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Holocaust in Cartoon

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Prohlášení:

Prohlašuji, že jsem závěrečnou práci vypracoval samostatně a použil jen prameny uvedené v seznamu literatury.

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CONTENTS

Introduction.....	7
1.Cartoon.....	9
1.1 Comics,,,,,,.....	9
1.2 Graphic novel.....	11
1.3 Difference between comics and graphic novel.....	12
2. Holocaust.....	13
2.1 Definition of the Holocaust.....	13
2.2 Anti-Semitism.....	14
2.3 Concentration camps – Auschwitz.....	14
3. Reflection of the Holocaust in Literature.....	16
3.1 The difficulty of capturing the Holocaust into writing.....	16
3.2 Second-Generation writers.....	17
4. Art Spiegelman.....	19
5. The Analysis of Maus.....	22
5.1 Plot summary.....	22
5.1.1 Summary of the first volume „My Father Bleeds History‘.....	23
5.1.2 Summary of the second volume „And Here My Troubles Began‘.....	24
5.2 The Form.....	25
5.2.1 Colours.....	25
5.2.2 Drawing form.....	26
5.2.3 Comic form.....	27
5.2.4 Form of writing.....	29
5.3 Writing difficulties.....	30
5.4 Animal metaphor.....	31
5.4.1 Exceptions to the characters portrayal.....	34
5.4.1.1 Photographs.....	34
5.4.1.2 Prisoner on the Hell Planet.....	35
5.5 Relationships in Maus.....	36
5.5.1 Relationship between Vladek and Art.....	36
5.5.2 Relationship between Vladek and Mala.....	38
5.5.3 Relationship between Art and Richieu.....	39
5.5.4 Relationship between Art and Anja.....	40

5.6 Other themes in Maus.....	40
Conclusion.....	42
Bibliography.....	43
List of Figures.....	45
Resumé.....	46
Anotation.....	47

ABSTRACT

The thesis deals with the representation of the serious topic of the Holocaust in a comic book form. The main aim of this work is graphic and stylistic analysis of the novel *Maus* by American author A. Spiegelman and interpretation of the Holocaust and its affect on people.

INTRODUCTION

I've always been interested in the history of the Second World War. Especially in the stories from the witnesses who experienced the events during the war. I think it's very important to be aware of what happened and how destructive war can be. All written and spoken stories, documents and other evidences describing World War II and the Holocaust are the testimonies of what humans are capable of. I find the Holocaust the most terrifying event in the history of mankind therefore I think knowing our own history is a necessity. History often repeats itself and it can all possibly happen again. We still have to remind this to ourselves and pass on the memory.

Not only that I'm interested in the era of the World War II, I'm also a big fan of art. Although I didn't know very much about comics genre before, once I heard about the concept of the book I decided to read it and I found the mixture of the two completely different genres (history and comic) very interesting and inspiring. This controversial way of describing the holocaust has let me to choose this book as my bachelor thesis.

The main aim of my bachelor thesis is to subject that history and especially sensitive and heavy subject such as Holocaust can be presented in a different way without losing its authenticity and sincerity. The story of the Holocaust survivor is a proof that even a cartoon is able to capture such a serious topic and it can leave a profound feeling in us. I will focus on analysis of these different subjects in connection with a novel *Maus* by Art Spiegelman.

In the beginning of my thesis I found necessary to explain theoretical terms we couldn't go any further without. In the first chapter of theoretical part I will focus on the various definitions of the term cartoon. I divided this chapter into three subchapters in which I will explain the term Comics and its difficulty to classify the genre. The problem of capturing the content of the story via written text and the pictures. The fact that every kind of artistic expression or medium has its pros and cons and author has to capture the story using different techniques. I will also explain rather new term Graphic novel and the difference between Comics.

Next section of the theoretical part I decided to focus on the historical background of *Maus* which will helps us to gain more profound sense of the events happened behind the narration of the main character Vladek. Therefore in chapter two of the theoretical part I will discuss the term holocaust more closely. I will aim mainly on the definition and the origin of the terms Holocaust, Anti-Semitism and I will also mention the concentration camp – Auschwitz with a brief description and history of this place.

Chapter three is aimed on Holocaust in the literature. I wanted to explain the difficulty of capturing the Holocaust in writing. There are many problems in the process of creating a story about such a heavy topic and *Maus* is a great example.

Spiegelman and his work are discussed in the practical part of my thesis. In chapter four I decided to very briefly sum up Spiegelman's life, his family background and motives to write his novel *Maus* which is necessary to fully understand the book. Chapter five will introduce us to the book itself. I will start with a short introduction of the book and in the subchapter I will sum up a plot of the story chapter by chapter by highlighting the most important events of the story.

In the chapter five I will aim on the analysis of *Maus* and I will deal with the book in a deeper context. In this section of my thesis I will try to reveal the secret of the book and the reason why this book is so special. In the beginning of the chapter the form of representation of the story will be discussed in more detail. Usage of the colors (black and white, colorful), drawing form and a way Spiegelman was able to portray the main characters. The form of the narration and the technique Spiegelman was using to translate Vladek's story into the comic. Form of writing and difficulties he had to face when he was writing *Maus*. Second part of the practical section I will discuss the animal metaphor, which is the major element which makes this book unique, symbolism and the relationships between each of the characters in the book.

1. Cartoon

First of all, I would like to discuss the term cartoon. Modern dictionaries such as *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* refers to cartoons as "1) a drawing in a newspaper or magazine intended as a humorous comment on something; 2) a series of drawings that tell a story; 3) a film or television show made by photographing a series of drawings: an animated film or television; 4) A Comic Strip; 5) a ludicrously simplistic, unrealistic, or one-dimensional portrayal or version. "

To sum up the definition, *cartoon in general* means colourful drawing or animation that also includes some sort of story line. The length of cartoon can be just one picture or it could be a whole cartoon movie. It depends on medium being used.

We associate cartoons mostly with fairy tales or other pieces in comedy genre. Despite this fact we can assume that cartoon is purely fun no matter which medium we refer to from animated movie, newspaper cartoons to comic strips.

The title „Holocaust in Cartoon“ used in my thesis refers to the fact that even cartoon could handle a serious topic such as Art Spiegelman’s *Maus*. It also pushes against the stereotype of public view of cartoon and more specifically comics.

1.1 Comics

Definitions of comic

If we try to define comic we will probably struggle to find a definition explaining this genre properly. These definitions we find in dictionaries, encyclopaedias and academic literature are mostly insufficient. Therefore I will introduce some of the definitions.

The reason the most literary experts are unsatisfied with the term is that it lacks complexity and adequate margins of the criteria (McCloud, 1993). In public the most usual description of comic is low-quality colourful magazine for children published on weekly or monthly basis. There are famous comic characters such as Spiderman, Batman or another popular comic heroes. This is the comic but not all of the comics are low-quality and they are not always supposed to be read by children. This is the general public view of this genre. However, even popular dictionaries contribute to this opinion. *Cambridge dictionaries Online*, *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* or *Oxford Learner’s Dictionary* define

comics as "a magazine, especially for children, that tells story through pictures" or "a magazine for children that tells a story using comic strips".

To breakthrough this stereotypic view we can find some more sophisticated definitions to this topic. American cartoonist and comics theorist Scot McCloud wasn't satisfied with the definition when he first came across comic books. He started to study comics and he was looking for an adequate definition. In his book *Understanding Comics* he explains comic as "*juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or produce an aesthetic response in the viewer*" (McCloud 1993).

There are many definitions nowadays. However, McCloud's definition is the most commonly used description of comics. His statement gives us understanding of a comic as a connection of both words and texts which also gives us some information value. We will stick with this explanation of the term. As I mentioned before he wasn't only writer who tried to define comics.

Another respected comic's theorist David Kunzle stated: "*I would propose a definition in which a 'comic strip' of any period, in any country, fulfils the following conditions: 1) There must be a sequence of separate images; 2) There must be a preponderance of image over text; 3) The medium in which the strip appears and for which it is originally intended must be reproductive, that is, in printed form, a mass medium; 4) The sequence must tell a story which is both moral and topical.*" (Groensteen, 2009).

This definition is also frequently used and it has more strict margins of the term. It consists of specific rules which have to be followed to define a comic. However, it lacks of simplicity.

American researcher Bill Blackbeard showed his disagreement in Kunzle's definition. He denied every single condition that Kunzle made. On the other hand he constructed his very own explanation of comics: "*A serially published, episodic, open-ended dramatic narrative of series of linked anecdotes recurrent identified characters, told in successive drawings regularly enclosing ballooned dialogue or its equivalent and generally minimal text.*" (Groensteen, 2009).

