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Irena Jurković

Remembrance and Control: History and Biopolitics in Art Spiegelman's Maus

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Remembrance and Control: History and Biopolitics in Art Spiegelman's Maus

Diplomski rad

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Zadar, 2017.

Izjava o akademskoj čestitosti

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Zadar, 8. studenog 2017.

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1. Introduction

Ever since Adorno accused the writing of poetry after Auschwitz to be barbaric, there has been a great debate about whether to represent the Holocaust at all, and if yes, what would be the correct way of remembering it. In that regard, many representations of the Holocaust in popular culture were deemed inappropriate by critics and accused of not following proposed ethical and moral imperatives. Moreover, having in mind particularly low status comic books had in Anglophone cultures in the late 20th century, it seemed almost unimaginable that there could be well-received graphical representation of the Holocaust until Art Spiegelman's *Maus* was published. Today, Art Spiegelman's *Maus* is considered groundbreaking in many ways. It is a comic book that interconnects a variety of different genres, themes, characterizations and temporalities while narrating history and depicting the process of remembrance through a combination of images and text (Kohli 1). It is also considered to be the text that elevated the comic book to the graphic novel and, consequently, greatly influenced later graphic novels of the Holocaust. The term graphic novel was popularized by veteran cartoonist Will Eisner who went on to characterize the lengthy comics, dealing with "more complex" issues, as graphic novels. However, according to Samantha Zuckerman, the popularization of the term graphic novel marks a movement rather than a change in the form. The goal was to elevate the form of the comic book, which was considered trivial by many, and ascribe it new, ambitious definition and meaning (55).

And although it is questionable if there is at all a correct way to represent the events of the Holocaust, in this paper we will specifically discuss Spiegelman's achievement in representing the Holocaust and the transmission of memory in the comic medium. However, at focus of the paper will be the analysis of the representation of regulation and control in *Maus,* referring mainly on Giorgio Agamben's and Michel Foucault's understanding of biopolitics.

Moreover, the paper will also provide an insight in subject of intergenerational transmission of trauma and its representation in *Maus*, referring mainly on Marianne Hirsch's concept of post-memory. In order to complement the analysis of the representation regulation practices and memory process, certain parts of the paper are devoted to themes such as the use of anthropomorphism in *Maus*, Spiegelman's narrative strategies, interrelation between text and image and visual representation of space and bodies.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1.Sovereignty and Biopower

In the past decade, the concept of biopolitics has been used more and more frequently in an attempt to address different social and political issues and also emerging theoretical questions. And although the field of biopolitics crosses traditional disciplinary boundaries, the contemporary theoretical debates on the relations between life and politics mostly take as their point of departure Foucault's work on biopolitics. In Foucault's understanding, biopolitics or biopower[1] denotes phenomena that "brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge power an agent of transformation of human life" (Foucault *The History of Sexuality* 143). According to Foucault, in order to understand this new, modern form of power, it is necessary to distinguish its mechanisms from the technology of the sovereign power. The sovereign power, Foucault observes, was essentially sovereign's right and privilege to seize all things, including life itself. In this instance, power operated as a form of deduction but it was in no means an absolute and unlimited privilege. The sovereign's right over life and death was a dissymmetrical one as it was actually the right to take life. In other words, the power on life was exercised only when sovereign could kill or refrain from killing. Thus, the right of life and death is to be understood rather as the right to *take life* or *let live* (Foucault *The History of Sexuality* 136).

However, Foucault points out that since the 17th century there was a transformation in the exercise of power and the old sovereignty's right was complemented with the new form of

[1] In his texts, particularly in 1976 lecture series *Society Must Be Defended,* Foucault uses the term "biopolitics" and the "biopower" interchangeably, without making clear differentiation between the two concepts.

power aimed at fostering life: “”Deduction” has tended to be no longer the major form of power but merely one element among others, working to incite, reinforce, control, monitor, optimize, and organize the forces under it: a power bent on generating forces, making them grow, and ordering them, rather than one dedicated to impeding them, making them submit, or destroying them“ (*The History of Sexuality* 136). According to Foucault, this power over life basically evolved in two forms; the disciplining of the individual body and the regulatory controls of the body of the population (139). Whereas the disciplinary technology is focused on the optimization and productivity of the individual body paralleled with the increase of its docility and usefulness, the regulatory technology centers upon life, and aims to achieve an overall equilibrium protecting the collective body of a population. However, it is important to note that these two sets of mechanisms do not represent independent extremes but rather two poles that can be articulated with each other (139).

Furthermore, as opposed to the old “juridico-discursive” model of power which was exercised by means of law and violence, biopower is exercised through the normalizing technologies dedicated to optimizing and managing of life. The logic of biopower is not the right to take life but the right to intervene *to make live* and to improve life by increasing life expectancy, stimulating birth rate, eliminating deficiencies etc. Death is no longer the visible manifestation of the absolute power, but now, understood as the end of life, death becomes the limit of the power, its very end (Foucault *Society Must Be Defended* 247). Whilst in the 17th century, in the right of sovereignty, death was the most public and the most spectacular manifestation of power, in modern era death has become the most private and shameful aspect of one's existence, the moment when the individual escapes power (Foucault *The History of Sexuality* 138).

2.2.Biopolitical State Racism

If biopower is the power dedicated to fostering and optimizing of life, then how is it possible for the power to kill to operate within such model? Foucault finds the answer to this question in modern racism that ensures the killing in the economy of biopower as "the existence in question is no longer the juridical existence of sovereignty; at stake is the biological existence of a population" (*The History of Sexuality* 137). Foucault argues that modern racism fulfills two basic functions under the conditions of biopower. First, it establishes a biological caesura that allows for the separation of the groups/races within a population. In this way racism permits a differentiation and hierarchy between good and bad, pure and impure "races", and thus a division "between what must live and what must die" (*Society Must Be Defended* 254-255). In that regard, killing is no longer to be viewed as crime, it is now justified in the name of security and protection. The "dispositif of security" further encourages binary division between *us* and *them*, between the *normal* (e.g. legitimate citizens) and *the abnormal* (e.g. Jewish people in Nazi Germany). The first category deserves to live, while the others need to be exterminated (Foucault qtd.in Zembylas 36). Racism's second function goes beyond the division by allowing the establishment of a positive, biological-type relation between the life one person or group and the death of the other. In the biopower system, exclusion and killing of others become acceptable only if it results in the improvement of life: "The fact that the other dies does not mean simply that I live in the sense that his death guarantees my safety, the death of the other, the death of the bad race, of the inferior race (or the degenerate, or the abnormal) is something that will make my life in general healthier" (Foucault *Society Must Be Defended* 255). Interestingly, Foucault theorizes racism not as an individual action or ideological operation but as a mechanism that, in modern society, operates between sovereign power and biopower. Furthermore, Foucault suggests that it was only in Nazi society and some socialist states that

the mechanisms of sovereignty and biopower coincided through racism. The principal objectives of Nazism's policies were to destroy the enemy race and, more importantly, to regenerate their own race (259). Exposing its own race to universal death was the only way to completely eliminate the threat and to position itself as the purest race: "the Nazi State makes the field of the life it manages, protects, guarantees, and cultivates in biological terms absolutely coextensive with the sovereign right to kill anyone, meaning not only other people, but also its own people" (Foucault *Society Must Be Defended* 260). As Ann Laura Stoler points out, the major contribution of Foucault's historical analysis of racism is the identification of micro and macro transformations of race discourse: the discourse of race war transformed into a discourse of biological purity; the sovereign right to kill became biopolitical state's management of life; a disciplinary power converted into a normalizing power; the struggle against the state became state's struggle to defend society against itself; a discourse against a power turned into a discourse of power (89).

