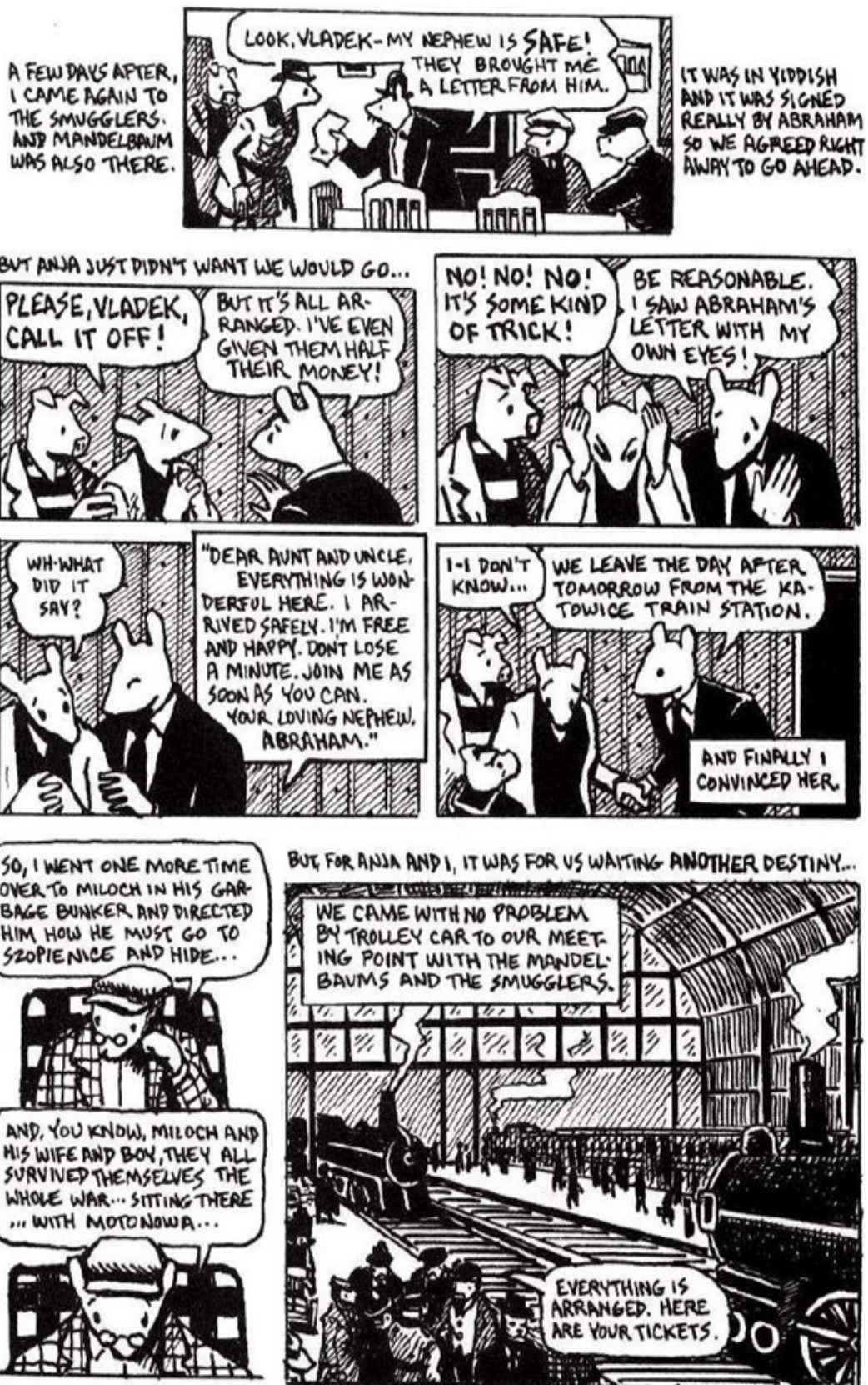
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(Figure 12: Maus I; Spiegelman, 2003, p 157)



(Figure 12: *Maus I*; Spiegelman, 2003, p 159)

Appendix F: Material for Reading Activity – *The Painted Bird*

In the first weeks of World War II, in the fall of 1939, a six-year-old boy from a large city in Eastern Europe was sent by his parents, like thousands of other children, to the shelter of a distant village.

A man travelling eastward agreed for a substantial payment to find temporary foster parents for the child. Having little choice, the parents entrusted the boy to him. In sending the child away the parents believed that it was the best means of assuring his survival through the war.

The villages in which he was to spend the next four years differed ethnically from the region of his birth. The local peasants, isolated and inbred, were fair-skinned with blond hair and blue or gray eyes. The boy was olive-skinned, dark-haired and black-eyed. He spoke a language of the educated class, a language barely intelligible to the peasants of the east. He was considered a Gypsy or Jewish stray, and harbouring Gypsies or Jews, whose place was in ghettos and extermination camps, exposed individuals and communities to the harshest penalties at the hands of the Germans. (The Painted Bird, 1981, p 1, 2)

...

On the way home we set more traps; Lekh was tired and withdrawn. In the evening, when the birds fell asleep in their cages, he cheered up. Restless, he spoke of Ludmila. His body trembled, he giggled, closing his eyes. His white pimply cheeks grew flushed.