There is no doubt Blackbeard's definition is very simple and straightforward and he simplified characteristics of comics in matter of its structure as he mentioned "ballooned dialogue". Another theorist Will Eisner refers to the special term "Sequential art", the fact that the comics consist of sequences of images (Groensteen, 2009). In 1972 French theorist Pierre Couperie explained comics as: "*Comics is probably a storytelling(but it's not a rule), presented sequences of picture in comics created by one or more artist(attempt to eliminate*

film or photo-novel), images are fixed (difference from cartoon) and multiple (difference from novel's engraving) and they are lined up next to each other....” (Groensteen, 2009).

There is no single definition we would pick up as the right description of the genre but if we sum up all the theses, comics is in general an interaction between images and words. When we look at more ordinary literary forms such as books, articles or poems, there're only words. It's the only medium we can use to understand the story or writer's thoughts. We use our imagination through these words. On the other hand when we read a comic book we are very limited in our imagination because of the images presented to us. We can assume that we read images as well as words in the “speech bubbles”. I previously mentioned Kunzle's definition of proportion images over text which is in comic genre vital. The lack of ability to create our own imagination of the background of the story such as character appearance or background settings would take us back from reading a comic book.

Comic would function as a presentation. Author of comics presents his imagination both visually and in written form. To define comics as the literary form only for children audience isn't appropriate but it's clear that this medium of an art expression is suitable for children especially for the smaller ones much more than any other literary forms.

1.2 Graphic novel

Definitions of graphic novel

Maus is very frequently called a graphic novel. Before we define the term, let's have a look into the history. Graphic novel, although there is no clear evidence who came up with this term first, we can assume that famous American comic artist Will Eisner was the first one who popularized this term. There is an interesting story behind it.

Will Eisner wanted to publish his book called *A Contract with God*. He knew that the publisher wouldn't buy his book due to the fact that it was comics so he cleverly came up with the term graphic novel. After telling the publisher he has no comics but graphic novel they agreed to consider it but unfortunately once they found out that it was just a comic, they did not agree to publish it. Eisner then contacted a smaller publishing company where his graphic novel was successfully released (Groensteen, 2009).

Oxford Learner's Dictionary defines a graphic novel as "an American and British usage for a type of text combining words and images—essentially a comic, although the term most commonly refers to a complete story presented as a book rather than a periodical".

Unlike the comic books, graphic novels consist of the stories with more complex plots and with longer and more sophisticated format. They are also sold in the bookstores rather than in the newsstands (McCloud, 1993).

As with a comic there is no strict definition of a term graphic novel. As we can see it consists of two words, graphic means images or the comics form and novel indicates fictional story behind the visual adaptation.

1.3 Difference between comics and graphic novel

The story of Eisner tells us that there is no big difference between comics and graphic novel. Someone would say that comics and graphic novel is exactly the same thing but named differently.

The term graphic novel came into public view in 1970's after comics had already been around for years. There are no enacted rules to define distinction between comics and graphic novel. Common public opinion on difference between graphic novels and comics is that graphic novels usually contain much more serious content than comics. This is the most common distinction. Therefore Graphic novels are aimed mainly on mature audience. Graphic novels have also often much longer and complex story than comics and they are not published weekly or monthly like many comics. Beside this as i mentioned there aren't strict criteria to distinguish the difference (McCloud, 2008).

Art Spiegelman's *Maus* is frequently called a Graphic novel due to its heavy content. However, in an interview from *Guardian* newspapers from 2001, Spiegelman mentioned that he prefers his work to be called comics. He stated that graphic novel would be more preferable due to the content of the book but he prefers the term comics. Despite it is comic, no matter of the seriousness of the storyline.

2. Holocaust

In this chapter I will focus on the explanation of the Holocaust and its origin. Spiegelman's life and his work were deeply connected with the Holocaust therefore I assumed it is necessary to reveal this topic. Essentially it will give us more detailed information of the background of Spiegelman's life and his work.

The dark era of holocaust influenced every aspect of ordinary life of the people. These experiences reflected also in art and literature. Many artists and writers whether they have had actual experience with war and holocaust or they belonged to the new generation dealt with this theme of human suffering from the World War II era.

2.1 Definition of the Holocaust

The Holocaust, holocauste, šoa, churban, porjamos or „*Final solution*“ - all these terms define one and only fact. It's one of the most horrifying expressions of anti-Semitism in the history of mankind. We can define the holocaust as a systematic persecution and murder of people marked as the Jews operated by a state. It was done by Nazi Germany and their partisans during the World War II. (*Historie holocaustu [on-line]*). However, the term Holocaust can be also used as a designation for extermination of a specific group of individuals.

The term Holocaust first appeared in late 1950's and it is related to Jewish tragedy during the World War II. According to Walter Laqueur (2001) the word Holocaust in matter of its origin is quite inappropriate term because it comes from Greek - holokausto 'burnt whole' which means religious sacrifice. Of course it isn't relevant to World War II events in Europe.

Yehuda Bauer (2002) explains the term Holocaust as the extreme humiliation of millions of Jews, as the brutal murders by different weapons - using gas in gas chambers or executed by gunshot. Starvation and diseases were also major causes of death. It implied also murders of children. Holocaust didn't mean suffering only for people who were killed but also for the victim's families and the survivors who had to deal with this experience. It means that holocaust impact spread on the whole generations.

Great deal of empathy and imagination is needed for young generations to understand what happened to the Jews during World War II even of the half century distance. (Laqueur, 2001).

2.2 Anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitism is closely connected with the Holocaust therefore in this chapter I will focus on this term. We can understand the term anti-Semitism as an expression of hostility, prejudice or hatred against the Jews. It doesn't matter if it concerns individual or people of different ethnical or religious background. Either way we have to understand anti-Semitism as a manifestation of hatred, racism and xenophobia. The first part of the word anti-Semitism, anti, reflects negation, something which has negative aspect while a word Semitism refers to the different groups Semitic-speaking people. In general, the word anti-Semitism can be understood as an expression of hatred against Jewish race. The modern understanding of the term anti-Semitism is not connected with any other Semitic-speaking group.

Anti-Semitism has its roots in ancient times. For the whole history of mankind the Jews were considered as a subordinate and unclean race. We can date the beginning of persecution of Jews at the beginning of A. D. year (Gregorian calendar). The persecution is connected with crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Jews were called the murderers of Jesus Christ. The main reason for the negative attitude towards the Jews was the Christian Church. Around the year 303 A. D. the Christian Church was recognized and equalized within the other religions in the Roman Empire. From this year the church gained its power very quickly. After few decades Christianity became the main state religion. There was simply no space for other religions. Repression against the groups of people of other religions and pagans took place. This hostile conditions set the ground for the anti-Semitic policy.

2.3 Concentration camps – Auschwitz

In the practical part of my thesis we will analyze the book *Maus* more deeply therefore we also need to look more closely at the concentration camp Auschwitz. The Author of the book proceeds from his father's experiences connected with this camp.

Concentration camp Auschwitz was situated in Silesia, Poland. It consisted of network of concentration and extermination camps which were built and controlled by Third Reich during World War II. Auschwitz was the largest of all the concentration camps operated by Germany. Camp was consisted of three major camps, called Auschwitz I (the Stammlager or base camp), Auschwitz II-Birkenau (the Vernichtungslager or extermination camp); Auschwitz

III-Monowitz, which was also known as Buna-Monowitz (a labor camp); and 45 satellite camps or sub-camps.

Today's number of the Auschwitz victims were calculated on 1.3 million. We also know that 90% of people who didn't survive the camp were Jews among them there were other nationalities and ethnics as 150,000 Poles, 23,000 Roma and Sinti, 15,000 Soviet war prisoners and about 400 Jehovah's Witnesses. We can't forget that nationalities and different ethnic groups were only victims of the concentration camp. People with physical and mental disabilities and for example homosexuals were also among the victims (Gutman, 1998). Those who didn't die in the gas chambers died of starvation, forced labor, infectious diseases, executions and medical experiments which were very common in the concentration camps.

Auschwitz I functioned as an administrative center, it was a place of the deaths of nearly 70,000 people. They consisted mostly of ethnic Poles and Soviet war prisoners. Auschwitz II was an extermination camp or Vernichtungslager, at least 960,000 Jews, 75,000 Poles, and nearly 21,000 Roma were killed in this area of concentration site Auschwitz. Auschwitz III-Monowitz functioned as a labor camp. This third part of Auschwitz camp site wasn't aimed to exterminate prisoners. (Auschwitz - concentration and extermination camp [on-line]).