2.3.Bare Life and the Rule of the Exception

Whereas for Foucault biopolitics marks a historical break in political thinking, in Giorgio Agamben's understanding the juridico-institutional and the biopolitical models of power have always been interconnected. According to Agamben, the analyses of two models of power cannot be separated since biological life has always been at the locus of political power, even in premodern times. The author goes even further and claims that "*the production of a bio-political body is the original activity of sovereign power*" (*Homo Sacer* 6). In an attempt to prove his claim, Agamben refers to Aristotle's distinction between zoē (the biological life, or *bare life*) and bios (the political life) that, in his opinion, has signified a decisive moment in Western political thought. The binary distinction central to Western politics, argues Agamben,

is not that of friend/enemy but rather of bare life/political existence, zoē/bios, exclusion/inclusion. However, the separation of zoē and bios, bare life and political life, is not simply a matter of exclusion as it is at the same time an exclusion and inclusion. According to Agamben, that which is included in politics solely through an exclusion (*bare life*) is to be understood to be included in the form of the exception. In the rule of exception, what is taken outside and is excluded maintains itself principally to the relation to the rule of the inside (18). As Agamben writes: "*The rule applies to the exception in no longer applying, in withdrawing from it.* The state of exception is thus not the chaos that precedes order but rather the situation that results from its suspension" (18). At this point Agamben outlines the hidden link between biopower and sovereign power. If biological life is always already political then sovereign power must be biopolitical in itself.

Agamben further investigates the relationship between sovereign rule and biopolitical exception through the figure from ancient Roman law: *homo sacer*. *Homo sacer* (sacred man) refers to a person who can be killed (without legal consequences) but not sacrificed, since he is excluded from both religious and political community. His entire existence is reduced to a physical existence, stripped of any right, and thus unworthy of religious sacrifice or legal protection. In a sense, *homo sacer* is above the divine law, as he cannot be sacrificed, and above the human law, as he can be killed by anyone without punishment (*Homo Sacer* 8). For Agamben, this double exclusion is at the same time an inclusion in relation to sovereign rule. Bare life, which is considered to be beyond law and sovereign's competence, basically constitutes the nucleus of sovereign power that decides not only who lives and who dies, but also when will someone be defined as the sacred i.e. who will be recognized as a human being (qtd. in Lemke 55):

"At the two extreme limits of the order, the sovereign and homo sacer [bare life] present two symmetrical figures that have the same structure and are correlative: the sovereign is the one with respect to whom all men are potentially homines sacri, and homo sacer is the one with respect to whom all men act as sovereigns." (Agamben *Homo Sacer* 84).

Here, it is important to emphasize that, for Agamben, *homo sacer* is not just a figure in Roman legal philosophy, but rather it is a conceptual persona whose traces can be found in Roman exiles, in the condemned of the Middle Ages, in the prisoners of Nazi camps, or today, in refugees, asylum seekers and the brain dead. Homo sacer, then, would be a person who has no political rights and is outside the protection of the law (Lemke 55; Zembylas 37). However, in contemporary age, claims Agamben, we are all virtually sacred as bare life is no longer restricted to a particular group or a category but it is now "in the biological body of every living being" (*Homo Sacer* 140).

2.4.The Camp as the Biopolitical Space

In Agamben's analysis, the concept of the camp does not represent a historical reality[2] or a logical exception, but rather it symbolizes a hidden matrix of the political space of modernity (*Homo Sacer* 166). For Agamben, the camp is a spatial structure in which bare life

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[2] In an interview, Agamben addresses the criticism regarding his use of the concentration camp as a paradigm of political space of modernity: „But I am not an historian. I work with paradigms. A paradigm is something like an example, an exemplar, a historically singular phenomenon. As it was with the panopticon for Foucault, so is the Homo Sacer or the Muselmann or the state of exception for me. And then I use this paradigm to construct a large group of phenomena and in order to understand an historical structure, again analogous with Foucault, who developed his "panopticism" from the panopticon. But this kind of analysis should not be confused with a sociological investigation" (qtd. in Raulff 610).

is being produced and the state of exception is realized. Its paradoxical status lies in the fact that while the camp refers to any space outside the normal juridical order, it is not simply an external space as that what is excluded in the camp is also included through its own exclusion (170). Therefore, the camp is not only the concentration camp of the Nazis or present day refugee camp, but every spatial structure that is formed at the moment when the exception becomes the rule. Once understood to be the border between friends and enemies, the camp now becomes the manifestation of the state of exception (Agamben qtd. in Lemke 56).

In that regard, Agamben claims that the concentration camps should not be defined by the horrific crimes committed there, but by the sheer possibility that they may happen. Instead of asking question of how such crimes could be committed against human being, it would be more useful to direct the investigation towards the juridico- political structures and technologies of power which allowed for human beings to be deprived of every right that no violence against them is perceived as human rights violation (Homo *Sacer* 171). For Agamben, the death camp of Auschwitz represented the classic example of the biopolitical space in which human beings had been reduced entirely to their physical existence: "Insofar as its inhabitants were stripped of every political status and wholly reduced to bare life, the camp was also the most absolute biopolitical space ever to have been realized, in which power confronts nothing but pure life, without any mediation. This is why the camp is the very paradigm of political space at the point at which politics becomes biopolitics and homo sacer is virtually confused with the citizen" (171). In other words, Agamben identifies the biopolitical potential of Nazi death camps and

views them not just as sites of extermination but also as sites of production[3] with final product being the *Muselmann*:

” Thus the non-Aryan passes into the Jew, the Jew into the deportee, the deportee into prisoner (*Hafling*), until biopolitical caesuras reach their final limit in the camp. This limit is the *Muselmann* . . . It is then possible to understand the decisive function of the camps in the system of Nazi biopolitics. They are not merely the place of death and extermination; they are also, and above all, the site of the production of the *Muselmann*, the final biopolitical substance to be isolated in the biological continuum” (Agamben *Remnants of Auschwitz* 85).

