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**Faculty of Arts and Philosophy**

**“Second Generation” Holocaust Literature: Art Spiegelman’s Maus**

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### Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Studentka s použitím relevantní sekundární literatury nejprve nastíní historický kontext, dále vysvětlí pojem Holocaust, shrne vývoj a charakteristiku tzv. "holocaust literature" a vysvětlí pojem "second generation holocaust literature". Dále uvede tvorbu Arta Spiegelmana a definuje pojem "graphic novel" a objasní rozdíl mezi komiksem a grafickým románem. Studentka s použitím teorií traumatu bude analyzovat grafický román Maus. V analýze, která bude tvořit jádro práce, se zaměří na vybraná témata, jako např. využití masek a zvířecí symboliky, otázku sebevraždy, viny a přenosu viny, fenomém tzv. "survival guilt", a také na formální aspekty díla, tj. využití literárních a vizuálních prostředků. Závěrem studentka analýzu shrne a pokusí se vyslovit obecnější závěry jak o zkoumaných tématech díla, tak i o významu samotného grafického románu Maus.

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## **Abstract**

The bachelor paper deals with the topic of the Holocaust, more precisely with the so-called second generation Holocaust literature which is written by the children of the survivors of the Holocaust. The paper focuses on analysis of the graphic novel *Maus* which in two timelines tells the story of the author himself and further it tells the author's father's experiences from the Holocaust. The main aim of the bachelor paper is to show on the author of *Maus*, Art Spiegelman, how the trauma of the Holocaust is transmitted on the second generation, and moreover, how he and the whole second generation are influenced by that event. Other aspects of *Maus* such as animal symbolism, question of suicide, transmission of trauma or the so-called survival guilt will be analysed.

## **Key words**

Holocaust, second generation, *Maus*, graphic novel, trauma

## **Název**

Druhá generace v literatuře o Holocaustu: *Maus* od Arta Spiegelmana

## **Souhrn**

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá tématem holocaustu, přesněji řečeno zaměřuje se na literaturu holocaustu tak zvané druhé generace, která je psána potomky těch, kteří holocaust přežili. Práce se zaměřuje na analýzu grafického románu *Maus*, který ve dvou časových liniích vypráví příběh autora samotného a dále jeho otce, který popisuje život v období holocaustu. Hlavním cílem práce je poukázat, jak je trauma holocaustu přenášeno na autora *Maus*, Arta Spiegelmana, a jak je on a celá takzvaná druhá generace je ovlivněna touto událostí. Dále se pak práce zaměřuje na aspekty díla jako je například zvířecí symbolika, otázka sebevraždy, přenos traumatu či pocit viny.

## **Klíčová slova**

holocaust, druhá generace, *Maus*, grafický román, trauma

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## 1 Introduction

The title of the bachelor paper indicates that it deals with the topic of the Holocaust. Moreover, it aims at a specific category of literature dealing with the Holocaust which is the so-called second generation Holocaust literature. The paper focuses on the work *Maus* written by an American writer Art Spiegelman. As the focus of the paper is on *Maus*, the main aim is to show on the author of *Maus*, Art Spiegelman, how the trauma of the Holocaust is transmitted on the second generation, moreover how he and the whole second generation are influenced by that event. *Maus* with its two time lines is unique since it is written in a form of a graphic novel where humans are pictured as animals. The first timeline takes place in present in New York and describes author's story telling sessions with his father, the process of writing and his personal life. The second time line takes place before, during and after World War II and reveals the life of the author's father at that time.

The term *Holocaust* is defined in the first chapter. Further, the chapter reveals what is hidden behind this word and explains that further generations will never fully understand this event because there are no adequate words to express the depth of human suffering. The subchapter introduces Holocaust literature and clarifies its importance. It conveys the information that there are many kinds of literature about the Holocaust and it defines in more details the Holocaust novel. The following subchapter deals with the so-called second generation Holocaust literature and explains that this type of literature is written by the children of the Holocaust survivors. It says that these children, even though they never experienced the Holocaust, are deeply scarred by that event. Moreover, the subchapter explains that they deal with their 'inherited' trauma through writing.

The next chapter introduces the author Art Spiegelman on whose graphic novel *Maus* this bachelor paper focuses and it briefly presents his artistic career and reveals that *Maus* won the Pulitzer Prize.

The following chapter introduces different definitions of *Maus* and reactions of the public after its publishing. It reveals that the public was at first shocked, it was



something unexpected to represent such a tragic event as the Holocaust in a form of a graphic novel. It also uncovers multiple narratives and kinds of texts presented in *Maus*, such as maps, real photographs or manual for shoe-repair. The subchapter deals with the literary genre of *Maus*. It reveals that Spiegelman himself considers *Maus* to be a non-fiction; it further explains that *Maus* could be understood as an autobiography of the author or a biography of his father and last but not least, it clarifies differences between a comic book and a graphic novel.

The next section aims at *Maus* itself. The first subchapter briefly introduces the plot. The second subchapter focuses on the reasons why Spiegelman used animal symbolism and reveals the absurdity of picturing different nations as different animals. Moreover, it conveys that the Nazis played with the Jews as cats would play with mice. Consequently, this subchapter presents different examples of this behaviour. The third subchapter deals with the question of suicide. It introduces a short comic strip *Prisoner on the Hell Planet* which reveals that Spiegelman's mother committed suicide and Spiegelman blames himself for it because he admits that he was a disappointment for his parents. Last but not least, this subchapter mentions diaries that Spiegelman's mother wrote and it shows author's disappointment when he finds out that his father destroyed them. The following subchapter reflects on trauma of the Holocaust and its transmission on the second generation. At first, the term *trauma* is defined and it tells how Art's relationship with his father is influenced by the Holocaust. Further, different reasons which resulted in broken relationships between the survivors and their children are presented together with examples shown in *Maus*. The end of this subchapter is dedicated to Spiegelman's father's racist behaviour. The last part of the bachelor paper focuses on the so-called survival guilt and its transmission on the second generation. It reveals that Spiegelman's father went through many stressful situations which marked him deeply and it presents examples of situations where the survivors felt guilty that they survived the Holocaust while millions of others did not. Moreover, it shows that Spiegelman himself feels guilty as well because he did not experience the Holocaust and therefore cannot imagine what it was like.

## 2 Holocaust

The term *Holocaust* has been first used in late 1950s and referred to the Jewish tragedy during World War II. Walter Laquer explains that, the word is deriving from the Greek word *Holokauston* which stands for “burnt whole” (2001: XIII). Professor Efraim Sicher defines the term similarly: “Hitler’s war against Jews, which succeeded in the systematic, planned murder of about six million human beings, is commonly known as the Holocaust” (2005:IX). However, there are other terms used, for instance the Hebrew word *Shoah* meaning calamity, ruin, devastation or Yiddish expression *Hurban* which was according to Stanislav Kolář, the specialist of American Jewish literature, “used in connection with the destruction of the First and second Temples” (2004:13). The expression *Holocaust* is not acceptable among the Jews because its Greek origin was associated with religious sacrifice consumed by fire and understandably, such sacrificial connotation is unacceptable because Jewish people did not want to make sacrifices on the Nazi altar. Nevertheless, it is the most used and known term for this terrible event. (Kolář 2004:12)

Yehuda Bauer characterizes it as the extreme humiliation of millions of Jews, as the brutal murder by bullet or gas, mass death by starvation and induced diseases, and, beyond everything else perhaps, the murder of children (2002:18). To compare, Alvin H. Rosenfeld claims that:

[t]he “Holocaust” implies not just death but total destruction; not murder, which carries with it some still lingering if dreaded sense of personal violation, but annihilation on so massive and indiscriminate a scale as to render death void of all personal characteristic, and hence virtually anonymous or absurd. Moreover, “Holocaust” suggests not only a brutally imposed life of humiliation, deprivation and degradation before the time of dying. (1980:3)

The term *Holocaust* means not only mass death but also utter humiliation, personal violation and inhuman destruction of a group of people linked by the same religious beliefs. The question is what the Holocaust means for the new generations and how deeply they have been affected by it. According to Laqueur:

[a]t distance of more than half a century, a great deal of empathy and imagination is needed on the part of new generations even to begin to understand what happened to the Jews of Europe during World War II. (2001: XVIII)

Although each new generation of writers tries to capture what it was like during World War II, as Elie Wiesel, a death camp survivor, said,

[t]here are aspects of the *Holocaust*, mainly the suffering of the victims and the brutality of the perpetrators, that can never be fully grasped or understood, and therefore the Holocaust is ultimately inexplicable. (as quoted in Bauer 2002:15)

The Holocaust brought annihilation of millions of Jews including vulnerable children but it also caused suffering to those who survived. They had to live with the consciousness that they survived, while their beloved ones did not. Even though, as Stanislav Kolář points out, "the Holocaust is unutterable because we are unable to find an adequate language to express the depth of human suffering" (2004:12), it is necessary to ensure it will be never forgotten and further generations will know about the Holocaust, also thanks to writers who deal with this topic. Young affirms that "silence was not an alternative. They [the writers] recognized that without a literature the Holocaust would have been a self-consuming catastrophe, giving the killers a posthumous victory" (2002: XXXI).