3. Reflection of the Holocaust in literature.

We moved from the definitions of comics, graphic novel and history of the holocaust to literature. It is important to discuss the topic of writing about Holocaust because the difficulty of capturing Holocaust and its consequences is a huge part of *Maus*. I will focus on this topic on the theoretical level and explain common issues connected with writing about the Holocaust.

As I mentioned in the introduction, having written testimonies of the events during Second World War and holocaust is necessary and it cannot be forgotten. Rosenfeld in his book *A Double Dying: Reflections on Holocaust Literature* (1988, 206, 215) stated: “*One of the major functions of the Holocaust literature is to register and record the enormity of human loss...memory must be kept alive at all cost and the agents of memory preserved from further destruction.....writing about the Holocaust is irreplaceable source of experiences and knowledge*”.

On the other hand Holocaust literature serves us as a reminder that not all of the humanity has been lost: “*Holocaust literature reminds us of all that has been destroyed and of all what has not been destroyed.*” (Rosenfeld, 1988). However, the writing process of this genre of literature and representation of such a heavy issue is very difficult due to its serious and inexpressible content. Nevertheless, the Holocaust literature has become very popular genre and it has developed in a big scale of different variations of writings.

It has become widely spread literature in forms of the diaries of victims, memoirs of survivors, documents and chronicles which were collected, assembled and formed into achieves and „memorial books”. There are also short stories and novels related to the Holocaust which were written by witnesses of the atrocities in the concentration camps as well as the poetry and drama related to this topic (Young, 2000).

3.1 The difficulty of capturing the Holocaust into writing

I have already mentioned the difficulty of writing in this genre especially for those writers who haven't experienced the destruction of the war and holocaust. However, even the survivor writers had to deal with moral dilemma. Describing the events they had witnessed were obviously serious problem especially to put it to the readers in an authentic and honest way. Moreover, they had to face their own trauma by searching back in their memories. Apart

from the living whiteness there are writings from the authors who didn't survive the holocaust. This kind of literature consist in most cases of diaries and memoirs written during the war, found and published after the war by the remaining family members or other relatives (Kolář, 2004).

The Diary of Anne Frank which is well known book written by a teenage girl who was hiding in the attic with her family. This book is very popular due to its breathtaking authenticity. Anne died in a concentration camp and her diary was published by her father after the war.

Besides, the actual whiteness of the war we have fiction writers who haven't experienced the war. There are many writers dealing with a Second World War and the Holocaust, whether it's a fictional story or semi-fictional based on a truth, e.g., *Schindler's Ark* by Australian novelist Thomas Keneally or John Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*. These writers had to structure their stories according to the historical facts or by the interpretation of the whiteness of Holocaust. On the other hand this makes their stories less authentic. Moreover, they had to be conscious whether it's adequate to write about something they have absolutely no idea about and what it was like.

In this case we are talking especially about American writers. They had quite small firsthand experience with the Second World War and the Holocaust therefore they wrote mostly about the Second World War in general. Mostly about the historical aspects, effects on people after the war and the absurdity of the war using non limited blend of autobiography, history and fiction (Kolář, 2004).

3.2 Second-Generation writers

The term 'second generation of Holocaust literature' has been widely spread by critics Alan Berger and Efraim Sicher who named this kind of literature based on the psychological studies of the children of survivors of the Holocaust especially the Jewish survivors (Young, 1988). This subgenre basically contains writers which have connection to Holocaust via their parents. They haven't experienced the Holocaust or the war but they were present in their life and they have been affected by it.

Maus is a typical example of a book written by Second-Generation Holocaust writer. The author has experienced the consequences of the Holocaust through their parents. The

theme of Second-Generation has a huge part in *Maus*. I will discuss this topic in the practical part.

4. Art Spiegelman

Art Spiegelman was born on 15th February 1948 in Stockholm, Sweden to Jewish war refugees Vladek and Anja, survivors of the concentration camp in Auschwitz and Dachau. Spiegelman's parents were originally from Bielsk, Poland. After the Second World War they moved to Sweden and they had their second son Art (born Itzhak Avraham ben Zeev). Their first son Richieu was born in Poland and he didn't survive the Holocaust. Spiegelman's family immigrated to the United States in 1951 after they obtained visa. Art's name was after their arrival in the United States registered as Arthur Isadore. As soon as they settled they changed his name to Art.

The family initially settled in Norristown, Pennsylvania but later relocated to Rego Park, New York in 1957. There he spent most of his childhood. His interest in cartoons started in 1960, influenced by his favourite comic magazine Mad he started to create his own. After this moment he was decided to become a comics artist although his parents wanted him to be a doctor. Spiegelman mentioned the beginning of his passion later in his biography called *Breakdowns: Portrait of the Artist as a Young %@&*!:* „By puberty, when asked what I would be when I grew up, I often answered: *Neurotic.*” (Spiegelman, 2008).

As a youngster he didn't fit among other children. He described his inability to participate in baseball due to his lazy eye (he has limited spatial vision). Those who couldn't play were excluded from children society. He started to spend his spare time in libraries stuck to his 2-D world (Spiegelman, 2008).

In 1961, Art published his first work in local newspapers in Queens. He was thirteen. Unfortunately, the newspapers made fun of him as they presented his drawing entitled as „*Budding artist wants attention!*”. After he enrolled High School of Art and Design the same newspapers decided to change their mind and wanted him to work for them as a freelancer. He also made some extra money creating drawings for trading cards for company called Topps Chewing Gum Inc (Spiegelman, 2008).

In 1960's, Spiegelman was swept away by new generation of comics writers and upcoming generation of hippies. Underground comics was hugely spread among young cartoon artists. The main criterion of this genre was to break every rule possible. Breaking taboo was priority for this comics style. As we know in 60's sex and drugs took place and reflected on every branch of art, comics included. As Spiegelman said: „*Underground comics dominating by sex, dope and transgressive genre stories.*” (Spiegelman, 2008).

Spiegelman enrolled Harper College in Binghamton in 1965 and studied art and philosophy. He met Robert Crumb, very influential person in Spiegelman's life. Art took over Crumb's life style and started experimenting with LSD which was quite common drug among the underground scene and nonconventional artists. Crumb showed him his work which influenced Spiegelman's vision of art. He also experimented with comics form, e.g. size of the panels, letters, etc. In this era he published his avant-garde work including *The East Village Others*, *Little Signs of Passion*, *Real Dream* containing erotica and transgressive humour in several underground magazines such as *Real Pulp*, *Young Lust* and *Bizzare Sex*.

In 1970's he suffered numerous psychical breakdowns and he was also hospitalized. Things started getting bad when his mother committed suicide leaving no note in 1968. After he left the hospital he returned to Harper College and met Ken Jacobs, Bill Griffith and Justin Green. All of them they were very influential but Ken Jacobs, teacher at Suny College in Binghamton, was his biggest mentor he had. He changed his understanding of art. On his cinema classes he first came up with mice for his new comics (Spiegelman, 2011). Later Spiegelman marked Jacobs as one of the most important persons in his life, though he also mentioned Harvey Kurtzman, the creator of *Mad* as the initial provider of his artistic inspiration. His artistic visions took different direction as he didn't want to deal with the underground comics elements (erotica, taboo, etc.) anymore. Spiegelman started to focus on his own family background. Knowing about his family history he began to work on stories based on true facts.

In 1978 he published a collection of his work entitled *Breakdowns*. This book contains his comics from underground era, very unconventional and experimental, as well as his very new comic strips *Maus* and *Prisoner on the Hell Planet* which were absolutely different compared to his previous work. *Prisoner on the Hell Planet* deals with his mother's suicide and expression of his feelings towards her. *Maus* is very first publication of a comics which tells a story of his family during the Second World War. This first version of *Maus* contains only two pages and it's about Art depicted as a small mouse lying in a bed while his father Vladek is telling him a story about getting caught and transported to Auschwitz.

During 1975 – 1976, Spiegelman and his friend Bill Griffith published short comic revue *Arcade* due to decrease of quality of San Francisco comics artists. Writers such as Robert Crumb, Kim Deith, Justin green, Bill Griffith and Spain Rodriguez contributed as well. However, Art was already decided about his future artistic direction and started to rewrite *Maus*. First part of this narrative comics appeared in *RAW magazine*. Underground comics and graphics anthology founded by Spiegelman and his wife in 1980. *Raw magazine* contained fiction and non-fiction comics strips by European artists and Art's previous work as well. Both

RAW and *Maus* led Spiegelman's career on the top. Many publishing companies wanted to work with him. Spiegelman took a job as an illustrator in *New York Times*. He also became cartoonist for *Playboy*, staff artist and bitter for *The New Yorker*.