The figure of *the Muselmann* refers to the camp inhabitant who was reduced to bare life, a person who lost all consciousness and personality and was moving in the zone of indistinction (indistinction of fact and law, of life and juridical rule, of nature and politics). That is to say, *the Muselmann* was not only a Jew who did not deserve to live and who was excluded from the political and social context to which he used to belong; he was the ultimate product and threat as he lost all reason and was closer to dead than to living (Agamben *Homo Sacer* 185).

Furthermore, it is important to note that Agamben uses the imagery of the Nazi camps primarily in order to understand the concept of the state of exception and to illustrate how bare life became the central figure of the contemporary political reality. In Agamben’s rendering, bare life forms the foundation of every form of government. However, in contrast to what many

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[3] In his analysis of the camp, Agamben follows Hannah Arendt in maintaining that the camps are not historical exceptions but products of a political logic. For Arendt, the logic of totalitarianism surpasses autocracy as it seeks to create a system where all men are superfluous. Thus the camps, as social ideal of such societies, became sites of annihilation of the best in human nature (Arendt qtd.in Grumley 242). As Arendt wrote: „the experience of the concentration camps does show that human beings can be transformed into specimens of the human animal, and that man's "nature" is only "human" insofar as it opens up to man the possibility of becoming something highly unnatural, that is, a man. After murder of the moral person and annihilation of the juridical person, the destruction of the individuality is almost always successful “(455).

critics claim, Agamben is not equating democracy and totalitarianism in political sense, but rather he claims that there is an inner link between the two systems that needs to be considered. The rapid and uninterrupted transformations from parliamentary democracies to totalitarian states, and vice versa, were only possible, claims Agamben, because for a long time politics had already turned into biopolitics (*Homo Sacer* 122).

3. Representing the Un-representable: Holocaust Narratives

Since the 1970s, there has been great debate concerning representations of the Holocaust as to whether to represent the Holocaust at all, how to represent it, and who has the right to commit to such task. The Holocaust, regarded as the epitome of historical tragedy, is generally considered to be (un)representable and thus any attempt of representation is required to follow proposed ethical and moral imperatives. The moral imperatives and ethical prohibitions placed upon Holocaust representations range from the demand to move the Holocaust into an incomprehensible, silenced and (un)representable lieu to the attempts to represent and recall the events truthfully and in detail, favoring depiction of eyewitnesses. And although, in terms of unspeakability, this is not entirely true since much has been written, said and recorded on the subject, the aura of incomprehensibility still surrounds the Holocaust and any attempt to aesthetically depict the trauma will most likely be regarded as inappropriate (Busse 14-15; Richardson Anna 1). As Elie Wiesel famously asserted, "The Holocaust? The ultimate end, the ultimate mystery, never to be comprehended or transmitted. Only those who were there will know what it was; the others will never know" (qtd.in Richardson Anna 12).

This approach, that calls for aesthetic silence and claims that only survivors may speak about the Shoah[4],[5], perhaps most famously advocated by literary critic George Steiner. According to Steiner, silence is the only appropriate response to the horrors of the Holocaust as

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[4] As James Young observes, some critics go as far as to claim that the body of literature written in the Holocaust (i.e. from within events) is more authentic than that written by survivors after the events (32). However, according to Young, the irony is that "nearly all the diarists and many of the survivors remind us, their insights, interpretations, and eyewitness descriptions may even be less reliable in a 'factual sense' because of their proximity to events" (33).

[5] The biblical word Shoah, meaning catastrophe and destruction in Hebrew, became the standard term used to refer to the fate of the Jews in Nazi genocide. While the term Holocaust is often used synonymously with Shoah, many historians and Jewish people claim the term Holocaust to be unsuitable as it originally means a sacrifice to God.

art can never comprehend such violence and adequately convey the reality of a lived experience. He goes on and argues that the Holocaust is outside the reach of our language and any artistic depiction of the Holocaust is already misguided and sacrilegious: "to try to speak or write intelligibly, interpretatively, about Auschwitz is to misconceive totally the nature of this event and to misconstrue totally the necessary constraints of humanity within language" (qtd. in Busse 17). On the other hand, there are those critics who reject the idea of unspeakability and the supremacy of factual testimony of Holocaust survivors. For instance, Michael Bernstein argues that "one of the most pervasive myths of our era, a myth perhaps even partially arising out of our collective response to the horrors of the concentration camps, is the absolute authority given to the first- person testimony" (47). According to Bernstein, it is wrong to assume that first-person testimonies are more unmediated and complete than some other narrations, because even such material fits into a certain ideological framework (48-49). For Bernstein, there is no right way to determine which textual representation of the Holocaust is more "appropriate" and which is less "appropriate". He considers the idea of testimony as a perfect textual representation to be yet another act of silencing and further claims that no textual/literary representation can ever be perfectly representative (qtd. in Aloui 56).

Furthermore, regarding specifically Holocaust fiction many critics consider such material to be dishonest and disrespectful to survivors[6]. The insistence on the supremacy of historical writing is grounded on the belief that imaginative texts necessarily overemphasize the modes of representation over the object of representation (events of the Holocaust). In this view, historical writing is considered to be more valuable and adequate as it has a more direct

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[6] In his unapologetic letter to the *New York Times Book Review,* Art Spiegelman objected to his comic book *Maus* being categorized as fiction. He insists on the nonfictionality of his work by arguing that the Holocaust can be adequately represented in language and graphics, that the events can be successfully transmitted to readers, and that *Maus*'s strategy of narration does not affect the truthfulness of testimony (Horowitz 2-5). Spiegelman concluded his letter saying: "I know that by delineating people with animal heads, I've raised problems of taxonomy for you. Could you consider adding a special 'nonfiction/mice' category to your list?" (qtd. in Horowitz 4)

access to experience while literary texts taint the brutality of the Holocaust with its creative aesthetics (Aloui 62-63). On the other hand, as Anna Richardson argues, a work of fiction can be regarded to have many advantages over a survivor memoir. First of all, Holocaust fiction is much more accessible than a survivor memoir which adds a certain pedagogical value to it. In addition, a work of fiction can also lead readers to places that survivor testimony can never reach. While survivor testimonies cannot account for the entire Holocaust experience, since they are being narrated by those who survived, fiction makes it possible to depict and imagine what happened in the gas chambers at the moment of death (7). However, regardless the form of representation, the witness testimony still remains the most important source from which nearly all Holocaust representations have been made. Whether we are talking about diaries, documentaries, films, graphic novels or art installations that address the Holocaust, the main question remains whether the text is faithful to the witness testimony or to some other source material from which it draws its inspiration.