However it took some time before the Holocaust literature evolved. In the first years after the World War II, devastated Europe had other priorities than confronting with the Holocaust. There was need of recovery and reconstruction. Survivors had to recover both physically and mentally from the years of suffering.

## **2.1 Holocaust Literature**

Sicher states that some survivors were afraid that memory of what they had undergone would be forgotten after years, nevertheless it turned out at the end of twentieth century media were full of the Holocaust related topics (2005:XVII). Also literature about the Holocaust started to be very popular because people wanted to learn about this event. The literature published in different languages simply called Holocaust literature started to be in an interest in the sixties.

As Alvin H. Rosenfeld, one of the scholars in the field of Holocaust literature explains one of the major functions of Holocaust literature is "to register and record the

enormity of human loss” (1980:26). The same author adds that “Holocaust literature is an attempt to express a new order of consciousness, a recognizable shift in being” (1980:13). On the other hand, especially American writers tend to portray horrors of the Holocaust from the point of view of the victims and they manage to express effectively suffering of those victims during World War II moreover to make the reader sympathize with them as Kolář points out (2004:180).

According to James E. Young, a professor of Judaic studies, Holocaust literature consists of all literary responses to the destruction of European Jewry and other people by the German Nazi state and its collaborators (2002: XXXI). During the decades since the end of the World War II, Holocaust literature developed in various directions. Young adds that:

[i]n its most expansive definition Holocaust literature thus includes the diaries of victims and memoirs of survivors; chronicles and documents compiled collectively by community groups and assembled in the forms of archives and „memorial books“; novels and short stories on Holocaust-related themes by those who witnessed the destruction as well as by those removed from it; poetry and drama from the concentration camps.

Holocaust novel, which started to be considered a distinct and serious genre in the late 1970s and 1980s, is the genre discussed in this bachelor paper. The genre has developed, expanded and its boundaries are not limited as it blends autobiography and fiction, memoir and fantasy, historical document and realistic novel. (Sicher 2005: XXII) This author explains that Holocaust novels retell the past in order to help us understand the present and to rethink our assumptions and beliefs (2005: XIX). It is a genre that “begs questions not only about fictionalizing the Holocaust, but also about the novel itself”. (Sicher 2005: XI)

As already mentioned, there are many literary forms representing the Holocaust in different way and each convey different shades of meaning and understanding of that event. (Young 2002: XXXI) However all writers of Holocaust novels are faced with difficulties of how to write about it and the challenges are moral as well as literary. Although the outcome is painful and upsetting both for the writer and the reader, writing about the Holocaust is irreplaceable source of experiences and knowledge. And as

Rosenfeld says, “memory must be kept alive at all costs and the agents of memory preserved from further destruction” (1980:187).

## 2.2 Second Generation Holocaust Literature

Genres of Holocaust literature have been enriched by works of the post-Holocaust generation, including the children of the survivors, the so-called second generation since the 1980s. This literature expresses the desire to tell the untold stories and fulfil the responsibility to pass the memory to other generations.

As Erin Heather McGlothlin explains, the term *second generation Holocaust literature* started to be used by literary critics Alan Berger and Efraim Sicher who borrowed it from psychological and journalistic studies of the children of survivors (2006:13). Sicher explains second generation as:

a term used by clinical psychologists and therapists for the children of Holocaust survivors who have in various ways been affected by the after-effects of their parents’ experience of deportation, forced labour, imprisonment in a concentration camp, or other forms of persecution by the Nazis. (2005:133)

In short, the second generation witnesses are the children of the Jewish Holocaust survivors. Holocaust survivors remember their own experiences, unlike their children who were born at the end of the war or afterwards. They have been in some way affected by something that they have never experienced themselves; they have no immediate or personal knowledge of the Holocaust. As Cheryl Pearl Sucher, a daughter of a Holocaust survivor explains, “though a child of survivor, I am parent to the interpretation of their survival”. (as quoted in Berger 1997:2) Further, the same author claims that “how the second generation witnesses shape and ritualize Holocaust memory has great bearing on how the event will be commemorated in the future”. (Berger 1997:2)

On the other hand, McGlothlin points out, that writers of the second generation explore German definition of Jewish difference that were assumptions to the identification, isolation, and destruction of the Jews and express their sense of being affected secondarily by the legacy of the Holocaust (2006:21). McGlothlin sees the

second generation as psychological studies of the children of survivors that then is applied to literature written by them and which is generally accepted as a useful designation by a number of critics (2006:17).

Accordingly, a question why these writers keep writing about this period of human destruction arises. One of the survivors' children explains it. Aaron Hass in his work claims that "the agony of our parents did not end with their liberation at the close of World War II" (1990:6). He adds that the legacy of pain and changed personalities of their parents affected authors themselves that they attempt to clarify the effects of that legacy. According to Berger, "[t]hey [the writers] inherit the Holocaust as an irreducible part of their Jewish self-identity" (1997:1). Ellen Fine explains that the second generation writers are "confronted with a difficult task: to imagine an event they have not lived through, and to reconstitute and integrate it into their writing-to create a story out of history". (as quoted in Berger 1997:2) Therefore, some of these writers complain of neurotic disorders symptomatic of having to live with their parents' fears that dated from the violence and death that had intruded into their lives claims Sicher (2005:135). The writers had to grow up with the so-called

post-traumatic effects which were manifested in their daily lives in dysfunctional parenting, separation anxieties, inherited fears of persecution, a pressure to fulfil expectations not realized by dead family members, an inability to mourn for those lost without graves or without trace, missing grandparents, and other members of the extended family. (Sicher 2005: XX)

Although it is true, there is no proof that all "members of the second generation share pathology and not all children of the survivors have felt the need to turn to professional help". (Sicher 2005:135)

In conclusion, the second-generation literature strives to both learn about the influence of the first generation's past on their present, and to work through and comprehend their relationship and identity in the context of this traumatic and absent past. As Sicher points out, "[t]he reimagining of the past makes it present in the lives of the second generation, but this is a transposition that risks loss of identity in the acting out of the stories of the dead" (2005:144).

### **3 The Author - Art Spiegelman**

As the name of this bachelor paper reveals, the main focus of the paper is on the book *Maus* written by an American author Art Spiegelman. Art Spiegelman, a child of two survivors of the Holocaust, was born 15<sup>th</sup> February 1948 in Stockholm. As a young child, his family emigrated to the United States, where he grew up in Rego Park in New York. He studied art and philosophy at Harpur College in Binghamton and during his life worked for instance as a designer, an instructor in history and aesthetics of comics, a contributing artist and an editor. As Robert C. Harvey points out, Spiegelman was a thinking cartoonist, his creations were invariably intellectualized (1996:237). He has been involved in drawing serious comics since late 1960s. His rise from an obscure comics artist drawing for underground publications to a Pulitzer Prize-winning author parallels the increasing seriousness with which comics as a genre have been approached critically. In 1986 Pantheon published *Maus-A Survivor's Tale* in book format; it was followed in 1991 by a second part, *Maus II-A Survivor's Tale: And Here My Troubles Began*, which in 1992 won the Pulitzer Prize. (Stefan Gunther, 2002:299,300)

Even though Spiegelman has written many books, *Maus*, in its comics form which retells story of Art's father Vladek before, during and after World War II and his own story, is the most famous one.

### **4 About *Maus***

As mentioned in the previous chapter, *Maus* consists of two volumes published within the range of five years. The texts reveal how powerfully the past influences the present and the future; they are trying to represent the unrepresentable. It is a rereading of one survivor's tale and the transmission of testimony of this tale to the son. To explain it, Kolář says:

*Maus* has a dual narrative structure; the sections set in present day Rego Park in New York narrated by Art Spiegelman, while those set in the past, located primarily in Poland before and during World War II, are described by Vladek. (et. al. 2010:39)

*Maus* thus juxtaposes and intertwines past and present, the different subject histories of each protagonist, and the very different cultural contexts of the Nazi occupied Poland and Rego Park, New York. To compare, Stefan Gunther has rather different definition of *Maus*. He construes it as dealing with the role of survivors' children in transmitting knowledge about the Holocaust and with the possibility of combining personal narrative with histobiography, moreover with the question of how to interpret the Shoah after the survivors' generation will have passed away. (Gunther 2002:300) Consequently, this author focuses on the importance of passing on the knowledge of the children of survivors on readers of future generations. That is mainly what Spiegelman wanted to do.