In 2000 Art and his wife started to publish comic-books for children called *Little Lit* which consisted of comics anthology of works collected from comics artists such as Chris Ware, Neil Gaiman, and Daniel Clowes. This comics anthology has a huge success among children with story like *Open Me...I'm a Dog!* (1997), which was first published by Harper Collins back in 1997.

In 2004 Spiegelman published *In the Shadow of No Towers*, a collection of broadsheet-sized meditations on mortality and the far-reaching consequences of 9/11 terrorist attacks. In 2008 he released *Breakdowns: Portrait of the Artist as a Young %@&*!*. Graphic memoir which consists of his earlier work as an underground comic artist. This publication is also an introspective view on his life.

5. The analysis of *Maus*

In this chapter I will focus on Spiegelman's novel *Maus* which is a great example of artistic flexibility and innovation. Spiegelman proved that even comics are capable of handling topics such as war and the Holocaust. I will sum up a plot of the book, analyse the form and I will discuss the main themes and subjects of the book.

Maus isn't the first story about the suffering of the Jews during the Second World War in the comics genre. However it's the uniqueness which makes this book uppermost. The first comics strip depicting the concentration camps called *Master Race* was written by Bernie Krigstein in 1955. It is a short and low quality comic.

Maus was first published in *RAW magazine* in 1980 which Art Spiegelman and his wife Francoise Mouly co-edited and published. The first part *Maus I: My father bleeds history* came out in 1991. The second part *Maus II: And here my troubles began* came out in year 1991 as well. *Maus II* was even more successful than *Maus I*. Spiegelman received Pulitzer Prize award for complete memoirs of the Holocaust in 1992 (Kaplan, 2006).

5.1 Plot summary

Maus is a story of Vladek Spiegelman and his son Art. Vladek is a Jew who survived the Holocaust. Art is a cartoonist who is trying to understand and capture father's traumatic experiences from the times of Hitler's supremacy. There are two main storylines in the book which mingle with each other. The first one is a retrospective story told by Vladek in which he describes events and his experiences before and during the Second World War in Poland. The second story takes place in the present in New York near Rego Park where the family moved after the war. This storyline contains a picture of a problematic relationship between Art and his old and ill father Vladek.

The book *Maus* is divided into two volumes. In the first part Vladek tells story about himself and his family before they were deported to the concentration camp in the Auschwitz. In the second volume Vladek tells about pain and suffering he experienced during the Holocaust. Both parts also contain depiction of the relationship between Art and Vladek in the present which I will discuss in other chapter in more detail.

5.1.1 Summary of the first volume „My Father Bleeds History“

In the beginning of the book Art visits his father and asks him to talk about his life in Poland before the war mostly to obtain information for his book (*Maus*). Vladek is unwilling to help him with the book but later he decides to tell his story. He recalls how he first met his wife Anja (Art's mother). Before Anja, he had 3 – 4 years long relationship with a girl named Lucia but on a family celebration he met 6 years younger girl Anja and he felt in love with her. Vladek and Anja got married in 1937. First son Richieu was born soon after. Vladek also describes his family and his happy and luxurious life back in Bielsk, Poland.

In 1939 the Second World War began and Vladek had to join the army. Anja, their son Richieu and their babysitter went to Sosnowiec. Vladek was captured and for the first time he encounters the Nazi hatred against the Jews. Fortunately, he was released and sent home. Life conditions of the Jews were getting distinctively worse. Vladek and his father-in-law were deprived of their possessions. Vladek, Anja and their son Richieu had to live in the house of Anja's family. There were twelve people in the house but after a new public noticed by the Nazis they have to leave their house and move to even smaller flat which was for twelve people very uncomfortable. Fortunately the family survived thanks to their savings and Vladek's ingenuity and bravery.

Later, in 1942 another public notice ordered to transport all the Jews above seventy-years to the concentration camp in Terezín. Family hid their ninety-year old grandparents but soon they had to release them because they were in great danger to be send to the concentration camps too. Gestapo did the selection of the Jews who were about to be transported to the concentration camps. The Nazis hid this deportation plan under an order for compulsory paper control of the Jews. Luckily, Anja's family escaped from the deportation but Vladek lost his father and sister Fela. Vladek describes how Jewish families were divided. They all lived in the ghetto in 1943. Vladek and Anja decided to send their son Richieu with Anja's aunt Toscha, her husband Persis and their children to the camp in Zawierce. They thought they would be safe there but they were murdered after the Nazis attacked the camp.

Vladek continues by description of their shelter in the basement. They had to pay for it. He also describes how many traitors were around them. They tried to escape to Hungary with the help of two smugglers but they were betrayed by them and ended up in jail and soon after they were deported to the Auschwitz in 1944.

5.1.2 Summary of the second volume „And Here My Troubles Began“

In the first chapter Art and his wife Françoise are on their way to Vladek's place. Vladek calls them and pretends heart attack. He asks them to come because Mala took all the money from their bank account and left to Florida, at least that's what he thought. After Art calms his father down they continue with the story. Vladek describes his life in Auschwitz, cruelty of the prison guards and inhumane living conditions.

Art can't write anymore. Because of his depressions he attends psychiatrist Pavel, the Czech Jew who is also a survivor of the Holocaust. He talks about his inner feelings and refers to the Holocaust. He continues the second part of *Maus* by transcribing previously recorded interviews with his father from the tape recorder.

Vladek continues his narration. He explains how he was able to survive in the concentration camp and how he found out about Anja who was in other camp (Birkenau). In 1944 all prisoners were transported in carriages primarily used for the cattle to Dachau. Many prisoners died during the transport.

Art visits his father in Rego Park in New York. Vladek hurls curses on Mala again and therefore Art asks him to continue telling him how he got out of the prison. He tells that Anja came back from prison way earlier because she was in a group supposed to be exchanged with war prisoners. There was chaos and confusion. Prisoners were afraid being shot but nothing happened. The Nazis ran away and they were rescued by American soldiers. Vladek knew nothing about Anja and he was afraid of her. He and his friend stayed in the refugee camp. Soon he found out about Anja was alive, he went home and arrived after four days. In 1946 Vladek and Anja moved from Poland to Sweden and after a few years they obtained visa to America.

At the end of the book, Vladek shows pictures of his family members he had. He recapitulates his life story. He shows pictures of Anja's family. Vladek is apathetic, forgets and calls Art Richieu. The whole book ends with a picture of the tombs of Spiegelman's parents, Vladek and Anja with the dates of their birth and death.

5.2 The form

5.2.1 Colours

The use of colours have huge part in the representation of the Vladek's story although there is a rare colourful version of *Maus*, the well-known version is strictly in black-and-white which gives us truly unique experience while reading the book.

In the history of art the use of colours have had a huge influence on the expression of artist's work. This fact is the same even in writing a comic book. If the author uses colours his pictures are more real and interesting. We can simply say that colours objectify their subjects more than in black-and-white portrayal. On the other hand, the difference in the colourful and black-and-white comics is that black-and-white portrayal tends to make reader use his imagination more and to use every aspect of his experience (McCloud, 2008). In case of *Maus* the black-and-white interpretation is more suitable for the content of the story. It gives us darker and depressive expression.

Spiegelman and his usage of black-and-white portrayal in his comic book make its appearance also more neutral. Reader has to use his imagination to match colours on each character or on each picture or set of the pictures. This results in very different reinterpretation between each reader, making the book very special and versatile. In the fact there are not even two readers left with the same experience.

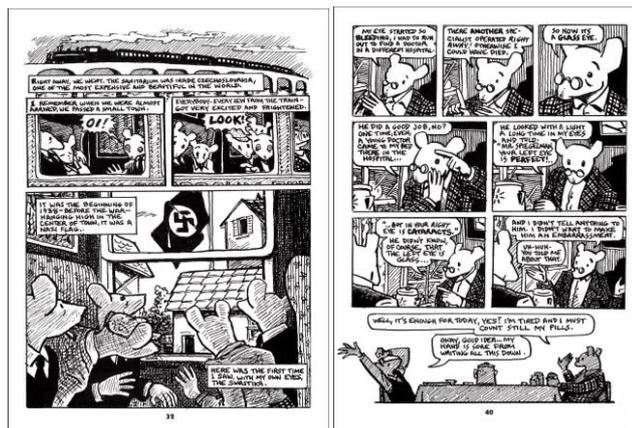


Figure 1: Black-and-white drawing style. Copyright by A. Spiegelman.