3.1.Holocaust Representation in Graphic Novels and Comics

Immediately after the rise of the modern comic book in the 1930s, war emerged as one of its central topics. The creation of the comic book basically reflected the period in which it was born; in the 1930s America and the rest of the world were in desperate need of a hero. The comic book heroes of that time, such as Superman, Batman and Captain America, were common people's heroes of high moral battling for the betterment of society. With the rise of Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany, most comic books creators decided to take a political stance

by including the information about the war in their stories. Indeed, American Jewish[7] artists began to write comic books featuring strong and powerful characters who ought to fight Nazis and help innocent people. Many of such stories and superheroes created during that period have underlying Jewish themes. For example, the origin story of Superman who was sent away from his planet Krypton as a baby, to avoid the mass destruction, somewhat reflects the real life story of Jewish children being sent by the Kindertransports in the late 1930s (Scott 28-30; Zuckermann 56-57).

Moreover, as Nicholas Yanes observes, American comic books of the early 1940s did not serve simply as a critique of the war, but also as "contained propaganda in clear support for America's entry into combat. The reason was that Jewish Americans were the first to see the danger Hitler represented" (qtd. in Lund 101). On the other hand, in occupied countries comics were mainly used as a site of resistance to war and Nazi invasion by illustrating the human suffering or by mocking Hitler. As one of such comics, Christine Gundermann lists Victor Dancette's and Edmond Calvo's *La bête est morte*! (The beast is dead!). Written in a period when France was still occupied, this comic book depicts all of the major events of the World War II. What is further interesting about this comic book is that the story is set in animal world and all the characters are drawn in fairytale style: Hitler is portrayed as a big bad wolf, Stalin as a big bear, while revolting against them are smaller animals, such as bunnies and squirrels (Gundermann 234).

Furthermore, in most of the Holocaust-themed comics, the extermination camps and annihilation of the Jews were very rarely shown (Gundermann 235). While demonization and

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[7] Though the majority of comic book artists and writers were of Jewish background, they often Anglicized or shortened their names to avoid potential anti-Semitism. Thus, many of today's well-known names from the golden age of comics were actually pseudonyms: Stanley Leiber became Stan Lee; Jakob Kurtzburg became Jack Kirby; Bob Kahn became Bob Kane etc. However, there were also a few Jewish American authors, such as Will Eisner and Joe Schuster, who continued to work by their real names (Scott 34).

mocking of Nazis was omnipresent in comic books of 1940s, the images of concentration camps were almost non-existent. Concentration camps were first portrayed in American comic books of late 1940s, and those images were based primarily on media reports. According to Markus Streb, the illustration of camps as castles and prisons was primarily an indication of the scarcity of information available to the artists at that time (36). And while the portrayal of concentration camps in visual arts is no longer a controversial subject, many artists still refrain from showing the inside of gas chambers or sanitary conditions in the camp. Indeed, the representation of the Holocaust in contemporary graphic novels and comic books is said to be highly influenced by the aesthetics of Hollywood film industry. This means that most comic books and graphic novels use various, well-known stereotypes and icons to portray the genocide of the Jews. Hence, we as readers are all quite familiar with the images of the shouting Nazis in leather coats or with the depiction of the camp saturated with religious symbols representing hell. Moreover, the Jewish victims are also portrayed in a stereotypical manner as they are usually represented as a group of women and children, drawn in a bright and clean style to further emphasize their innocence (Gundermann 233). Interestingly, this stereotyped way of representing the Holocaust in comic culture, but in other media of popular culture as well, also serve to evoke moral judgments and emotional reactions. Thus, the well-known images of "SS uniforms, combinations of uniforms and doctor's overalls and medical tools represent evil, [while] the pure and good is often represented by women, children, feminized men or the tall, strong (and heterosexual male) hero as the saviour of the victim" (Gundermann 234).

While sketching a brief history of Holocaust comics, Christine Gundermann makes an important distinction between biographical comics, comics as a medium of coping with the past, comics as teaching material and comics as historical additives. Gundermann employs the mentioned organizational schema in order to further investigate the role of comics regarding the memory culture of the Holocaust and knowledge transfer (233). Following such analysis,

comic biographies about the Holocaust are said to be characterized primarily by the tendency to focus on prominent figures of that time such as Anne Frank, Adolf Hitler, Irena Sendler and others. What is typical for most "biographics" is a certain sacralization of characters while emphasizing the positive image and heroic actions of one sole person. Moreover, as Christine Gundermann notes, certain Holocaust comics have also become a medium of coping with the past for the second or third generation of survivors. In such comics, because of their autobiographic element, the artists have much more liberty and independence in representing the Holocaust. They do not have to conform to the standard way of representing the Holocaust and can easily avoid showing atrocities to tell their stories. In other words, at the focus of such works are not so much the events from within the Holocaust, but rather the present time events and the author's (protagonist's) own coping with the trauma (238- 239).

It is also noticeable that the Holocaust comics are being used more and more as a teaching material in different educational programs. And while some critics emphasize the importance of popular media in teaching young people about the Holocaust, others raise questions regarding just how much fiction is allowed in teaching history. Consequently, comic books that are based upon biographic memories or historical facts are often considered to be more authentic and appropriate for telling about the Holocaust than those comics that do not offer historical facts in a strict sense. However, such distinctions cannot tell us much if we do not consider the aesthetic approach that complements the story in the comic medium. In other words, the style and the drawing technique are not just artistic expressions but narrative strategies that serve to further accentuate the story's facts and fictions (Gundermann 241). For example, color or abstract drawing can be used to highlight fictionality of the text or to evoke certain emotions in readers. Likewise, the black-and-white line drawing may suggest authenticity as we, readers, associate the lack of color with old photographs and historical

documents, particularly with those dating from World War II (McCloud qtd. in Gundermann 241).

Furthermore, investigating the Holocaust representation in contemporary comic books and graphic novels Rachel Mandel, in a similar manner as Gundermann, categorized a wide variety of Holocaust comics in six major types: allegorical representation, plot-driven Holocaust representation, historical fiction, historical non-fiction, survivor testimony and vicarious survivor accounts. Although most of these categories are somewhat self-explanatory, it is interesting to observe that the category of allegorical representation refers to those works in which the Holocaust events are not represented in any way. According to Mandel, such works are equally important material for understanding the Holocaust representation in the comic medium as there is a plethora of comic books that, despite the absence of literal Holocaust imagery, deal with some of the major themes and questions of the Holocaust (2-4). On the other hand, plot-driven Holocaust representation refers to those comic books that use direct references to the Holocaust but, for which, the Holocaust is not the central plot of the book (Mandel 15).