On the other hand, Sicher explains *Maus* as:

[a] comic-strip narrative about the Holocaust which places the survivor's story within the frame of the son's story-his mental breakdown, his mother's suicide, and the recording of the father's testimony about his life in Poland, his concentration camp experiences, and his survival ordeal. (2005:144)

It was somewhat unexpected and shocking for the public to read about such event in a form of comic books. "And as if this was not enough, Spiegelman prepared another shock for the reader: all nations acting in his book are conceived as animals". (Kolář 2002:90) Even Stanislav Kolář at first could not imagine that a comic book could be an adequate form to convey experience as the mass extermination of European Jewry during World War II (et al. 2010:150). This reaction was not rare:

When the 1st volume of *Maus*, with the subtitle *A Survivor's Tale-My Father Bleeds History*, came out in the United States in 1986, the first response of some of its readers was similar. They felt offended by the genre and regarded it as a desecration of the memory of millions of victims. Yet generally *Maus* enjoyed great success among both readers and critics. (Kolář et al. 2010:150)

*Maus* brings multiple narratives and kinds of texts, maps of the concentration camp, diagrams of hideouts, real photographs from the family archive, detailed plans of the crematoria, an exchange table for goods in Auschwitz, and a manual for shoe-repair. He does that "in order to make abstract facts (that are more or less generally known) come alive". (Kolář et al. 2010:165) Sicher suggests that Spiegelman's use of pictures, the map of Poland under the Nazi rule and the map of Rego Park in New York, where



Art grew up, on the back cover of the first volume indicates blending of past and present (2005:144).

On the whole, *Maus* addresses the questions of Jewish trauma, guilt, shame and, perhaps most importantly, the transmission of these conflicts from one generation to the next. It illustrates the intimate, influential, and mutually constitutive relationship between past and present; however Spiegelman makes it clear that a certain level of comprehension of such events is impossible.

#### **4.1 Literary genre of *Maus***

As already mentioned, when writing *Maus* Spiegelman turned to what has always been his working artistic medium and thereby *Maus* is also significant because it is written in a form of a comic book. Since many literary genres mingle in *Maus*, the question is to which genre the book primarily belongs. Kolář asks these questions considering literary genre of *Maus*: “Does *Maus* belong to fiction or non-fiction? Is it biography or autobiography? A mere comic book or a novel?” (2004:151).

Looking at these questions, it is worth mentioning that even the early reviewers of *Maus* did not know into which genre to classify it. *The New York Times* initially assigned *Maus* into its fiction best-seller list, reflecting the uncertainty concerning the genre under which to classify a comic novel about the Holocaust, however after Spiegelman’s letter of protest, they reassigned it to non-fiction. (Gunther, 2002:299,300) That means that the author himself considers *Maus* to be non-fiction. Spiegelman said that it should not be on the bestseller fiction list because “it was based on his father’s memoirs and therefore it was factual”. (Sicher 2005:XII) Stanislav Kolář affirms it:

The story of Spiegelman’s parents, Vladek and Anja, and his family is not made up, and it draws on real personal as well as historical background, yet in its artistic selection of facts it moves closer to fiction. In its strongly testimonial character, however, *Maus* approaches non-fiction. (2004:151)

The next question is whether *Maus* belongs to the section of biography or autobiography. According to Sicher, “*Maus*, has usually been read as a documentary biography of the concentration camp survivor Vladek Spiegelman” (2005:144). However it can be better understood as Art’s own story of how he grew up in a family of survivors in Rego Park in New York and therefore as an autobiography.

It also needs to be explained whether *Maus* is a comic book or a graphic novel. Michael Payne and Jessica Rae Barbera define comics as “a creative and expansive form that has always been constrained by formats dictated by commercial enterprise” (2010:312). They add, that “[t]here are many different formats for comics, which all carry unique cultural baggage” (2010:311). Therefore, they recognize many kinds of comics.

Comics inhabits all kinds of serial forms and contexts, from weekly or daily strips to monthly comic books serial characters presented across formats; we can also recognize the comics page itself as a material register of seriality, a narrative architecture built on the establishment of and/or deviation from regularized intervals of space. (Payne et. al. 2010:311)

While graphic novel, as James Baetens explains, “make[s] a clear-cut distinction between the “good guys” and the “bad guys” (2001:7). To complete the definition, a dictionary of cultural and critical theory claims that “[g]raphic novels work in a practical sense as a label that seeks to distinguish serious, adult work from comics for children”. (Payne et.al. 2010:311) Moreover, *A Dictionary of Literary and Thematic Terms: Second* explains graphic novel as a term for a full-length novel of serious intent presented in a form of a comic book. It says that many of these novels offer autobiographical, ironic portraits of the artist-as-looser. They frequently focus on the main character’s unhappy childhood, dysfunctional family, retreat from reality, and ultimate despair. (Quinn 2006:185) What follows from it is that a graphic novel is a subgenre of comics because it evolved from it. (Quinn 2006:185)

Therefore *Maus* can really be considered a graphic novel. Firstly, there are typified Nazis as “the bad guys” and Jews as “the good guys”. Secondly, it is aimed at adult readers. Thirdly, the protagonist has a difficult and in some ways broken relationship with his father. And finally, *Maus* “is considered to be a graphic novel because it deals with a serious theme, based on a true story”. (Baetens 2001:39) There is

no doubt that *Maus* dealing with the Holocaust belongs to a genre of graphic novel. Payne and Barbera in their dictionary confirm that *Maus* belongs to a group of fascinating works which helped to rocket the term graphic novel into public consciousness and which are complex works of non-fictions (2010:311).

Regardless of whether we call it a graphic novel (like Spiegelman does) or not, *Maus* covers all mentioned categories and perhaps even more. (Kolář 2004:151) More importantly, “with its graphic images, of violence and its allegorical framework, Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* is a powerful representation of the Holocaust in popular culture”. (Baetens 2001:23)

Despite its unusual form, *Maus* is an important work that offers a unique approach to narrative construction and interpretation and its images support reader’s better ‘realization’ of Vladek’s words, while the text helps to facilitate and contextualize the illustration.

## **5 *Maus***

### **5.1 Plot**

*Maus* is a story within a story. The central theme of *Maus* focuses on the legacy of racial genocide enacted by the Germans against the Jews during the Holocaust of World War II. There are two timelines. The story primarily chronicles Art’s father Vladek’s life from 1930s Poland until the end of the World War II. Vladek is a Polish Jew, a survivor of the Holocaust. The plot recounts Vladek’s experiences in Auschwitz, a Nazi concentration camp, and the difficult interpersonal dynamics that can manifest between Holocaust survivors and their children. Secondly, the story is pointing on the author himself; it reveals to readers what is behind this magnificent book. It shows Art’s interviews with his father, his personal, mental and love life. Last but not least, it shows the struggle how to deal with a trauma which even though happened years ago and Art did not experience himself, it marked both of them.

The story starts in Rego Park in New York when Art comes to visit his father Vladek in order to chronicle Vladek's memories for a book he arranges to write. At first, Vladek does not think that it is a good idea. "IT WOULD TAKE MANY BOOKS, MY LIFE, AND NO ONE WANTS ANYWAY TO HEAR SUCH STORIES" he says. (Spiegelman 2003:14) He has no idea how the book about how his life story will be successful and says: "BETTER YOU SHOULD SPEND YOUR TIME TO MAKE DRAWINGS WHAT WILL BRING YOU SOME MONEY...." (Spiegelman 2003:14) However, he does start telling his story.

There is an opening describing Vladek's youth in Sosnowiec in Poland, where he meets and marries Anja Zylberberg with whom he soon has a son, Richieu. However Anja suffers from post-natal depression and therefore Vladek accompanies her to a sanatorium in Czechoslovakia. Unfortunately, on their way there, they witness the spread of Nazism throughout central Europe and they hope that are relatively safe from it in Czechoslovakia. "JUST PRAY THAT THEY DON'T START A WAR!!" says Vladek at their train passes the swastika in one of the Czechoslovakian towns. (Spiegelman 2003:14) Anja's treatment in the sanatorium does not take long, she successfully recovers and they can come back home to Poland. Soon after that World War II begins and as a Polish soldier Vladek is taken as a prisoner of war by the Germans. After he is released, he returns to Poland, which is occupied by the Germans. Even though Vladek loses his factory he does what he can to make a living. While part of the family is taken to the concentration camps, Vladek and the rest of the family are moved to a ghetto and then to Srodula. Vladek and Anja send their son, Richieu, to stay with Anja's sister Tosha in another Polish town for safekeeping. As the Germans in Srodula start to deport Jews to the camps too, in order to avoid deportation Tosha poisons Richieu and her own children and commits suicide. Since the Jews in Sosnowiec are supposed to be sent to the camps, Vladek and Anja go into hiding on a farm. They pay smugglers to transport them to Hungary, but they are betrayed by the smugglers and turned over to the Germans. While Vladek is taken to the concentration camp in Auschwitz, Anja is taken to the concentration camp in Birkenau. As Vladek is very skilful, he works in Auschwitz as a tin worker and a shoemaker and is even able to make connections with Anja in Birkenau and supply her with some rations of food

which he saves for her. After some time, Vladek is moved to Dachau and catches a typhus fever. Soon he is transported with other prisoners to the Swiss border from where he manages to run away and hide until the American soldiers take over the town. Then, Vladek can finally return to Sosnowiec, where he meets his wife Anja. They decide to emigrate first to Sweden, and then to the United States, where they begin a new life and where their second son Art is born.