The story of Spiegelman's father is depicted only in black-and-white form. The exceptions are two cover pages which are colourful. The headline title *Maus* is depicted in red colour which symbolises the colour of blood and refers to the atrocities of the Holocaust. There

is only one black-and-white element on the cover pages and that is the head of a cat which has obviously the characteristics of the face of Adolf Hitler. Behind the head on the background there is a big, black-and-white symbol of Nazi Germany- swastika, crooked cross. Other character on the cover pages are drawn in colours. On the cover page of *Maus I* Vladek and Anja crouching on the ground in embrace. On the cover page of *Maus II* there is a portrayal of the Jews standing behind a barbed wire wearing typical prisoner's uniform people wore in the concentration camps, i.e. the blue striped clothes. Author's motive to use black-and-white on the cover was to highlight the evil of Nazism. It works the same with the story. The black-and-white portrayal gives us the feel of the severity of the war.

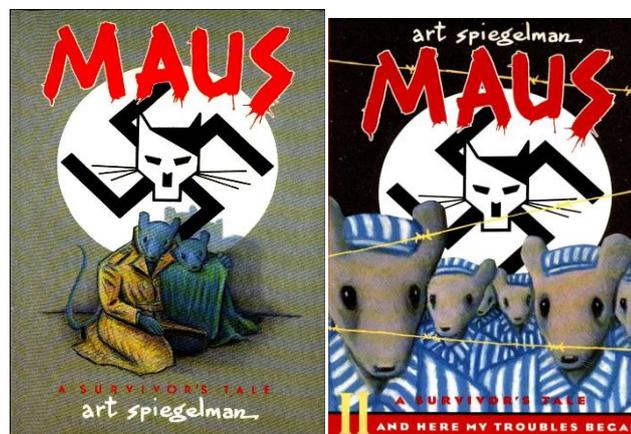


Figure 2: The Pictures show the drawings used for the front covers. Copyright by A. Spiegelman.

5.2.2 Drawing form

One of the basic elements in the comics is the portrayal of the characters. The author has to have an advanced drawing skills and he has to be able to capture his thoughts through the pictures. Character's body and its face expression are the fundamentals of the comics. The author has to be able to capture and portray attitudes and the movements of the characters because they have superiority over the text (Eisner, 2008).

The characters in *Maus* are depicted as animals but they behave like humans therefore we can find some characteristics of each character which can be symbolised in the drawings, e.g., Vladek has glasses on his nose every time in the present story line. Art is frequently smoking cigarettes during Vladek's narration.

In general, while reading the comics we usually tend to concentrate on head or face of a character. Eyes are believed to be "the window to the soul". However, Spiegelman decided to act the other way by introducing very small amount of face expression in his drawings. The

visual details are reduced and the characters are dehumanised. However, in intense situations characters are drawn with more detail to the face which captures the mood of the character, e.g., picture 1. We can see the emotions even with the minimalistic approach of the portrayal.

In most of the comic books we can relate to a character by their face expressions which represent different types of emotions (Eisner, 2008). Spiegelman worked in very minimalistic way. Eyes are drawn as the dots and mouths as the lines. By simplifying the face expressions Spiegelman wanted to direct readers to more serious themes of the book. Moreover, he opens space for readers to use their imagination and he forces them to understand the characters and the qualities of each and one of them.

5.2.3 Comic form

Spiegelman doesn't use any of the traditional literal and sequential form of a comic. Reader has to aim on the whole page, not on each frame and dialogues only. Information are represented on horizontal as well as on a vertical level (Zuckerman, 2008).

Maus is typical for the mismatch of the individual frames. Each of them has a different size and occasionally, we can find it quite difficult to orientate in it. However, it's powerful instrument to emphasize given segment in the story, e.g., Vladek and Anja were trying to escape to Hungary unnoticed. They didn't want to be deported to the Auschwitz but Gestapo found them and took them there. In this section there is a panel representing a gate of the concentration camp. We can notice that this panel is much bigger than the other panels above. This is the way Spiegelman uses to emphasize this emotive moment of the arrival to the concentration camp which is clearly something of high importance in the storyline. This panel mismatch technique repeats quite often. There is other example, Vladek and Anja drove to sanatorium and they saw the Nazi flag for the first time. It is a moment readers are forced to think about the seriousness of the presented situation.

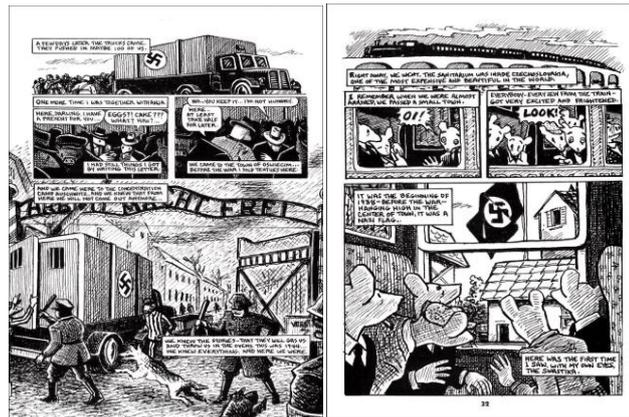


Figure 3: The pictures show the change of the size of the panels. Copyright by A. Spiegelman.

The gutters and a space between panels are important not for a graphic separation of the individual panels only, but they are special medium providing space for readers. We can obtain some information from the gutters which are not visible in the pictures or the text.

If we look at the story through Spiegelman's eyes we can see how it's deeply influenced by the past of his father which is also a big part of Art's own life. He tries to find a reason in his life. The gutters can symbolize the emptiness of his soul, small amount of information and inability to understand the Holocaust. He deals with this problem because he hasn't experienced the Holocaust (McCloud, 2008).

Conversational bubbles unable author to express characters thoughts or direct speeches. They often serve as a description of a certain situation. We can discuss Spiegelman's usage of the bubbles by looking at the picture 4 below. The Author doesn't take advantage of using a computer. All of his texts are written by hand. Size of the text depends on the length of the content. Hand written text brings more authenticity of the whole story and creates deeper and more open relationship between the reader and the author. We can see on the picture I mentioned that the author uses wavy lines for the bubbles to express more intense feelings e.g. fear. Some of the bubbles are square and they often represent a description of current situation or they refers to the events happened before. These texts try to keep readers into the context of the story. Other texts are written in circle bubble and they express character's feelings and thoughts primarily by using direct speech.

In the second volume of *Maus* the author uses bolt fonts on individual words or parts of the texts to emphasise the content of these words.

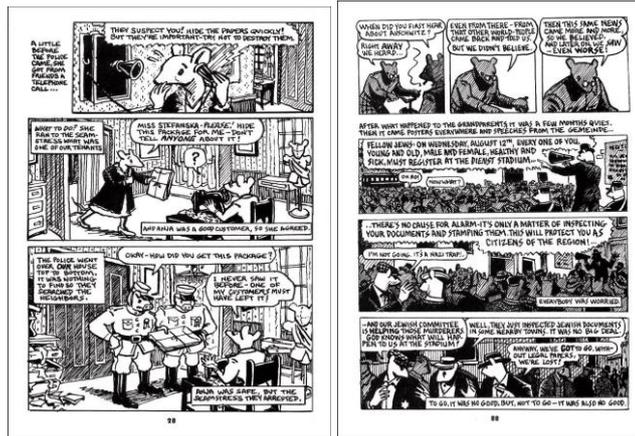


Figure 4: The Pictures show different types of the bubbles. Copyright by A. Spiegelman.

5.2.4 The Form of writing

There are two narrators in the novel distinguished by graphical form of the lettering. The first narrator is Spiegelman's father Vladek who is telling the story of his family during the Second World War and the Holocaust. The second narrator is Spiegelman himself playing the role of a son visiting his father and listening to his story while taking notes and recording it. Depictions of Spiegelman's visits are used as a frame for the whole book. Same graphical form is used in a depiction of Vladek's story. There is an exception in a story from previous Spiegelman's work Prisoner on the Hell Planet which has its own chapter and its graphical depiction is quite different.

Most of the chapters are structured in following order: Art comes to his father at Rego Park. There is usually a conflict between Art and Vladek or Mala and Vladek. After Vladek starts his narration he is usually interrupted by Art asking specific details from father's story. Narration ends with another quarrel between Art and Vladek.

The form of writing is clearly to distinguish the two separate lines of the story. Vladek's Holocaust story and Art's present story. Spiegelman wanted to make his book structured by maintaining the two storylines in order.

5.3 Writing difficulties

Spiegelman faced many problems during the process of writing his novel. Expressing his father's narration was extremely difficult both emotionally and technically as well as time consuming. The comics format was not able to capture precisely all the information he had. Spiegelman had to listen to the story and translate it to more simplistic form for the readers. Visualization of the places he has never experienced, this was especially tricky because he had to capture all the details to make these places real in the individual panels of the comic. He had to think whether it was day or night, how many people were present (at a specific stage of the story) and most importantly how the given and described place looked like. Spiegelman was forced to rearranged concepts of the panels multiple times. He listened to his records of father's narration repeatedly which was exhausting (Zuckerman, 2008).