It is also interesting to mention the category of vicarious survivor accounts which denotes works written by authors who have a personal connection to the Holocaust but who are not themselves survivors; they are mostly children or grandchildren of Holocaust survivors. In such comic books and graphic novels, there are usually two dimensions of the story. On the one side, it is the story of the Holocaust as told by their parent, grandparent, or other survivor, and on the other side, it is the story that deals with the present time and the transmission of a trauma across generations. Probably the most well-known and the best example of the vicarious survivor accounts in comics is precisely Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, the seminal work in the field of Holocaust studies and also in the history of comics (Mandel 51-52).

4. Methodology

4.1.Specific Field of Research

Specific field of research will include the analysis of the portrayal of mechanisms of biopower and transmission of traumatic memory in Art Spiegelman's graphic novels *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History* and *Maus II: A Survivor's Tale: And Here My Troubles Began.*

4.2.Aims of Research

The aim of this research is to analyze the representation of regulation and control, and the memory process in Art Spiegelman's graphic novel *Maus*. The focus will be on the portrayal of regulation in concentration camps, but also on animal allegory in the representation of different ethnic groups. Specific attention will be given to the contribution of the comic medium in the representation of the memory, and *Maus's* achievement in raising the questions regarding the limitations of such representation. The relationship between Art and his father Vladek will be critically examined while differentiating between Vladek's (hi)story and Art's experience of post-memory. Some of the questions I will try to answer include: How is dehumanization of Jews and other groups represented in *Maus*? How does Art Spiegelman visually represent ghetto and concentration camps? What questions does this graphic novel raise about the memory and limitations of representing it?

4.3.Methods

At the focus of this paper will be analysis of the representation of regulation and control in *Maus,* referring mainly on Giorgio Agamben's and Michel Foucault's understanding of biopolitics. I will focus on narrative strategies used in *Maus,* on interrelation between text and

image and on visual representation of space and bodies in this novel. Also, *Maus's* incorporation of actual photographs, maps and diagrams, will be analyzed drawing on Hirsch's concept of post-memory.

5. *Maus*

5.1.Critical Reception

The publication of Art Spiegelman's *Maus*[8], in 1986, is widely regarded as one of the most important events in the history of comics. As Joseph Witek wrote, *Maus* forever changed the status of comic books by shifting "the cultural perception of what a comic book can be and what can be accomplished by creators who take seriously the sequential art medium" (97). Visually representing the Holocaust, in a medium traditionally considered to be trivial, Spiegelman succeeds in challenging the dominant representations of the Holocaust while at the same time criticizing popular productions of the Holocaust and commenting on low position of the comic medium. Indeed, as many critics emphasize, *Maus* is a text extremely self-aware of its creative process and problems regarding the limits of representation and transmission of history. In a similar manner, Michael Rothberg asserts that the part of *Maus's* originality stems from its insistence that we understand the visual portrayal of the Holocaust "as one more commodity in the American culture industry" (666).

And although *Maus* later became the first graphic novel to win the Pulitzer Prize and literary scholars generally applauded Spiegelman's choice of genre, there were also those

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[8] *Maus* was in fact published in two volumes*: Maus I: My Father Bleeds History* and *Maus II: And Here My Troubles Began.*

commentators who argued that Spiegelman's book seriously trivializes the event and the Holocaust survivors. Among such commentators was Hillel Halkin who claimed that, "The Holocaust was a crime committed by humans against humans, not – as Nazi theory held – by one biological species against another…To draw people as animals is doubly dehumanizing, once by virtue of the symbolism and once by virtue of graphic limitations" (qtd.in Zuckerman 59). Perhaps most passionate in criticizing Spiegelman was his cotemporary, comic artist Harvey Pekar, who claimed that Spiegelman's use of anthropomorphism "stereotypes nationalities" and particularly humiliates Poles by depicting them as pigs In addition, Pekar also believed that *Maus's* popularity can be explained by the fact that "most people in the U.S. and Europe are so sympathetic to victims of the Holocaust that anyone who writes about them with any competence gets credit for being profound and a great humanitarian" (Pekar "The Comics Journal"). Thus, at the center of criticism were mainly Spiegelman's style and the use of anthropomorphism understood as perpetuation of racism. On the other hand, according to Andreas Huyseen, Spiegelman's adoption of Nazi racist imagery manages to transform its implications while keeping us aware of racism's original intention (75). *Maus* follows the tradition of classical animal fables of Aesop, LaFontaine and Kafka rather than Disney production of "funny animal" stories. At the same time, *Maus* moves away from enlightening animal fable as it does not provide us with moral instruction or a happy reconciliation. *Maus* remains a narrative thoroughly ambiguous and full of self-reflexivity and self-irony (Huyseen 70).

5.2.Narrative Form

In *Maus*, Art Spiegelman narrates the story of his father Vladek, a Holocaust survivor, whilst depicting human beings as anthropomorphic characters (Jews are represented as mice,

Germans as cats Poles as pigs etc.). The story is divided in two parts with the first following Vladek's life, in 1930s Poland, and his incarceration at Auschwitz, and the second depicting author's present relationship with his father. However, some critics point out that *Maus* consists not only of two narrative layers, but actually of three. Stephen Tabachnick, for instance, divides the narrative layers focusing on Art's struggle to comprehend his father's story and to find an appropriate frame to represent it. According to Tabachnick, the first layer of narrative is Vladek's epic story about the survival and days he spent at Auschwitz. The second, middle layer, deals with the transmission of trauma and narrates Art's relationship with his parents and how their Holocaust experience shaped his life. The third, meta-narrative layer, touches upon the problem of *Maus's* production, and consequently, the problems of representation and authenticity (qtd. in McGlothlin 181). Hence, it becomes evident that *Maus* is not so much the story about the Holocaust and Vladek's survival as it is the story of artist's recording of personal and historical trauma. As author himself stated, "Maus is not what happened in the past, but rather what the son understands of the father's story... [It is] an autobiographical history of my relationship with my father, a survivor of the Nazi death camps, cast with cartoon animals" (qtd. in Young 670).

With the constant shifting between past and present, the narrative simultaneously depicts Vladek's life in Poland, his post-Holocaust life in America, and the present-day relationship between father and son. In that regard, *Maus* also self-reflexively addresses the difficulties of the reconstructedness of memory, and it depicts the very process of remembrance through a combination of graphic images and text (Kohli 2). The narrative of Vladek's story is constantly challenged and interrupted by everyday life situations: Vladek's relationship with his new wife, Art's questions and dilemmas, Art's relationship with his father, his father's illness etc. The continuous interruptions and dislocations permeating the narrative, above all, serve to give the impression of circular memory telling instead of a linear storytelling. So while

Maus can be regarded as the story of events, it is important to recognize that it is also the story about the unfolding of narrative itself (Young 673).