As Vladek's personal history is told, the story of Art himself writing the novel unveils. It shows his tense relationship with his father and dealing with critique and success of *Maus* Book I. He visits a psychiatrist and talks to him about these problems. Art deals with unresolved anger and depression over his mother's suicide in 1968. Even though Vladek remarried another Holocaust survivor Mala, with whom he constantly bickers over money, he cannot cope with his first wife's suicide either. He even destroys her dairies from the war and Art is mad at him because he wanted to use them in writing his novel. When Vladek's health worsens, Art and his wife Françoise visit him and Vladek ends the story by telling Art of his reunion with Anja.

## **5.2 Humans as Animals**

*Maus* uses animal symbolism where the characters are not pictured as humans but as anthropomorphic animals, which means that the silhouettes of animals have human shapes. However, only their heads resemble animals, their bodies look as human bodies and they look, act, dress, and talk like humans as well. Throughout *Maus*, Spiegelman uses different species of animals to present different ethnic groups. The Jews are portrayed as mice, the Germans as cats, the Poles as pigs, the Americans are represented as dogs, frogs stand for the French, reindeers for the Swedes, bees for the Gypsies, etc. This decision to use animal imagery seems to have been an ideal choice since it was probably the only way how make a distinction among various nations in such a different genre as a graphic novel is.

Nevertheless, Spiegelman's animals are not individualized, "their faces lack distinct features because they are portrayed uniformly. They look as if all of them have

been cloned”. (Kolář 2004:154) It means that *Maus* requires reader’s ability to recognize the characters in terms of their animal identities. (Baetens 2001:56) Possibly as Kolář suggests, “Spiegelman reflected the essence of the Nazi’s racist theory, which reduced the whole of the Jewish nation to one anonymous mass (deprived of individual features) destined for annihilation” (2004:154).

If Spiegelman had depicted the characters with human faces, he would most likely have had to use generalizations and stereotypes for different nations, for instance a big nose with the Jews or blond hair and blue eyes with the Germans. Some nations might have felt offended, which, nonetheless, Spiegelman at the end did not avoid. Choosing pigs to represent the Poles may evoke dirt, laziness, a liking for comfort, or indifference and if we apply our stereotyped projections of animals we can understand why the Polish felt insulted. (Kolář 2004:154) The same author further denotes that Spiegelman might have felt an urge to point out strong anti-Semitism that had existed in Poland at the time of World War II. The example of it is in the sixth chapter of the first volume. It is soon before Vladek and Anja are taken to the concentration camps. Vladek is on his way to arrange the transfer to Hungary wearing a pig’s mask when Polish children spot him and recognize that he is a Jew and start to scream: “HELP! MOMMY! A JEW!!” (Spiegelman 2003:151) Vladek explains to Art that in Poland: “THE MOTHER ALWAYS TOLD SO: “BE CAREFUL! A JEW WILL CATCH YOU TO A BAG AND EAT YOU!”...SO THEY TAUGHT TO THEIR CHILDREN”. Therefore the children are afraid; however Vladek is alert and keeps pretending to be Polish. Another scene where Polish showed their antipathy against Jews is when Vladek and Anja look for a shelter from the Germans. Even though they wear pig’s masks a Polish woman recognizes that they are Jews and starts to scream: “THERE’S A JEWESS IN THE COUNTRYARD! POLICE!” This shows that some Polish did not sympathize with the Jews and rather gave them to the police. Nonetheless, Spiegelman is aware that not all Poles acted like that and even helped the Jews as Vladek reveals in his story.

Spiegelman’s *Maus* is not the only literary work about the Holocaust using animal symbolism, for instance Jerzy Kosinski in his novel *The Painted Bird* works with animal images as well. Both authors maybe used animal symbolism for writing

about such event as the Holocaust because as Kolář suggests, “they find parallels between animals and humans to express animalistic features in human behaviour from the terror of World War II” (2002:87). He further explains that using animal imagery “enables writers to explore the relationship between perpetrators, bystanders, and victims during Nazi genocide, and clearly exemplifies the predatory nature of Nazism” (2004:186).

Most likely, Spiegelman’s idea of presenting mice in the role of the Jews comes from Hitler’s own words. Kolář confirms that the central metaphor of illustrating Jews as mice is the author’s ironic response to Hitler’s infamous statement in which he attempts to dehumanize the Jews (et. al. 2010:40). This statement was used as epigraph to the first volume of *Maus*. It says: “THE JEWS ARE UNDOUBEDLY A RACE? BUT THEY ARE NOT HUMAN”. (Spiegelman 2003:10) In his quotation, Hitler deprives the Jews of human qualities and reduces them to mere vermin, therefore Spiegelman took the meaning literally and by graphic realization he caricatured the characters in order to reveal its absurdity. (Kolář 2004:152-153) “It also makes ironic reference to an article published in a German newspaper in the mid-1930s which condemned cartoon icon Mickey Mouse, dismissing him as “the dirty and filth-covered vermin” according to Kolář (et. al. 2010:40). Sicher affirms that Spiegelman ridiculed the Nazi propaganda and showed its absurdity by “making a cartoon mouse into a symbol of humanity”. (Sicher 2005:147)

The cat and mouse game gives an effective metaphor for Nazi and Jews relations and illustrates the predatory nature of the Nazi repression. The first example of it is in *Maus* in the chapter three where the Nazis give the Jews a task which is impossible to finish in time; the punishment for not completing the task is not getting their daily portion of soup. It means that even though Jews do their best not to lose their portion of soup, the Nazis enjoy watching them work hard knowing it is useless. This behaviour suggests that it was their kind of a game, exactly as cats play with mice. Another situation indicating the game of cats with mice is the telling about Vladek’s return to Poland after release as a war prisoner at the beginning of the war. He asks his father what happened with his beard and hears that:

IN SEPTEMBER THE GERMAN SOLDIERS GRABBED MANY JEWS IN THE STREET...THEY MADE US SING PRAYERS WHILE THEY LAUGHED AND BEAT US...AND BEFORE LETTING US GO, THEY CUT OFF OUR BEARDS. (Spiegelman 2003:67)

This representation shows unequal human relations and creativity of the animal imagery points to deeper meaning of *Maus*. This type of behaviour thus confirms that Nazis “played” with Jews and teased them like cats do with mice. Kolář adds: “Jews facing Nazi’s genocide were as helpless as a mouse caught by a cat. And like mice, they became toys in the Nazi’s hands” (2002:90). Another example showing the Nazis play with the Jews is illustrated in chapter one in the second volume of *Maus*. Vladek tells Art that the Nazis “played” with Jew a game when they took their cap and said: “GO GET YOUR CAP-QUICK!” (Spiegelman 2003:195) When the Jew ran to pick the cap up, the guard shot him for trying to escape. And later, “THE GUARD GOT A CONGRATULATIONS AND A FEW DAYS VACATION FOR STOPPING THE ESCAPE” says Vladek.

However sometimes Nazi’s behaviour did not resemble cats and mice, they just acted inhuman. Vladek tells Art that one day the Germans came to Srodula to take people to Auschwitz, most of them were kids and they were screaming and screaming, they could not stop. “SO THE GERMANS SWINGED THEM BY THE LEGS AGAINST A WALL...AND THEY NEVER ANYMORE SCREAMED”. (Spiegelman 2003:110)

Even though the reader knows that animals in *Maus* represent different human nations, the story shows moments when these animals, therefore nations, pretend to be other animals thus belonging to other nations by using animal masks. The main reason for masks in *Maus* is to show that to survive World War II; Jews sometimes had to pretend to be someone else. Kolář explains:

Masks, symbolizing a change of ethnic identity, are necessitated by existential need and are justified by historical reality—when many Jews disguised their Jewishness and posed as Christians. The use of masks becomes a means of defence against persecution. (2002:91)

An example of this masquerading is when Vladek travels back to Poland after being taken as a prisoner of war by the Germans. To travel by train from protectorate,



the traveller needs legal papers but anyway Vladek manages to get onto one of the trains and talks to the conductor. Since he still has on his army uniform he pretends to be a Pole. He talks to the conductor: "YOU ARE A POLE LIKE ME, SO I CAN TRUST YOU...THE STINKING NAZIS HAD ME IN A WAR PRISON...I JUST ESCAPED". (Spiegelman 2003:66) Since the Poles were very bitter about the Germans, the conductor helps Vladek hide in the train and he therefore manages to get to Poland. Another situation where Vladek and Anja wear pig's mask is on their journey from Srodula to find a better bunker, later Vladek is not even afraid to travel with Germans in the streetcar in disguise, moreover he greets other passengers: "HEIL HITLER". He explains that there were two cars. "ONE WAS ONLY GERMANS AND OFFICIALS. THE SECOND, IT WAS ONLY THE POLES". (Spiegelman 2003:142) Vladek clarifies the reason why he travelled with the Germans. "THE GERMANS PAID NO ATTENTION OF ME...IN THE POLISH CAR THEY COULD SMELL IF A POLISH JEW CAME IN". These examples show that pretending to be a Pole, thus wearing pig's mask, could save Jews their lives and help them survive.