The content of Vladek's narration was very difficult to divide in harmonic proportion between the pictures and the words. Father's oral testimony had to be re-constructed in a way to fit in the titles and the bubbles. On the top of that Vladek wasn't native speaker and there was a big decision whether to preserve this feature of Vladek's expression or not. At the end he left Vladek's language in the titles and in the bubbles he stayed with more neutral type of a dialogue. During the narration Vladek had tendencies to change the chronological order of the story as he often jumps from one part of the story to another which is visualized in *Maus* many times. Besides, Spiegelman tried to stay in chronological order. To make this novel even more readable and understandable he enclosed some drawn maps, graphs and diagrams specially in the passages he wasn't sure they were clear enough to understand (Review of Art Spiegelman: Conversations [on-line]).

There were many problems Spiegelman had to face while he was writing *Maus*. He had to obtain lot of knowledge about the historical background of the Holocaust to be able to capture the story more authentically. Moral dilemma he had was the most problematic aspect of the writing.

5.4 The Animal metaphor

The animal metaphor is basically a form of a portrayal of each individual character in *Maus*. This topic is a core of the book and it's the element making this book very special. I decided to discuss it in a separated chapter.

Maus was Spiegelman's „most nature and extravagant work to the date“ (Kaplan, 2006). Spiegelman has experimented with similar elements earlier in his work trying to share profound and serious thoughts through the talking animals. In 1972 he created a strip for comics collection called *Funny Animals* which was also called *Maus*. He considered a metaphor of mice as oppressed black people and cats as their white oppressors. At the end he rejected this idea because of the lack of authenticity (Kaplan, 2006). Therefore, he decided to use animal metaphor in an authentic story and describe experience of the Jews during the Holocaust.

In *Maus I* the Germans were portrayed as the cats and the Jews as mice for the first time. In *Maus II* Spiegelman added other animal metaphors: the Poles are pictured as pigs, the Americans as dogs, the French characters as frogs, the Swedish as mosses and the Gypsies as ants. Each of the animal portrayal has its specific characteristics. The Jewish people were depicted as mice because they are prey of the stronger and fierce cats. Mice are quiet and innocent animals which are often forced to hide. Cats are cunning predators. The Poles were shown as pigs which can symbolize a neutral animal without moral stand. This can be translated into relationship between the Jews and the Poles which wasn't good for hundred years. We can also consider Vladek's dislike for the Poles. Common collaboration of the Poles with the Nazis contributed to this depiction (Spiegelman, 2011). In the last chapter of *Maus I*, Vladek recalls himself and Anja searching for shelter to hide from the Nazis and deportation to the Auschwitz. Their lives were reliant to the Poles but not everyone was willing to help them. Those who were willing to help were unwilling to do so for free. Vladek explains: „*What you think? Someone will risk their life for nothing?*“ (Spiegelman, 1986). The French were shown as frogs (another neutral animal) which is a playful portrayal of their eating habits. The American soldiers were shown as dogs which symbolize loyalty, protection and the fact that dogs chase cats. The Swedish were shown as mosses which are animals living in the northern countries.

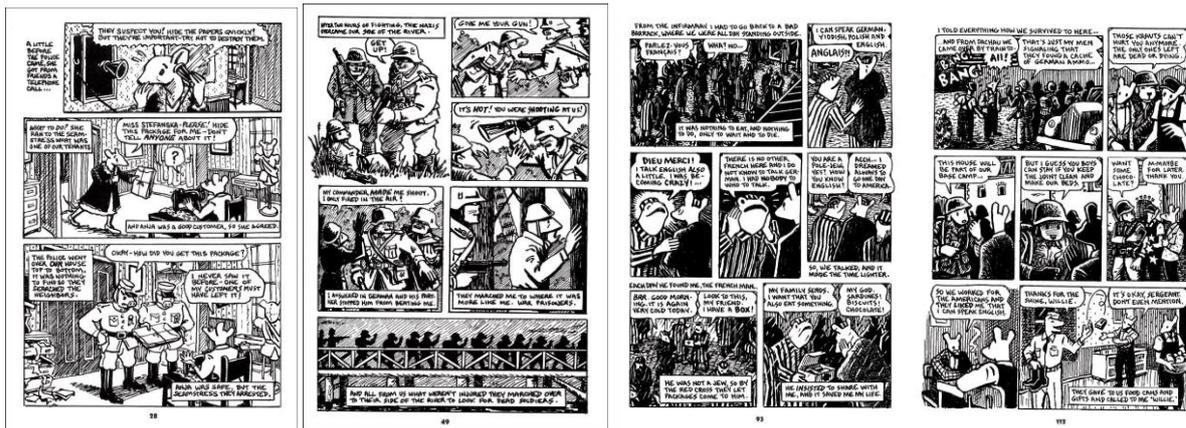


Figure 5: Animal metaphor used in Maus. Copyright by A. Spiegelman.

Although the characters are portrayed as animals they don't possess their animal physical characteristics. As we discussed earlier in the chapter 5.2.2, in *Maus* the faces of the characters especially of the Jews are depicted with a minimal almost imperceptible attention to the detail of its characteristic. Dominating elements of the face are long, simple muzzle and ears. Eyes are drawn as dots and mouth as a simple line. We can distinguish the main characters only by the additional features such as glasses (Vladek), cigarette (Art), scarf (Francoise), apron (Mala) or hat, beard etc., represented by other characters.

In general, we can assume that the characters look like human beings with the animal heads. One of the most significant elements in Spiegelman's metaphors is the fact that characters perceive themselves not as animals but as humans. We can find a few signs of a proof e.g., Anja's fear of rats (although she is depicted as mouse), Art's and his wife's dispute over the depiction of the French, real dog in the house of Art's psychotherapist Pavel. Moreover, when Art is sitting in Pavel's office and consulting his problems with him, there is a framed picture of a cat on his table. This is the only picture readers can see that a cat is simply a cat.

Although the characters are portrayed as animals or rather partially, they don't have animal attributes. Spiegelman points out that the usage of animal metaphor wasn't aimed as a projection of the human characteristics on animals. His minimalistic style and simple portrayal of the faces created an illusion of the unity. Without a clothing or other characteristic complements the characters look almost the same. Animal metaphor was used to accomplish a little distance from reality. The readers can easily focus on the story and let the form of drawing and all the details behind. Spiegelman explained this in an old interview, where he mentioned if he had portrayed all the characters as humans he would have forged in the some way the authenticity of the story. This sort of metaphor was used mainly to keep a distance because of

the lack of his personal experience. The book *Maus* is primarily about his family which was deeply affected by the Holocaust (McCloud, 2008). On the other hand the usage of the metaphor of cats and mice characterized their relationship quite accurately. In this way Spiegelman emphasized their roles during the Holocaust.

From the story we can easily assume that Vladek and his family are the Polish Jews. They are portrayed as mice. However, there are situations when Vladek and Anja are forced to wear masks of pigs to pretend to be the Poles. They had to hide their racial and religious identity. In this situations they had to act as the Poles to survive although they were officially the Polish citizens. The mask can be understood as the author's view on the nonsense of racial prejudice. In the second chapter of *Maus II (Time flies)* Art pictured himself sitting in his room thinking about the success of his first volume of *Maus*. He is wearing the mask of mouse on his face which most likely represents the problems of the author's identity, despite a huge public success of *Maus I*, he is still connected with the past. His father already died and he is expecting baby with his wife. Drawing represents a trauma caused by the suffering of his family during the war which affects his present life. Art is aware of the ghosts of the past he wouldn't be able to shake off (Kolář, 2004).



Figure 6: The Pictures show Spiegelman's depiction of his trauma. Copyright by A. Spiegelman.

If we would like to sum up Spiegelman's usage of the animal metaphor we had to admit there are possibly a lot of meanings hidden. We can only speculate whether some of them were author's intention or there are just make sense to us individually. As an example we can point out the experiments of infamous Dr. Mengele which he realized on prisoners of the concentration camps. He realized his experiments on humans, today mice and rats are used for the laboratory experiments of any kind. Poisoned gas which was used in the gas chambers in the concentration camps to kill people was first tested on mice and brown rats. We can find

similarity in a way of the escape from the deportations to the concentration camps. The Jews were hiding mainly in basements, in the attics and other similar places.