Furthermore, the narrative form of the comic book medium makes possible for Spiegelman not only to retell is father's story, but to depict it graphically as well. Whereas in the literary medium readers are left to their imaginations, the use of images in the comic book form forces readers to engage with the story visually and draws their attention to discontinuities, gaps and connections that cannot be depicted solely in prose (Kincade). But despite apparent advantages of the comic medium, many critics still consider to be trivial and inappropriate to illustrate the Holocaust in any medium besides realistic photographs. Spiegelman, well-aware of the "low art" status of comic books, managed to achieve authenticity and evoke emotions by employing simple, black-and-white line drawing and including real life photographs, maps, tickets etc. The use of such simplistic drawing requires the reader's constant attention while, at the same time, it highlights *Maus*'s (auto) biographical documentary. Equally important, the neutral drawing style also allows Spiegelman to avoid sentimentalizing and sacralizing survivors of the Holocaust, which is particularly evident in the minimalistic depiction of his father Vladek (Zuckerman 55).

Moreover, important for storytelling is also the design of each panel and their mutual combination. In *Maus*, Spiegelman often juxtaposes the panels and uses vertical, top-to-bottom dialogue, instead of the more common left-to-right, in order to emphasize a particular aspect of the story or to illustrate a jump in time. For Spiegelman, the juxtaposition of visual images and specific arrangement of panels serve primarily as a method for differentiating between past and present, between Holocaust events and the present-day lives of the survivor and his son. On the other hand, the visual elements in *Maus* are also sometimes used to blur the temporal boundaries between the present and the past, suggesting that past is always constitutive of present (Richardson Sarah 80; McGlothlin 178). Interestingly, the connection between past and present

is not only represented visually but aurally as well. According to Alan Rosen, Vladek's accent should be regarded as part of the aesthetic structure of *Maus* as it provides the means by which Spiegelman further separates the present from the past: "for episodes in the past, Spiegelman uses fluent, colloquial English to represent the languages of Europe as spoken by their native speakers; for episodes in the present, Vladek's broken, accented English serves as a constant marker" (130).

Figure 1. Maus I 135 [9]

In moving between different temporal levels, Spiegelman aims to portray the interconnectedness of past and present, and more importantly, the very process of remembering. Spiegelman does not simply retell his father's story; he captures the process of transmitting the memory by illustrating his own recording of that memory. Thus, we often get to see how Vladek's story is being challenged and interrupted by Art's questions and dilemmas. By depicting his recording of Vladek's story, Spiegelman avoids aestheticizing the Holocaust and

[9] All images used in this paper are from comic books *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History*, copyright 1973, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1984, 1985, 1986 by Art Spiegelman, and *Maus II: A Survivor's Tale: And Here My Troubles Began*, copyright 1986, 1989, 1990, 1991 by Art Spiegelman. It is believed that the use of the images in this context is in accordance with the fair use-principles of the U.S. Copyright Law. As Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 states: "the fair use of a copyrighted work, including such use by reproduction in copies or phonorecords or by any other means specified by that section, for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use), scholarship, or research, is not an infringement of copyright" (107).

demonstrates how remembering is not merely a retrieval of facts, but rather the process involving the construction and shaping and of the past (Kohli 11).

5.3.The Second Generation Trauma

As a part of the body of second-generation Holocaust writing, Art Spiegelman's *Maus* deals specifically with the issue of intergenerational transmission of trauma. In retelling his father's story, Spiegelman manages to depict how the trauma experienced by Vladek, a Holocaust survivor, is transmitted on to his son, the author of the book. Although Art (the author) is born after the World War II and has no direct experience of the Holocaust, the horrific events and stories about the loss of his family are passed on to him through interviews with his father. As a secondary witness, Art records Vladek's testimony on tape, interprets it and eventually rewrites it in the form of a comic book. In that regard, *Maus* proves to be a model for what James Young calls "received history" i.e. "a narrative hybrid that interweaves both events of the Holocaust and the ways they are passed down to us" (669). As Young observes, most survivor-children, aware of their own position in the Holocaust history, avoid portraying the events outside of what they know and have experienced. Born only in time of Holocaust memory, the second-generation authors tend to write, draw and talk about the event focusing mainly on the ways it was transmitted to them. They remember not actual events, but stories that survivors passed down to them in form of diaries, memoirs, novels, poems, photographs etc. (669).

Furthermore, by depicting the present day ambivalent relationship with his father, Spiegelman also raises questions about the appropriation of his father's experience and the way his family's trauma shaped his own life. Such mediated familial knowledge and inherited memory was termed by Marianne Hirsch as post-memory. According to Hirsch, post-memory

is to be distinguished from memory by "generational distance and from history by deep personal connection. Post-memory should reflect back on memory, revealing it as equally constructed, equally mediated by the processes of narration and imagination" (*Family Frames* 22). Although there is a certain temporal delay signaled by the concept, the post-memory should not be understood as something that comes after the memory or completes it, but rather as the relationship of the second generation to a certain traumatic experience that preceded their birth. Those traumatic experiences they "remember" through stories, images and behaviors, were passed on to them powerfully and affectively that they seem as though they are their own memories. That is to say, post-memory is not so much about the recall of the past events as it is about the imagination and investment. The generation of post-memory inherited not just the stories of a previous generation, but also the memories that are so overwhelming that they threaten to displace their own stories and experiences (9). Interestingly, Marianne Hirsch first coined the term post-memory while analyzing the inclusion of real-life photographs in *Maus*. For Hirsch, photography has a key role in the process of post-memory as it enables the subjects in present to imagine and revive the past. More than oral or written narratives, photography has the power to rematerialize the past events that we could not otherwise witness. The photographic images are particularly important in the history of the Holocaust as the numerous photographs, that survived and outlived their subjects, authenticate the existence of the event and, at the same time, signal the unbridgeable distance ("The Generation of Postmemory" 123). In *Maus,* the inclusion of actual photographs, and the animal metaphor, both serve to reinforce the authenticity of the text. As Spiegelman asserts in *MetaMaus,* photographs „carry the kind of "authenticity" snapshots carry" (218). There are three actual photographs that intrude *Maus's* visual narrative.