Even the author draws himself with a mask of a mouse. Sicher explains that "Art's own mouse-mask underscores the artist's futile attempt to distance himself from a past of which he is himself a victim, but also establishes ironic distance from the past" (2005:145). This happens in the chapter two in the second volume of *Maus* called *And Here My Troubles Began*. The author compares the past and the present; he shows the readers what happened to him in the present when Vladek was telling his story. At this moment the author confesses to feeling depressed and he starts to see his own psychiatrist with whom he speaks about the Holocaust since he is a survivor of the Holocaust as well. Kolář explains that "[o]bviously masks serve the author to express problems of identity and they also make us think about the sincerity or falseness of individual deeds" (2002:91). In other words, the mask indicates that the past and the Jewish identity is deeply connected to him and even though he tries to dissociate from the past he himself is a victim of it and the mask denotes how the revulsion is ironic. The metaphor of masks also points to the dehumanization of victims, as well as to the Nazi animalistic and inhuman behaviour. By illustrating humans as animal Spiegelman

wanted to pass on the message that animal instinct are hidden in every person. (Kolář 2004:187)

### 5.3 Question of Suicide

As already mentioned, Art's mother Anja committed suicide. Even though it happened a long time ago, Art still cannot cope with it. Kolář calls his mental problems which originate in Anja's death as "his own little private Holocaust" (2004:183). This part of Spiegelman's life is described in *Maus* throughout a short comic strip called *Prisoner on the Hell Planet* which was originally published in a comic *Short Order Comix* in 1973. The title of the comics, *Prisoner on the Hell Planet*, reveals that what Art Spiegelman was going through was nothing pleasant. As Kolář points out, this comics is "personal account of his [Spiegelman's] mother's suicide and his nervous breakdown" (2004:1559).

Unlike *Maus*, the characters in the *Prisoner on the Hell Planet* are not pictured as animals but as humans with individualized faces. Stanislav Kolář explains that story of Art's mother's suicide is personal itself that there is no need to distance from the tragedy as it was with presentations of the Holocaust (2004:160). Paradoxically, its visual realization is more frightening and depressing than the figures from narrating about Auschwitz because Art's revelation of his demonic world is graphically intensified by dark panels with an excessive use of black colours explains Kolář (2004:164).

During one of many Art's story-telling sessions with his father, Art learns that Vladek has read this comic strip. Art is surprised as he did not suppose that it would get into his father's hands and worries what his father thinks about it. Vladek tells him that he cried when he was reading it, however he admits: "IT'S GOOD YOU GOT IT OUTSIDE YOUR SYSTEM". (Spiegelman 2003:106) He realises that Art is still dealing with Anja's suicide even though it happened years ago, when he was twenty years old.

In *Prisoner on the Hell Planet*, when telling about Anja's suicide, Art is wearing a prison uniform which reminds the reader of the concentration camp uniforms. The uniform could be understood as a message indicating that Art feels guilty about his mother's death and the reader gets to know that Spiegelman spent some time in the state mental hospital. Accordingly, Art describes himself as a prisoner of overwhelming guilt. Kolář explains that:

Despite Artie's effort to push the blame for the death of his mother onto somebody else, he knows that it is impossible. He is haunted by the feeling that he contributed to her death by being a disappointment for his parents. (2004:163-164)

Art remembers the last time he saw his mother, "SHE CAME INTO MY ROOM...IT WAS LATE AT NIGHT...She said:...ARTIE...YOU...STILL...LOVE..ME...DON'T YOU...?" But Art resentfully turned away and mumbled "SURE, MA"! unwilling to talk. (Spiegelman 2003:105)

It is obvious, that Art now regrets his behaviour and he puts his blame on his mother. "CONGRATULATION!...YOU'VE COMMITTED THE PERFECT CRIME...", he says ironically while he is locked in a cell which could indicate that he is locked and imprisoned by his mother's death (Spiegelman 2003:105). *Prisoner on the Hell Planet* ends by Art saying: "...YOU MURDERED ME. MOMMY, AND YOU LEFT ME HERE TO TAKE THE RAP"!!!(Spiegelman 2003:105) It seems that Art hates his mother for committing suicide which completely broke his nerves. Kolář explains that Art "is stung by the accusatory remarks made towards him by friends of the family at the funeral" (et.al. 2010:41). One of them said: "NOW YOU CRY! BETTER YOU CRIED WHEN YOUR MOTHER WAS STILL ALIVE!" (Spiegelman 2003:104) Kolář denotes that Art has not fulfilled his parent's expectations, and instead of love, he showed his mother only resentment and now is overwhelmed by remorse (2004:163-164). Disappointment of mother's suicide is even bigger as Art's mother did not leave any suicide note.

When writing *Maus*, Art realizes that his mother used to write a diary where he could find an indication as to what led her to suicide and, what is more, which could be another source for his book. Unfortunately, he finds out that his father destroyed these

diaries. "AFTER ANJA DIED I HAD TO MAKE AN ORDER WITH EVERYTHING...THESE PAPERS HAD TOO MANY MEMORIES. SO I BURNED THEM" Vladek says (Spiegelman 2003:161). When Art hears that he is very angry and calls his father a murderer. "GOD DAMN YOU! YOU-YOU MURDERER! HOW THE HELL COULD YOU DO SUCH A THING!!" he says to his father. As Harvey points out, by calling his father a murderer Art means that he murdered his vision of the *Maus* (1996:242). Since Vladek told Art that his mother had written diaries he could not wait to read them and use them while writing *Maus* because it could have brought another point of view for it. Moreover, by calling his father a murderer, Art means that his father murdered Art's memories and he is even angrier when realizes that Anja hoped that Art will be interested in her testimony. However Vladek's excuse is that: "ALL SUCH THINGS OF THE WAR, I TRIED TO PUT OUT FROM MY MIND ONCE FOR ALL...UNTIL YOU REBUILTME ALL THIS FROM YOUR QUESTIONS". (Spiegelman 2003:258)

To sum it up, to represent dealing with his mother's death, Art creates a comics *Prisoner on the Hell Planet*, which is introduced as a part of *Maus*. It is his personal account to Anja's death and his nervous breakdown and as Kolář points out, it reflects the depression the narrator suffers from (2004:164). The reader learns that Art feels guilty about her death. He did not fulfil her expectations and because he did not show her enough love, he has become a source of disappointment. Since she did not leave any suicide note, his remorse is made worse. (Kolář et.al. 2010:41) He has no idea what the reason for her suicide was and since her diaries are destroyed by his father, there is no way to find out.

#### **5.4 Trauma and Its Transmission on the Second Generation**

Not only did the trauma appearing in *Maus* mark the generation that survived the Holocaust but it also deeply affected the already mentioned second generation. Kolář explains that "Maus depicts how the trauma experienced by the author's father Vladek, a Holocaust survivor, is passed on to Art, a writer and cartoonist born after World War II" (et. al. 2010:39).

In the first place the term *trauma* needs to be defined. According to Kolář “in immensely stressful situations, our psyche is unable to cope with the distress and our experience becomes that which psychologists term traumatic” (et. al. 2010:5). He adds that trauma is viewed as a severe physical wound or injury, caused by violence as an evil of human design, by natural disaster or an accident. Survivors have lost their homeland, culture, language, identity, belief and last but not least, their desire to love states Kolář (2004:181). After all of this, it is undisputable that the Jews during the Holocaust underwent many stressful moments therefore it is asserted that the Holocaust experiences negatively affected the survivors’ capacity for human relations.

As Hass points out, survivors often suffered from intense depression which led to complete social withdrawal or seclusion and they had difficulty to establish close relationships (1990:9). Consequently many of them have been unable to be effective parents and this disability has had damaging psychological ramifications for children raised by these adults. (Hass1990:25) It means that generations which have never been exposed to a traumatic event can “inherit” the trauma of their ancestors and they need to cope with the trauma as well. As a result, some of the second generation writers explore their identity in relation to the Holocaust through imaginative writing and art.

The example of the second generation author dealing with the Holocaust through writing is Art Spiegelman. The story of *Maus* inter alia shows what happened to Art’s father in the hands of Nazis moreover what happened to the writer himself in his father’s hands and how his stories affected him. (Young 2002: XXXIII) Art’s influence by the Holocaust is obvious since he visits a psychiatrist. Art admits to him that he feels depressed and miserable. He talks about his youth and relationship with Vladek: “MAINLY I REMEMBER ARGUING WITH HIM...AND BEING TOLD THAT I COULDN’T DO ANYTHING AS WELL AS HE COULD”. (Spiegelman 2003:204) One day Art even admits to his wife that he became an artist to annoy his father, because he thought it was an impractical job. He adds: “IT WAS AN AREA WHERE I WOULDN’T HAVE TO COMPETE WITH HIM”. (Spiegelman 2003:99) This indicates that the relationship between them was complicated. Another example showing the difficulties between Vladek and Art is for instance when Vladek wants Art to check some papers for the bank for the third time, even if previous checking showed

that those papers were alright. When Art refuses it, Vladek says to him: “ALWAYS YOU’RE SO LAZY!” and Art replies: “LAZY?! DAMN IT, YOU’RE DRIVING ME NUTS!” Accordingly, this type of relationship culminates in Art’s saying:

I CAN’T EVEN MAKE ANY SENSE OUT OF MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MY FATHER...HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO MAKE ANY SENSE OUT OF AUSCHWITZ?...OF THE HOLOCAUST... (Spiegelman 2003:174)

It reveals how Art deals with the Holocaust; he struggles how to write about it, he does not understand the Holocaust. Moreover, he admits that his relationship with Vladek is complicated and he himself does not understand it.