5.4.1 Exceptions to the characters portrayal.

5.4.1.1 Photographs

Spiegelman's usage of animal metaphor isn't the only visual element in the book. He also used photography of his family. Photos of Art's dead brother, Richieu are included in *Maus II*. This volume is also dedicated to him. Spiegelman has never met his brother but he has felt his presence whole his life. He explained his feelings of living in the shadow of his dead brother. On the last chapter of *Maus II* photos of young Vladek are also included. The drawings of animals sharply contrast with the photos of real people. The author wants to emphasise the fact that this is a real story. This has a huge effect on the readers because they realise it isn't just a comic strip but a real story and real people.



Figure 7: The Pictures show the photographs of the family members. Copyright by A. Spiegelman.

5.4.1.2 Prisoner on the Hell Planet

In chapter five of *Maus I* the story „Prisoner on the Hell Planet“ was isolated from the rest of the book. In this underline story people are drawn as animals but with human faces – Art and his mother Anja. The characters of this story are depicted with faces full of pain and sadness of losing their beloved person – mother and husband. Spiegelman brings readers from the comic to reality. In this story Spiegelman wears the same uniform as the prisoners in the concentration camps. Spiegelman is in the prison of his own mind. He can't escape from his past and from the thoughts on his mother. Art has become a prisoner of his doubtfulness and reproach. The clothes represent his feelings of guilt but it also expresses the tragedy of his family during the Holocaust (Kaplan, 2006).

The reason behind this was obviously to depict a traumatic relationship between Art and his mother who committed suicide in 1968. He shows his own feelings of guilt for mother's death. He also insults his mother for killing herself and for not leaving any note before she died. This story was written earlier than *Maus* (Kaplan, 2006).

The presence of this story in *Maus* is to help readers understand Spiegelman's past and what happened to his mother. At the same time it's one of the main reasons Vladek was unwilling to contribute on Art's book at first. He was angry on Art because he revealed this story. *Prisoner on the Hell Planet* is very intense comics which shows Spiegelman's artistic expression of Anja's suicide.



Figure 8: The illustration from Prisoner on the Hell Planet. Copyright by A. Spiegelman.

5.5 Relationships in *Maus*

In this chapter I will focus on one of the main element in the story. Description of the relationships between each character is essential to understand the book. It makes the story complex and emotional. I will discuss relationships between Art and his father Vladek, Art's attitude to his mother Anja, relationship between Art and his brother Richieu who he never met, relationship between Vladek and Mala, relationship between Vladek and his first wife Anja, relationship between Art and his wife Francoise, relationship between Art and himself and relationship between Art and his book *Maus*.

There are many hidden and obvious signs of relationships in the novel which complement the story.

5.5.1 Relationship between Vladek and Art

The whole story begins in Art's childhood. Art used to skate with his friends. One day he lost one skate of the pair; his friends didn't bother to help him and left Art alone. He went to his father while he was crying and complained about his friends who let him alone. Vladek told him: „*If you lock them together in a room with no food for a week...then you could see what it is friends...*” (Spiegelman, 1986). This is a reaction of a survivor of the Holocaust. His memories of his experiences during the war are deeply rooted in his mind. It also reflects on his behavior to his son. As a child and even as an adult, Art is unable to fully (cannot) understand the Holocaust. Nevertheless, he is still affected by his father's history. Surprisingly, Vladek isn't depicted as a hero but as an ill person who is taking a lot of medications, had two heart attacks and often behaves inappropriately. The most of the conflicts and emotionally charged situations between Vladek and his son are described in *Maus I*. The first sign of their relationship is shown in the first chapter. Art comes to Vladek's place and asks him to tell him about the Second World War and the Holocaust but Vladek doesn't want to share his story. According to him these information are very personal, they have nothing to do with war or the Holocaust and it would be highly inappropriate to reveal these facts about his life. Art disagrees with his father and tries to explain that it would make the story far more interesting and even though he promises not to ever reveal any of his private life he breaks this promise and shares the story with the readers which eventually made the book unique and more successful (Spiegelman, 1986).

Art wants to know father's story about the time during the Second World War and although he patiently listens, he can't understand his father. He said he couldn't understand father's behavior not to mention the holocaust: „*I mean I can't even make any sense out of my relationship with my father... how I my supposed to make any sense out of Auschwitz?... of the Holocaust!?*“ (Spiegelman, 1991).

Art finds out that his father destroyed his mother's diary. Vladek confessed he was in depressions. Art is angry and calls his father a murderer which he regrets lately and he apologizes. Art thought it would be a great source of information for the book but at the end he understands father's behavior.

Art is experiencing an intense ambivalent feeling to his father. He realizes how difficult it had to be to go through the holocaust but on the other hand he is still frustrated by his father behavior. He sees father's exaggerated grayness, his permanent anger on his current wife Mala, himself and other people. Besides, Vladek is successful in manipulation with his surroundings and he also emotionally blackmails them. Vladek forces his son to behave in way Art doesn't want to, e.g. Art has to eat all the food he has on a table, he is told not to smoke too much. Vladek even throws Art's jacket into a trash bin and he gives him his used one. Art can't deal with this behaviour. He has no patience for Vladek's insults on Mala. Although he feels powerless at the same time: „*You can't do this to me. I'm over 30 years old*“ (Spiegelman, 1986).

Art isn't tolerant to father's behavior and they often end up in argument. In *Maus II* Art and Francoise are on their way to Vladek and they discuss the Holocaust and how difficult it is to understand it, just like it is to understand Vladek's behaviour. Art reveals his feelings from his childhood (his nightmares). He explains the difficulty to compete with a „ghost“ of his dead brother Richieu and to win favour of his parents. He also describes his inner thoughts from the childhood such as a question whom of his parent he would save from the gas chamber. He usually chose his mother. Art is doubtful about his book and writing about the Holocaust because of the fact that he has such an easier life than his parents and other survivors of the Holocaust (Spiegelman, 1991). In the same chapter Vladek persuades Art and his wife to stay with him as long they can. He asks them to take him at the market, he wants to return opened package of food. He doesn't want to waste anything: „*I cannot forget it...ever since Hitler I don't like to throw out ebeny rumb*“ (Spiegelman, 1991). This is another typical example of a person with war experience. During the war there was lack of everything especially food. Francoise admires Vladek and the way he survived the Holocaust. Art agrees but he adds: „*...but in some ways he didn't survive*“ (Spiegelman, 1991). On the way back from the market

Francois stops a hitchhiker. Vladek is mad and he doesn't want to go with him in the same car. He thinks he is a thief only because the hitchhiker is black – African-American, a Schvartser. Art is absolutely shocked and doesn't understand Vladek's racial prejudice. He thinks Vladek talks about African-Americans same way like the Nazis did about the Jews. Vladek reacts: „...*It's not even to compare, the Schvartsers and the Jews!*“ (Spiegelman, 1991). This part gives us an unexpected situation as we discover Vladek's racial prejudice even though he has experienced the Holocaust. It leaves us with a mixed up feelings about him and his behaviour.

Nevertheless, Art visits Vladek not only because of the book and the story but he is around whenever Vladek needs him. He loves his father but at the same time he feels empty.

5.5.2 Relationship between Vladek and Mala

Relationship between Vladek and Mala is very complicated. Mala is Vladek's second wife who he married after Anja's suicide. Vladek and Mala come from very similar background, they both faced similar problems, they have mutual experiences from the war and they both survived the Holocaust (Auschwitz). At the end of *Maus I* Art comes to visit his father and he finds Mala crying. She complains about Vladek but according to Art, he was exactly the same to Anja. He is quite sure that the war caused this strange behaviour. Mala disagrees and claims that she experienced the concentration camps as well. Art reacts: „*In some ways he's just like the racist caricature of the miserly old Jew.*“ (Spiegelman, 1986).

They don't share the same consequences of the war. Traumatic experiences affected Vladek's life and his whole family. There is a typical behavior of a person who had to survive in difficult situations, e.g., he refuses to buy Mala a hairbrush, returns food to the store, collects wires and matches. It can appear that in Vladek's mind the Holocaust has never ended and it is still present, he still acts in a way he used to during the war. Vladek gives an impression of a pedantic person, especially in relation to Mala who is permanently complaining about him. He doesn't want to give her any money, even for basic household goods.

Vladek believes Mala is all about money: „*Mala makes me crazy. Only she talks about money...*“ (Spiegelman, 1986) and she is untidy: „*You are dropping on the carpet...Clean it, yes!...Mala could let it sit like this for a week and never touch it*“ (Spiegelman, 1986). Mala says that there's no point in arguing with Vladek: „*You should know, it's impossible to argue with your father.*“ (Spiegelman, 1986). She claims: „*He's more attached to things than to people.*“ (Spiegelman, 1986). Vladek also becomes paranoid and leads Art to the bank. He

wants to give him a special key in case he dies. If it happens Art was given an order to take all Vladek's possessions from the safe because otherwise it will be assigned to Mala (Spiegelman, 1986).