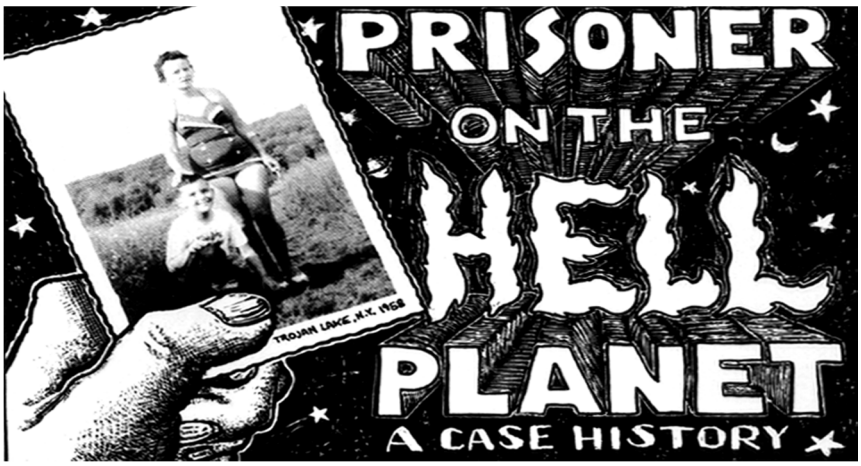

Figure 2. Maus I 100

The first photograph is that of 10-year-old Art and his mother, Anja, taken in New York, in 1958. The photograph appears in the section entitled "Prisoner on the Hell Planet", and is held by a drawn human hand. This comic within the comic, written by Spiegelman before the publication of *Maus*, tells a story of his mother's suicide and his own mental breakdown. Interestingly, the inserted strip contrasts the graphic style of the rest of the *Maus* by depicting the characters as humans and not as animals. Here, there is no need to use animal figures as a distancing technique, since Art witnessed his mother's suicide first hand and experienced the trauma personally (Kolář 229). Unlike the trauma of the Holocaust, this family tragedy was not mediated to him; it signifies a primary memory, and not post-memory. However, the author also shows the deep connection between his personal trauma, and the historical trauma of the Holocaust. The connection is particularly evident in a frame showing Art locked in a cell, wearing a prison uniform. The image clearly references death camps and suggests author's over-identification with the Holocaust victims. Moreover, at the top of the frame we see the naked body of his mother, laying in a blood bath, while immediately below her is a pile of murdered victims. The frame is dominated by words that seem to represent Art's thoughts: "Hitler did it!", "Mommy!" and "bitch" (*Maus* I 103). It is at this moment that Art realizes that his personal trauma, associated with mother's suffering, is actually a transmitted trauma of the Holocaust violence. Hence, Hitler did that too, for as the suffering of the survivors continues

through the generations (Kolář 230). In regard to intergenerational transmission of trauma, it is also interesting to observe a picture in the corner of the frame portraying Art as a young boy, wearing prison uniform while his mother is reading him a bedtime story. The image illustrates how through a storytelling direct survivors pass down their trauma, and how inherited trauma consequently forms a large part of second generation's identity. As Hirsch writes: "To grow up with such overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one's birth…. It is to be shaped, however indirectly, by traumatic events that still defy narrative reconstruction and exceed comprehension" ("The Generation of Postmemory" 107).

Figure 3. Maus I 103

Alongside the photograph of his mother, Spiegelman includes two more actual photographs in Maus II; a photo of Art's dead brother Richieu and the picture of young Vladek Spiegelman in a camp uniform. The photograph of Art's brother Richieu, a child who did not survive the Holocaust, represents all those Holocaust victims whose experience cannot be told and whose voices cannot be heard. On the other hand, the photograph of Art's murdered brother illustrates also the penetration of the past into the present and the irretrievable loss of a past that

was unspoken of. As Art explains, he is a "ghost brother" who is still very much present in their lives: "I didn't think about him much when I was growing up…He was mainly a large, blurry photograph hanging in my parent's bedroom… It was an ideal kid, and I was a pain in the ass. I couldn't compete" (*Maus* II 15). In other words, he could not compete with Richieu since he did not experience the Holocaust himself. Unlike Richieu, who died tragically in the war, Art could experience the trauma of the Holocaust only through his parents' stories. However, the inherited memory is so strong that at one-point Art starts imagining he is in Auschwitz: "I wasn't obsessed with this stuff… It's just that sometimes I'd fantasize Zyklon B coming out of our shower instead of water" (*Maus* II 16). Interestingly, by comparing himself to Richieu and setting him in a position of a rival, Art (the author) successfully avoids the appropriation and over identification with his dead brother i.e. with all the victims of the Holocaust. Furthermore, the rivalry Art has with the photograph of Richieu illustrates just how deeply he is affected by post memory, but also how it is necessary for a second-generation to find way to include their family's trauma within their own story without appropriating the experiences of their family members into their own (Elmwood 703).

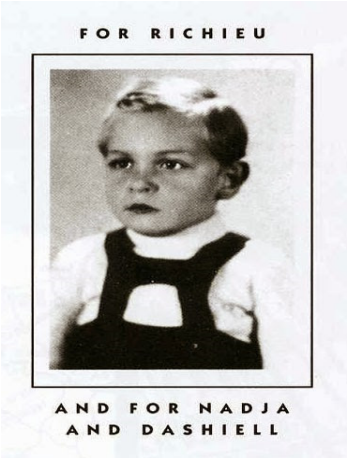

Figure 4. Maus II

Figure 5. Maus II 134

Moreover, according to Hirsch, it is no coincidence that the photographs Spiegelman decided to include are all family photos. The family pictures are specific in as much as they do not simply inform us about events or subject, but they also allow us to form an affective connection and to identify with subjects. So while the family photographs commonly symbolize a sense of safety and comfort, the photographs of a family destroyed by the Holocaust are bound to represent the loss of that safety and continuity ("The Generation of Postmemory" 108). However, alongside the actual photographs Spiegelman also includes the illustrated photographs with people portrayed as mice. According to Victoria A. Elmwood, the inclusion of illustrated photographs in *Maus* should not be disregarded as irrelevant since precisely those photographs highlight the importance of the photographic documentation and the transmission of memory (714). Going through old family photos, Art (and readers) discovers his family history as Vladek narrates the story behind each photo. At the same time as Art learns about the private lives of his family and their friends, we are being reminded of the importance of personal memory in knowledge transfer. Including actual family photographs, illustrated photographs, maps, diagrams and Vladek's hand drawing, Spiegelman manages not only to distinguish between the account of father and son, but also to highlight the overall connection between history and memory (716- 717). One of the examples in which the author's insistence on the connection between personal and historical is particularly evident is the episode when Vladek narrates about his experience in Auschwitz and Art interrupts him asking about the presence of the camp orchestra: "I just read about the camp orchestra that played as you marched out the gate…" (*Maus* II 45). However, Vladek dismisses the account of the orchestra as he does not recall them: "No, I remember only marching, not any orchestras… From the gate guards took us over to the workshop. How could it be there an orchestra?" (*Maus* II 45). Although aware that his father is certainly not a reliable narrator, Spiegelman refuses to give primacy to only one account of history so he visually juxtaposes two panels, one depicting the prisoners

marching out of the gate, and the other, practically the same, but with the addition of the orchestra in the upper corner of the frame.