Broken and difficult relationships between survivors and their children could have many reasons but they all originated in the Holocaust. According to Berger, reasons causing problems can be for instance “separation anxiety, lack of parental respect for boundaries or fear for hurting the children” (1997:10). To compare, Sicher suggests that these children were influenced and marked by intergenerational transmission by constant reliving of traumatic experiences, fears of separation, expectancy of over-fulfilment or anxieties about food (2005:133).

The case of survivor’s attempt to make his child to think about food as about something that is not axiomatic which therefore marks that child is shown in *Maus* when Art and Vladek are having dinner. Art is full even though there is still some food on his plate and Vladek orders him to eat it all. Then Art tells his father’s wife Mala what it was like in the same situation when he was a child. “MOM WOULD OFFER TO COOK SOMETHING I LIKED BETTER, BUT POP JUST WANTED TO LEAVE THE LEFTOVER FOOD AROUND UNTIL I ATE IT”. (Spiegelman 2003:45) It reveals that survivors were anxious about food even after the war and they wanted to teach their children be more cautious and appreciate that they have something to eat. During Vladek’s story telling he explains to Art: “YOU CAN’T KNOW WHAT IT IS, TO BE HUNGRY”. (Spiegelman 2003:251)

Art’s trauma grows with knowing that he is a replacement of his dead brother Richieu who died during the war. Art knows that he has been a disappointment for his parents and that he has never fulfilled their expectations and never matched up to what Richieu might have been. Art comments on Richieu’s photo in his parents’ bedroom:

“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 2003:175) He adds that Richieu might have become a doctor or married a wealthy Jewish girl, which he did neither. However, as Kolář points out, Art knows that the competition with his dead brother to win his parents’ favour is absurd (2004:164). Art’s secret rivalry and trauma from being in his dead brother shadow culminates when tired and disoriented Vladek asks Art to stop interviewing him: “I’M TIRED FROM TALKING, RICHIEU”. (Spiegelman2003:296) This confusion of Art with Richieu Kolář explains as “a culmination of Artie’s frustrating rivalry and of his battle for self-definition of his identity. The battle seems to be ultimately lost” (2004:165). This feeling can testify the fact that his parents had the picture of Richieu in their bedroom. Moreover, calling Art Richieu suggests Vladek’s confusion to recognize past and present, which as Kolář points out many victims do and which means that they cannot distance themselves from the traumatic event (et. al. 2010:10).

What can be surprising is that after all that Vladek went through, he himself is a racist. As Kolář explains, “Vladek, a victim of racism, becomes its disseminator in America” (2004:185). The example of Vladek’s racist behaviour is when going to the town; Art’s wife Françoise stops the car to give a lift to a hitch-hiker. Vladek does not want to stop and calls the black hitch-hiker a shvartser which is a Yiddish offensive word for black people. He is not even afraid to express a concern that he had when the hitch-hiker was in the car. “I HAD THE WHOLE TIME TO WATCH OUT THAT THIS SCHVARTSER DOESN’T STEAL US THE GROCERIES FROM THE BACK SEAT!” (Spiegelman 2003:259) Even Art himself is surprised by his father’s behaviour. “THAT’S OUTRAGES! HOW CAN YOU, OF ALL PEOPLE, BE SUCH A RACIST! YOU TALK ABOUT BLACKS THE WAY THE NAZIS TALKED ABOUT THE JEWS!” he says to Vladek. However, he replies that it is something different. This behaviour shows that however trauma of the Holocaust marked him, he did not change attitude to black people.

To sum up, there is no doubt that survivors of the Holocaust are marked by this event and it changed their behaviour and priorities. It marked the way they raised their

children and therefore these children, the so-called second generation, are scarred by the Holocaust as well. These children have to deal with trauma that is transferred to them by fears of separations, anxieties about food or repeated listening to the stories of their parents. Art Spiegelman is an example of it and his story shows that it all can result in broken relationships between the survivors and their children.

#### **5.4.1 Survival Guilt and Its Transmission on the Second Generation**

However, it is not only trauma that is transferred between the generation that experienced the Holocaust and the second generation. Survivors of the Holocaust very often deal with the so-called survival guilt and it affected their children as well. Under the influence of survival guilt, survivors may blame themselves for not going to greater lengths to save others and they may be haunted by the thought, “[w]hat right did I have to live when better individuals than I died?” (Hass 1990:10) The same author further explains that survivor guilt can result in restrictions against expressing rage towards Nazis or parents who failed in providing them protection from those torturous events (1990:11). Moreover,

[t]he survivor frequently feels himself indicted for unspecified but unforgivable crimes—chief among them the “crime” of having returned to the living while others, and often one’s “betters,” went to their death. Rosenfeld (1980:53)

It is pictured in the part of the story when Vladek and Anja want to persuade their nephew to go with them into a bunker to hide. When he refuses, Anja starts counting members of family who are dead. “THE WHOLE FAMILY IS GONE! GRANDMA AND GRANDPA! POPPA! MOMMA! TOSHA! BIBI! MY RICHIEU! NOW THEY’LL TAKE LOLEK!” she says and adds “OH GOD! LET ME DIE TOO!” (Spiegelman 2003:124) This indicates that Anja regrets that she is still alive while her family is dead and she is willing and ready to die because of them.

Kolář explains that feelings of guilt are a typical feature of survival syndrome and therefore survivors become prisoners of their guilt, they feel remorse (of course, unsubstantiated) for their impotence in saving family (2004:184). Sicher agrees that



surviving was not easy and that, “[m]any victims of the Holocaust had to witness the deaths of their closest family, underwent some unspeakable brutality, or had to make impossible moral choices in order to survive” (2005:134). For instance Jews police had to make impossible moral choices when deciding to do that job however they did it to survive. Vladek explains it in his telling:

SOME JEWS THOUGHT IN THIS WAY: IF THEY GAVE TO THE GERMANS A FEW JEWS, THEY COULD SAVE THE REST. AND AT LEAST THEY COULD SAVE THEMSELVES. (Spiegelman 2003:89)

In further telling, he reveals that Jewish guards acted like the Germans, they had big sticks and were not afraid to use them. Other example of immoral behaviour is in the chapter five. When waiting for the transport to Auschwitz, Vladek sees his cousin and asks him for help. He replies that there is nothing he can do, however when Vladek shows him some gold, he suddenly changes his mind and helps Vladek, Anja and their nephew escape. Art himself does not understand this behaviour: “WOULDN’T THEY HAVE HELPED YOU EVEN IF YOU COULDN’T PAY? I MEAN, YOU WERE FROM THE SAME FAMILY...” he asked. (Spiegelman 2003:116) Nevertheless, his father told him that at that time everyone took care only of themselves.

In chapter three of the second volume of *Maus*, Vladek, in order to survive, even hurts himself. He hears that the infirmary is a “paradise” in comparison with the barracks in the concentration camp. Consequently he wants to get an infection and to be taken there. “HERE I HAD THREE TIMES A DAY SOMETHING TO EAT, AND IT WAS ONLY TWO PATIENTS FOR EACH BED” he explains to Art. (Spiegelman 2003:252) Thus he cuts himself into his palm repeatedly. “I IRRITATED EACH DAY MY HAND, TO STAY LONGER”. He does it, even if it hurts him very much. “I GOT AFRAID FOR MY HAND AND LET IT HEAL...I HAVE STIL TODAY A SCAR ON THIS PLACE”, says Vladek and shows his palm to Art.

These were examples of extreme and unbelievable behaviour that was sometimes unnecessary to survive and thus it left consequences and feelings of guilt on

the survivors. Therefore many of them “see themselves as “not normal” and forever scarred by their wartime experiences”. (Hass 1990:23)

Since the life of survivors was changed forever, their children are touched by their parent’s experiences as well and many of them had to find professional help. “It was in the 1970s that psychologists first began linking disorders among children of survivors with their parents’ experiences”. (Sicher 2005:136) It is indicated in *Maus* as well when Art reveals that he has sessions with his own psychiatrist with in whom he confides his private life and relationship with his father, and the feelings of guilt. It is because Art’s parents went through the horrors of the Holocaust and he suffers from what can be called “second-generation survival guilt”. Sicher explains that Art feels guilty because he was not here in Auschwitz with his parents, and therefore did not know what it really was like (2005:146). He thinks that his life in comparison with life of those who survived Holocaust is nothing, moreover he express a wish that he would like to have come through Auschwitz to know and experience what his parents went through. “I GUESS IT’S SOME KIND OF GUILT ABOUT HAVING AN EASIER LIFE THAN THEY DID” he says to his psychiatrist (Spiegelman 2003:176). He even does not enjoy the success of the first volume of *Maus*. “NO MATTER WHAT I ACOMPLISH, IT DOESN’T SEEM LIKE MUCH COMPARED TO SURVIVING AUSCHWITZ.” (Spiegelman 2003:204) Sicher states that “the Holocaust has not ended for Art in the sense that he is living under its shadow and it has formed him before his birth” (2005:146).