Compared to Vladek, Mala doesn't act as inappropriately as Vladek does. She is conscious of the fact that she is just an imperfect substitute for Vladek's first wife Anja. Mala is traumatized by Vladek's behavior in a same way Art is towards his dead brother Richieu. She can't handle fact she is living in the shadow of Anja.

5.5.3 Relationship between Art and Richieu

Before the beginning of the Second World War, Anja gave birth to a boy Richieu. Richie died tragically during the war. In spite of the fact that Art has never had a chance to meet his older brother, he feels he can't extricate from his shadow. We mentioned in the previous chapter Mala being a substitute for Vladek's first wife Anja. In a relationship between Art and Richieu, Art feels exactly the same.

Art express his relationship to Richieu during a conversation with Françoise. „*They didn't need photos of me in their room... I was alive! The photo never threw tantrums or got in any kind of trouble... It was an ideal kid, and I was a pain in the ass, I couldn't compete.*“ (Spiegelman, 1991). Art believes his parent has never coped with his brother's death. He feels that his brother was better than him in every aspect and he can't compare. He is permanently thinking about a situation if Richieu was still alive: „*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.*“ (Spiegelman, 1991). There is one sequence at the very end of *Maus* where ill and evidently confused Vladek ends his conversation with Art with words: „*I'm tired from talking, Richieu, and it's enough stories for now....*“ (Spiegelman, 1991).

Although Richieu isn't physically present, his presence is reflected in Art's thoughts.

5.5.4 Relationship between Art and Anja

We discussed this relationship in chapter 5.4.1.2. *Prisoner on the Hell Planet*. Emotional impact from death of his mother is still present in Spiegelman's life and visible in the thoughts of Art and Vladek. Art accuses himself and his mother for killing herself. He is angry with her and at the same time he feels powerless. After Anja's death in 1968 Vladek was hospitalized. He had mental problems before but after mother's death he sought help (Spiegelman, 2008).

Art remembers his mother in his autobiographical book *Breakdowns: Portrait of the Artist as a Young %@&*!*. She was much more supportive than his father besides it was her who bought him his first comics. Vladek didn't have an understanding for Art's passion but Anja was more open-minded than him. Although Spiegelman also mentioned she was very sad and didn't talk very much when he got older.

If we look at the story there is not much about Art and Anja's relationship although she is constantly present in Spiegelman's mind. She was one of the main reasons he wrote *Maus*. We don't know much about Anja's mental condition but in the first chapter of *Maus* we know that even before the war she was hospitalized. The Holocaust gave her experiences and memories she could handle.

5.6 Other themes in *Maus*

Apart from the main story of *Maus*, i.e., Vladek's life story and a relationship between Vladek and Art in the present, we can discuss other themes in *Maus*.

One of the main themes is a fight for survival. It relates to hardship and inhuman conditions of the Jews during the Second World War. Constant fear, helplessness and betrayals of the family members and friends for enrichment or fear. Hiding from the Nazis in shelters. This all reflected in behaviour of Vladek. In *Maus I* Vladek and Anja are hiding in the basement and other places. They feel a constant fear of being caught by the Nazis. They had to bribe people to hide them but they ended up betrayed by the smugglers.

The topic of racism is also presented which comes from a substance of the Holocaust. Art Spiegelman (1986, 4) used racial utterance of Adolf Hitler in the first volume of *Maus*: „*The Jews are undoubtedly a race, but they are not human*“. We mentioned Vladek's hatred against African-Americans which is unexpected from a person who experienced the Holocaust.

The story describes rise of the Nazis, e.g., there is the panel in *Maus I* showing a big Nazi flag which symbolizes the beginning of the war. The Jews were divided into the ghettos. The Holocaust is represented as a power which affects everybody. Art loves his father, he is worried about him but he cannot communicate with him and relate to him without a conflict. At the end he realizes how his father story has influenced his own life.

Conclusion

This bachelor thesis focused on the representation of the Holocaust in cartoon. I concentrated on the book called *Maus* by American author Art Spiegelman. This book is a comic and I wanted to show that even comics can be used to represent topics such as the Holocaust, war and complex relationships.

In the first chapter, I analyzed the term cartoon which I found necessary to explain due to the analysis of *Maus*. I focused mainly on the definitions of comics, graphic novel and I also described the difference between these two terms. In the second chapter, I aimed on the Holocaust and its definition in connection to the historical background. The third chapter dealt with the Holocaust and its reflection in literature. I targeted mainly on the difficulty of representing the Holocaust into writing especially for the authors with no experience with the Holocaust or the war.

Art Spiegelman biography and his motives for writing *Maus* are discussed in chapter four and in the last chapter I dealt with the analysis of *Maus*. In this chapter I very briefly summed up a plot of the book, analyzed the graphical and stylistic form, concentrated on the difficulties Spiegelman had to face during the writing process and I also mentioned the animal metaphor and relationships of the characters in the book.

The Holocaust is very serious and touchy subject and not every author is able to deal with this topic. We can think of cartoon (funny, colorful, childish) and the Holocaust (heavy, emotive, terrifying) as two completely different subjects which would under no circumstances be somehow connected. Art Spiegelman set himself for highly challenging goal. Representing the Holocaust and his own life in cartoon was very courageous. *Maus* is an unique book and a great example that even comics can cover such a serious topics. Furthermore, I think Spiegelman's portrayal of the Holocaust and his life story give the readers even more intense experience than reading a casual book. The comic form of the book doesn't detract from the seriousness of the main themes and on the other hand the story of Vladek and Art and its style of expression is very beautiful and unique. Younger readers would benefit from the form as well because it makes the book attractive, easy to understand and orientate in yet it has still heavy and uneasy content to handle – the Holocaust and its influence on people which I think nobody will ever understand. We can see Art's relationship to his father Vladek and discover that the Holocaust had a huge affect on them. Art loved his father but due to his behavior he could not understand him.

After reading and analyzing this book in my thesis I find out how complex the book is. I truly enjoyed reading *Maus* and it reminded me of my great-grandfather who had experienced the war and the Holocaust and had very similar behavior to Vladek. Therefore I assumed the Holocaust must have been very traumatic experience which affected the lives of many people. I recommended this book to my friends and family.

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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Black-and-white drawing style.....	25
Figure 2: The drawings used for the front covers.....	26
Figure 3: The change of the size of the panels.....	28
Figure 4: The different types of the bubbles.....	29
Figure 5: Animal metaphor used in Maus.....	32
Figure 6: Spiegelman's depiction of his trauma.....	33
Figure 7: The photographs of the family members.....	34
Figure 8: The illustration from Prisoner on the Hell Planet.....	35

RESUMÉ

Bakalářská práce se zabývá využitím komiksu i pro méně obvyklá témata jako je holocaust. Konkrétně byla zaměřena na komiksovou knihu Maus.

V teoretické části jsou rozlišeny pojmy komiks a grafický román, dále přiblíženy termíny holocaust, antisemitismus a koncentrační tábor Osvětim. V následující části je popsána obtížnost literárního zpracování tématu holocaust a kromě toho je zde shrnuta biografie autora románu Maus Arta Spigelmana.

Praktická část práce je zaměřena na analýzu díla Maus. Velmi stručně je přiblížen obsah díla, způsob grafického ztvárnění a technických aspektů, využití zvířecích metafor, rozbor minulých i současných vztahů hlavních aktérů a jiných důležitých detailů dokreslujících celý příběh.

ANOTATION

Jméno a příjmení:	Petr Frýdl
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Rok obhajoby:	2014

Název práce:	Holocaust v kreslené literatuře
Název v angličtině:	Holocaust in Cartoon
Anotace práce:	Bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na využití formátu komiksu pro ztvárnění závažného tématu holokaustu. Hlavním cílem této práce je grafická a stylistická analýza románu <i>Maus</i> amerického autora A. Spiegelmana. Dílčími cíli je přiblížení tématu holocaust a jeho dopadu na životy lidí.
Klíčová slova:	Komiks, Holocaust, Spiegelman, Maus, literatura
Anotace v angličtině:	The thesis deals with the representation of the serious topic of the Holocaust in a comic book form. The main aim of this work is graphic and stylistic analysis of the novel <i>Maus</i> by American author A. Spiegelman and interpretation of the Holocaust and its affect on people.
Klíčová slova v angličtině:	Comics, Holocaust, Spiegelman, Maus, literature
Přílohy vázané v práci:	0 příloh
Rozsah práce:	48 stran
Jazyk práce:	Angličtina