Sometimes days passed and Stupid Ludmila did not appear in the forest. Lekh would become possessed by a silent rage. He would stare solemnly at the birds in the cages, mumbling something to himself. Finally, after prolonged scrutiny, he would choose the strongest bird, tie it to his wrist, and prepare stinking paints of different colors which he mixed together from the most varied components. When the colors satisfied him, Lekh would turn the bird over and paint its wings, head, and breast in rainbow hues until it became more dappled and vivid than a bouquet of wildflowers.

Then we would go into the thick of the forest. There Lekh took out the painted bird and ordered me to hold it in my hand and squeeze it lightly. The bird would begin to twitter and attract a flock of the same species which would fly nervously over our heads. Our prisoner, hearing them, strained toward them, warbling more loudly, its little heart, locked in its freshly painted breast, beating violently.

When a sufficient number of birds gathered above our heads, Lekh would give me a sign to release the prisoner. It would soar, happy and free, a spot of rainbow against the backdrop of clouds, and then plunge into the waiting brown flock. For an instant the birds were confounded. The painted bird circled from one end of the flock to the other, vainly trying to convince its kin that it was one of them. But, dazzled by its brilliant colors, they flew around it unconvinced. The painted bird would be forced farther and farther away as it zealously tried to enter the ranks of the flock. We saw soon afterwards how one bird after another would peel off in a fierce attack. Shortly the many-hued shape lost its place in the sky and dropped to the ground. When we finally found the painted bird it was usually dead. (The Painted Bird, 1981, p 49, 50)

Resumé

Práce se zabývá analýzou knih *Maus* a *Malované ptáče*, obzvláště pak vlivem traumatu spojeného s Holocaustem na tvorbu a životy autorů. Autorská tvorba byla prožitým traumatem hluboce ovlivněna, v případě Arta Spiegelmana byla analýza zaměřena obzvláště na přenos traumatu na další generace – skrze otce/rodinu na syna. Jerzy Kosiński byl válkou bezprostředně poznamenán a jelikož těmito zážitky prošel již v dětství, měly vliv na vývoj jeho osobnosti. Přestože u něj není možné s jistotou rozlišit, co je pravdou a co fikcí, jisté je, že zážitky popsané v knize prožil, ať už na vlastní kůži nebo ve svých myšlenkách. Hlavním cílem bylo poukázat na způsoby reflektování těchto zážitků do tvorby a životů autorů se zaměřením na volbu literární tvorby jako způsobu terapie, znovuprožití a najetí východisek z tíživé situace. Součástí práce jsou také přípravy na využití zmíněné literatury při výuce.

Annotation

Jméno a příjmení:	Bc. Klára Vémolová
Katedra:	Anglického jazyka
Vedoucí práce:	Mgr. Andrea Hoffmannová, Ph.D.
Rok obhajoby:	2016

Název práce:	Literární tvorba jako terapie: Vliv Holocaustu na dvě generace autorů
Název v angličtině:	Writing as Therapy: The Impact of the Holocaust Trauma on Two Generations of Authors
Anotace práce:	Práce se zabývá vlivem Holocaustu a s ním spojeného traumatu na literární tvorbu a životy dvou generací autorů. V teoretické části jsou zmíněny životopisy autorů, dále se práce zabývá tématem traumatu a posttraumatické stresové poruchy, fázemi odlidštění vězňů v koncentračních táborech a teoretickým vymezením literární tvorby jak terapie a komiksu jako terapie. Praktická část obsahuje analýzu Spiegelmanova díla <i>Maus</i> a Kosińskiho díla <i>Malované Ptáče</i> , obzvláště pak se zaměřením na projevy traumatických zážitků v dílech a krátce zmiňuje možné využití těchto knih ve výuce.
Klíčová slova:	Art Spiegelman, <i>Maus</i> , Jerzy Kosiński, <i>Malované Ptáče</i> , trauma, posttraumatická stresová porucha, literární tvorba a komiks jako terapie, vliv Holocaustu
Anotace v angličtině:	The diploma thesis deals with the impact of the Holocaust trauma on the literary creation of two generations of authors and on their lives. The theoretical part focuses on the biographies of the authors, on the topic of trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder, on the stages of depersonalization of the prisoners in concentration camps and on the theory of writing as therapy and comic book therapy as such. The practical part deals with the analysis of Art Spiegelman's <i>Maus</i> and Jerzy Kosiński's <i>The Painted Bird</i> and with how trauma reflects in these works of art and their lives. It also provides few ideas of implementing these books into education.
Klíčová slova v angličtině:	Art Spiegelman, <i>Maus</i> , Jezy Kosiński, <i>The Painted Bird</i> , trauma, posttraumatic stress disorder, writing as therapy, comic book therapy, the impact of Holocaust

Přílohy vázané v práci:	<p>Appendix A: Photos of Jerzy Kosiński and Katherina von Fraunhofer</p> <p>Appendix B: MAD Magazine</p> <p>Appendix C: Art Spiegelman's The New Yorker covers</p> <p>Appendix D: Art Spiegelman and His Family</p> <p>Appendix E: Material for Reading Activity – <i>Maus</i></p> <p>Appendix F: Material for Reading Activity – <i>The Painted Bird</i></p>
Rozsah práce:	87 s
Jazyk práce:	Angličtina