Art’s physical condition is exacerbated by Vladek’s constant reminder that whatever Art suffers from cannot compare to him. As Sicher points out, Vladek evidently considers Art as incompetent because he did not go through the Holocaust and managed to survive it (2005:145). He does not understand that Art is going through something similar through a trauma transmission and he keeps indicating that he can manage everything when he survived the Holocaust. The psychiatrist suggests that maybe Vladek needed to show that he could always survive. Aaron Haas explains this kind of behaviour, he points out that some survivors felt a triumph at having made it through the Holocaust (1990:11). However Vladek felt guilty about it as well and Art’s

psychiatrist adds: “AND HE TOOK HIS GUILT OUT ON YOU, WHERE IT WAS SAFE...ON THE REAL SURVIVOR”. (Spiegelman 20003:204) That explains why Art is so tired and that the Holocaust is all around him. He admits:

SOME PART OF ME DOESN'T WANT TO DRAW OR THINK ABOUT AUSCHWITZ. I CAN'T VISUALIZE IT CLERALLY, AND I CAN'T BEGIN TO IMAGINE WHAT IT FELT LIKE.

This proves that Art really feels guilty because he was not there in Auschwitz and cannot imagine how it was like.

The *Maus* shows another type of guilt that Art suffers from. He feels guilty because the first volume of *Maus* has brought him success and money and he cannot deal with the fact that it profits from affliction of others. Art admits that “IN SEPTEMBER 1986, AFTER 8 YEARS OF WORK, THE FIRST PART OF MAUS WAS PUBLISHED. IT WAS A CRITICAL AND COMMERCIAL SUCCESS” (Spiegelman 2003:201). He adds that he got many offers to turn the book into the movie and pictures in *Maus* show journalists push him to do interviews and he is pictured as a little boy who wants to escape from the hustle about his book. He also pictures himself saying “I WANT MY MOMMY!” Kolář confirms that for Spiegelman, making money from the suffering of millions of victims is unacceptable and therefore the success of the first volume of *Maus* does not make him happy and even make him feel even more depressed (et. al. 2010:43). However, his psychiatrist helps him cope with the creative crisis and advises him how to continue writing of the second volume of *Maus* where he got stuck.

On the whole, dealing with experiences from the Holocaust lasts the whole life and it even marks further generations. Survivors feel guilty because they survived something terrible that millions of others did not. They do not know why they “deserved” it and the feelings of guilt are even worse when they think of people “better” than them who did not survive. In the story of *Maus*, Vladek feels guilty about the death of his first son Richieu and what is more, the author, Art Spiegelman, himself feels guilty for his mother’s death. This indicates that even offsprings of survivors are

affected by the Holocaust because it is not possible for the children of Holocaust survivors to grow up without becoming scarred and helpless. It is pictured in Art's own story. It focuses on the ways in which his family's Holocaust trauma has become his own trauma, and the ways in which he has inherited his parents' survivor guilt.

Last but not least, trauma of the Holocaust connects all Jews. "Many assimilated Jews see the collective trauma of the Holocaust as the main totem of their identity, rather than the religious practice of Judaism". (Kolář et. al. 2010:11) It means that this nightmarish experience from the World War II is very significant for Jews and they understand it as an integral part of their lives that represents their identity. Moreover, writers of the so-called second generation through the trauma transmitted from their parents use the Holocaust as means for exploration of their own post-Holocaust experience and re-examining their Jewish identity. (Kolář 2004:177) Nevertheless obsessive concern with the past is an after-effect of their trauma that is difficult or even possible to get rid of as Kolář further states (2004:179).

## 6 Conclusion

The main aim of the bachelor paper was to show on the author of *Maus*, Art Spiegelman, how the trauma of the Holocaust is transmitted on the second generation, moreover how he and the whole second generation are influenced by that event.

An American writer Art Spiegelman is a son of Vladek Spiegelman and Anja Spiegelman who survived World War II. The story of *Maus* in the first place retells Vladek's story before, during and after World War II. Despite many attempts to avoid concentration camp, eventually he and his wife Anja ended up in Auschwitz, Birkenau and later Dachau. However, they managed to survive and started a new life in America where Art Spiegelman grew up. Secondly *Maus* focuses on the author Art Spiegelman himself and it tells process of writing *Maus*.

The theoretical part of the paper introduces the topic of the Holocaust and its literature, further it focuses on the so-called second generation Holocaust literature and reveals that it is a generation of writers of who were the children of the Holocaust survivors. Following on from that, Art Spiegelman's *Maus* is introduced. The theoretical part deals with the question into which genre to classify *Maus*. It reveals that in its graphic form where humans are pictured with animal's heads, with its dealing with such a serious topic as the Holocaust undoubtedly is, with its focus on the adult readers, autobiographical elements and focusing on unhappiness and dysfunctional family, it belongs into a genre of graphic novel.

The analytical part of the paper focuses on *Maus* itself and it analyses different aspects of this work. Firstly, the plot is introduced. Secondly, it focuses on the animal symbolism in *Maus*. It reveals that Spiegelman used portraying different nations as animal because he wanted to express animalistic features in human behaviour and wanted to pass on the message that animal instinct are hidden in every person. The central metaphor of picturing Jews as mice is Spiegelman's ironic response to Hitler's infamous statement in which he dehumanized the Jews. He took the meaning literally and caricatured the characters in order to reveal its absurdity. He explored the relationship between the offenders and the victims and clearly exemplified the predatory

nature of Nazism. The cat and mouse game gave an effective metaphor for Nazi and Jews relations.

The next chapter deals with the question of suicide; it shows why Spiegelman felt guilty for his mother's suicide. The reader finds out that Spiegelman blames himself for her death because he did not fulfil her expectations and did not show her his love.

The key chapter of the paper aims at the transmission of trauma from the Holocaust. The reader learns that in the concentration camps and during the war, people went through many stressful situations that scarred them for the rest of their lives. They lost their homes, faith and these experiences negatively marked their capacity for human relationships. Consequently, some survivors have not been effective parents and had problematic relationships with their children because they passed their trauma on their kids. This is the case of Art and Vladek. The paper showed examples indicating their difficult relationship and suggested different reasons, which could lead to these difficulties not only in their relationship but generally, such as separation anxiety, anxiety about food, lack of parental respect and mainly telling about the Holocaust. In other words, the children of the survivors, the so-called second generation, "inherited" their parents' trauma and many of them dealt with it through writing about the Holocaust, like Art Spiegelman did. He admitted and the paper showed that he had a problematic relationship with his father, the constant obsession with the Holocaust caused him an artistic crisis and this depression made him to feel unprepared to be a parent. Consequently, he started visiting a psychiatrist. He is an example of what has been stated in the theoretical part, he suffers from neurotic disorders caused by having to live with his parents' fears that dated from the violence and death.

Last but not least, the paper focuses on the survival guilt and also its transmission on the second generation. Besides feeling traumatised, survivors of the Holocaust often had to deal with the feelings of guilt. The guilt that they survived while others, their beloved, often 'better' people did not. The paper revealed that Art, a member of the second generation, felt guilty because he was not there in the concentration camp and therefore could not imagine what it was like and what is more he felt guilty because he thought he had an easier life. Many authors of the second generation had the same problems and through the trauma transmitted from their parents they used the Holocaust

as means for exploration of their own post-Holocaust experience and re-examining their Jewish identity.

## 7 Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá tématem holocaustu v literatuře druhé generace a zaměřuje se na dílo *Maus* od Arta Spiegelmana.

Slova *holocaust*, které bylo poprvé použito na konci 50. let 19. století a poukazuje na tragédii židů za druhé světové války, je někdy nahrazováno slovy *Shoah* nebo *Hurban*. Téměř šest milionů židů bylo v tomto období vyraženo německými nacisty, a přestože je mnoho literatury, která se snaží toto období objasnit, je těžké mu porozumět, protože neexistují vhodná slova, která by něco takového popsala.

Ačkoli se lidé zpočátku báli, že tato událost upadne v zapomnění, na konci 20. století začalo plnit média a vyvinula se literatura holocaustu. Úkolem této literatury bylo zaznamenat strašlivé události tohoto období a uchovat ji v paměti pro další generace. Vyvinulo se mnoho literárních žánrů věnující se této tematice a mezi nimi v 80. letech vznikla takzvaná literatura druhé generace píšící o holocaustu. Jak název naznačuje, tato skupina autorů jsou potomci přeživších holocaust. Přestože nikdy sami nezažili toto období, mnozí z těchto autorů se skrze psaní o této události vyrovnávali s následky holocaustu, které zanechalo stopy i na nich samých, protože takzvaně „zdedili“ trauma svých rodičů. Příčin přenosu traumatu mohlo být více, například strach z rozdělení rodiny, rodiče neplnící svoji rodičovskou funkci, obavy z pronásledování nebo truchlení po členech rodiny, kteří za druhé světové války zemřeli či obavy o dostatek potravy.

Do kategorie druhé generace píšící o holocaustu patří autor Art Spiegelman. Tento autor, který jak již bylo řečeno, je potomkem přeživších holocaustu Vladka a Anji, se narodil ve Stockholmu. Ovšem ještě za jeho mládí se rodina přestěhovala do Ameriky, kde vyrůstal v New Yorku. Studoval umění a filozofii a během svého života se živil jako projektant, editor a vyučující historie a estetiky komiksu. Od konce 60. let se věnoval tvorbě komiksu, v roce 1986 vydal první díl *Maus-A Survivor's Tale* a v roce 1992 mu *Maus II-A Survivor's Tale: And Here My Troubles Began* přineslo Pulitzerovu cenu.

Tato práce se zaměřuje na celé dílo *Maus*. Kniha je rozdělena na dvě části a poukazuje na to, jak minulost ovlivňuje současnost. Kniha má dvě časové linie, první je



příběh Artova otce Vladka z období holocaustu v Polsku, druhý je Artuv vlastní příběh odehrávající se v New Yorku a zaměřující se na jeho psychické problémy, které způsobilo předání traumatu holocaustu i sebevražda jeho matky. Jinými slovy je to předávání poznatků holocaustu z jedné generace na druhou, na které by lidstvo nemělo zapomenout. Co je na *Maus* dále výjimečné, je to, že Spiegelman použil pro psaní o tak vážném tématu jako je holocaust komiksovou formu a dokonce použil zvířecí motivy při znázorňování lidí. Toto bylo zprvu pro čtenáře šokující, ale později se kniha setkala s obrovským úspěchem.

Naskytá se otázka, do kterého literárního žánru se *Maus* řadí. Toto dílo sám autor zařazuje do kategorie “non-fiction“, protože je to založeno na pravdivém příběhu a tudíž je to příběh reálný. Otázka, zda je *Maus* biografie nebo autobiografie, zůstává nezodpovězena, neboť toto dílo lze zahrnout do obou kategorií. Z pohledu na Vladkův příběh se jedná o biografii, z pohledu na Artovo vyprávění lze *Maus* zařadit do autobiografie. Stěžejní otázkou zůstává, zda je *Maus* komiks nebo grafický román. Z bakalářské práce vyplývá, že *Maus* náleží do kategorie grafického románu, neboť splňuje jeho kritéria, jako je rozlišení kladných a záporných hrdinů, zabývá se závažnou tematikou, je zaměřen na kategorii dospělých čtenářů a v neposlední řadě se v *Maus* vyskytují autobiografické prvky vyprávění autora.

Primární časová linie *Maus* je vyprávění polského žida Vladka Spiegelmana o životě před, během a po druhé světové válce. Vladek a jeho žena Anja se skrývali před nacisty, ale nakonec byli deportováni do koncentračních táborů Osvětim a Birkenau, později i Dachau. Přestože většina jejich rodiny, včetně syna Richieuho holocaust nepřežila, Vladkovi a Anje se přežít podařilo a emigrovali do Dánska, kde se jim narodil druhý syn Art, autor *Maus*. Později se všichni přestěhovali natrvalo do New Yorku. Zde bohužel Anja Spiegelman spáchala sebevraždu. Druhá časová linie *Maus* znázorňuje proces psaní autora Arta Spiegelmana. Jeho návštěvy u otce, který mu vyprávěl svůj příběh, autorskou krizi a v neposlední řadě psychické problémy, kterými trpěl v následku smrti své matky a přenosu traumatu z holocaustu a kvůli nimž navštěvoval psychiatra.

Práce analyzuje různé aspekty díla *Maus*. Nejprve zvířecí symboliku použitou v *Maus*. Jak již bylo řečeno, Spiegelman ve svém grafickém románu znázorňuje lidské

postavy se zvířecími obličejí. Odlišné národy jsou prezentovány odlišnými zvířecími druhy. Židé jsou zde zobrazováni jako myši, nacisté jako kočky, Poláci jako prasata, Američané jako psi. Zvířecí obličejové postav jsou znázorněny jednotně, nejsou odlišeny, čímž chtěl autor odrazit podstatu nacistické rasistické teorie, která snížila celek židovského národa do jedné anonymní rasy určené k vyhlazení. Vyobrazení židů jako myši souvisí také s Hitlerovým citátem, kdy zbavuje židy lidských kvalit a přirovnává je k pouhé havěti. Spiegelman chtěl poukázat na absurditu toho citátu a vzal ho doslovně. Dále pak znázorněním židů jako myši a nacistů jako koček poukazuje na dravou povahu nacistické represe, kdy si nacisté „hráli“ s židy jako s kočky s myši, což tato bakalářská práce podkládá ukázkami z díla *Maus*. Tato práce dále odhaluje, že znázorněním sebe samého s maskou myši se Art Spiegelman pokusil distancovat od minulosti, jejíž je sám obětí, ale také vytvářít ironický odstup a vyjádřit problém s identitou. Spiegelman není jediný, kdo pro tematiku holocaustu použil zvířecí symboliku, udělal tak i Jerzy Kosinski, autor románu *The Painted Bird*.

Další zaměření práce je na otázku sebevraždy. Jak již bylo zmíněno, Artova matka spáchala sebevraždu a on se s tím bohužel nedokáže vyrovnat. Jeho psychické problémy, způsobené matčinou smrtí, jsou v *Maus* publikovány skrze komiks nazvaný *Prisoner on the Hell Planet*. Čtenář se dozvídá, že Spiegelman se cítí vinen za smrt svojí matky, jelikož ji neprojevoval dostatek lásky a celkově byl zklamáním pro své rodiče. Artuv pocit viny zhoršuje vědomí, že Anja nezanechala dopis na rozloučenou, tudíž nevysvětlila důvod své smrti. Když Art zjišťuje, že Anja si psala deníky, doufá, že mu napomůžou objasnit důvod její vraždy a poskytnout další zdroj informací pro jeho psaní. Po zjištění, že jeho otec tyto deníky spálil, ho nazývá vrahem, neboť zabil jeho naději na vypořádání se se svými depresemi způsobenými pocitem viny z matčiny smrti a také zabil možnost rozšíření *Maus*.

Stěžejní část práce se věnuje traumatu a přenosu traumatu z holocaustu. Protože během druhé světové války židé ztratili svoje blízké, domovy, často i víru, je bezesporu, že trpěli depresemi, které často vedly k sociálnímu ústraní, a tudíž měli problémy navázat úzké vztahy. Z toho pramení, že to na nich zanechalo následky a co více, zanechalo to následky i na jejich dětech, se kterými těžko navazovali důvěrné vztahy. Příkladem, že tato druhá generace také trpěla holocaustem, je Art Spiegelman. Ve svém

grafickém románu *Maus* přiznává, že kvůli psychickým problémům navštěvoval psychiatra. Řešil s ním zejména svůj narušený vztah s otcem, přiznal mu, že jejich vztahu nerozumí a tudíž nedokáže porozumět ani holocaustu a tím pádem o něm psát. Práce uvádí několik příkladů znázorňujících problematický vztah Arta a Vladka. Artova trauma narůstala s vědomím, že nenaplnil očekávání svých rodičů, byl pro ně zklamáním. Cítil se jako „náhrada“ za svého zesnulého bratra Richieuho. Fotka Richieuho v ložnici jeho rodičů mu připomínala, že on se nikdy nedostal do problémů a byl ideální dítě. Spiegelman si byl nicméně vědom toho, že soutěživost s mrtvým bratrem je absurdní.

Dále se práce zabývá takzvaným pocitem viny, kterým trpěli přeživší holocaustu. Litovali, že přežili, zatímco jiní, často lepší než oni, zahynuli. To, že přežili, cítili jako vinu a cítili výčitky, že nezachránili své blízké. Nicméně aby přežili, oni sami museli mnohokrát čelit nelehkým situacím a rozhodnutím a dělat věci, které by za normálních okolností nedělali. Během 70. let začali psychologové diagnostikovat psychické poruchy i u druhé generace. Ta cítila vinu za to, že neprožila holocaust a tudíž si nedokáže představit, jaké to pro její rodiče muselo být. Cítila se vina za to, že měla jednodušší život, než její rodiče. Stejným případem je i Art Spiegelman, který se svému psychiatru svěřil s těmito problémy. Dále se Art cítil vinen za úspěch, který mu přineslo vydání prvního dílu *Maus*. Nemohl se srovnat s faktem, že vydělával peníze na neštěstí druhých. Nicméně s těmito všemi problémy, včetně řešení vztahu s jeho otcem, mu pomáhal jeho psychiatr.

*Maus* řeší otázky židovského traumatu a viny, a co je možná nejdůležitější, přenos těchto důsledků holocaustu z jedné generace na druhou. Spiegelman ilustruje vzájemný vztah mezi minulostí a současností a zároveň dává najevo, že současná generace nikdy plně neporozumí holocaustu a tomu, čím si lidé v tomto období prošli.

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