Indeed, as Erin McGlothlin notes, what characterizes the second-generation writing is both the acknowledgement of its inability to fully comprehend the Holocaust, and the exploration of narrative's therapeutic potential. Postmemorial work is thus a space in which the writers, children of survivors, explore their own imagination of the event while trying to come to terms with the constant presence of the past (*Second-Generation Holocaust Literature* 11-12)

5.4.The Use of Animal Metaphor

As a graphic novel that deals with historical reality, *Maus* was equally praised and criticized for Spiegelman's choice to draw Jews as mice, Germans as cats, Poles as pigs, and other ethnicities as specific animal forms. Though some critics labeled such storytelling technique as inappropriate, Spiegelman's anthropomorphication should be regarded solely as a metaphor and a comment on biological determinism, racial theory and stereotypes. The choice to open the book with Hitler's quote on racial superiority makes it clear that the anthropomorphication in *Maus* should be read primarily as a comment on the assignment of "race"; on its absurdity and potential destructiveness (Zuckerman 60). And while Spiegelman claimed on several occasions that he drew inspiration from anti- Semitic works that portrayed Jews as rats or vermin, we should bear in mind that his characters are also, in some way, stereotyped projections of animals. In most cartoons and children stories mice are depicted as vulnerable and timid animals running away from predatory cats. By using the relationship of predator and prey between cats and mice, Spiegelman is able to emphasize the attitude of Nazis

toward the Jews. However, aware of the limits of the use of such imagery, Spiegelman makes clear, on several occasions, that these roles are not at all intrinsic.

"I liked working with a metaphor that didn't work all that well though I certainly didn't want my metaphor to work as an endorsement of Nazi ideology, or as an implicit plea for sympathy, like, "Aw, look it the cute defenseless little mouse.". To equalize them in scale didn't mean to give them equal power, but it didn't put the mice necessarily at the total biological disadvantage that the metaphor otherwise implies" (*MetaMaus* 119)

There are several ways in which Spiegelman avoids the pitfalls of the metaphor and shows the inadequacy of racial theory. For instance, at one point in the book we see a prisoner of German nationality first drawn as a mouse and then as a cat. During the interview, Art asks his father was he really a German to which Vladek responds:" Who knows? It was German prisoners also…but for the Germans this guy was Jewish" (*Maus* II). In other words, although he had German citizenship (cat), in the eyes of the Nazis he was a non-Aryan because of his Jewish ancestry (mouse).

Figure 6. Maus II 50

Another interesting way in which *Maus* deconstructs the anthropomorphic metaphor is by depicting Jews as mice wearing masks of other animals when they wish to disguise themselves as Polish or German. Particularly problematic is the episode in which Vladek wears a pig mask trying to disguise himself as a Pole, although he is in fact Polish. Here, masks serve author to show the inadequacy of racial theory that assigns only one distinct identity to individuals regardless of their belonging to various ethnic groups. In the Nazi racist theory there were no differences among people of Jewish background. The diversity of a nation had been ignored and the whole nation was reduced to one group unworthy of living. Spiegelman catches this idea of racist ideologies by drawing all mice, and other animals, uniformly and without visible, distinct features (Kolář 90-91).

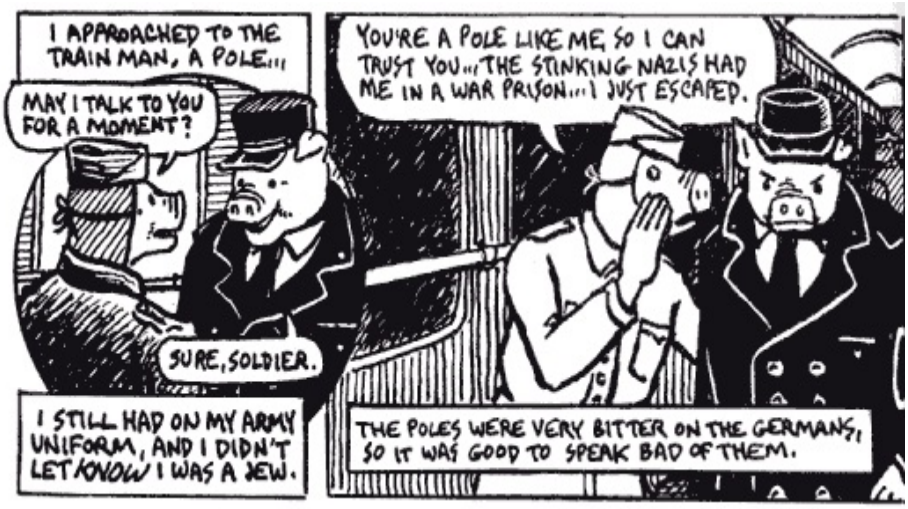

Figure 7. Maus I 64

Furthermore, the metaphorical use of animal masks in *Maus* also connotes other meanings as well. In the second volume of *Maus*, Art's face is covered by a mouse mask as he sits by the writer's desk feeling guilty that *Maus* became such a worldwide success. This time mask signals Art's feeling of inadequacy in retelling his father's story, as well as an inevitable link to the past. In a sense, it is both a link to Auschwitz and link to personal family history from which Art cannot escape as it constructs a large part of his identity (Smith 232).

Maus further refers to the futility and artificiality of the anthropomorphic metaphor when he includes his own question and dilemmas in the story (Staub 38-39). At the beginning of the second volume, Art is discussing how to draw his wife Francoise who is French but has converted to Judaism. Should she be drawn as a mouse, or as a new animal distinguishing French? The animal metaphor is further deconstructed when "real" animals appear alongside metaphorical animal characters. Particularly interesting is the scene in which Vladek tries to calm Anja by telling her that the sounds she hears in the basement in which they are hiding are just mice and not rats. The differentiation between mice and rats may point to the "Aryan" view in which Jews are seen as inferior and weaker race, but also as a menacing Other and a threat to non-Jews (De Angelis 231).

Concerning the representation of other nations, it is important to mention the drawing of Americans as dogs. Being the most dominant "animal" in the cat-mouse food chain, dogs are commonly viewed as the natural enemies of cats which consequently turns them into the rescuers of mice (Jews). However, not all dogs representing Americans are drawn in the same manner as African-Americans are drawn as black dogs. The only time African American character appears in *Maus* is when Art, Francoise and Vladek stop to pick up a hitchhiker on their way home. In this episode, Spiegelman subtly touches upon the issue of racism in present day America as we see Vladek upsetting over Francoise offering the hitchhiker a ride: "What happened on you, Francoise? You went crazy, or what?! I had the whole time to watch out that this shvartser doesn't steal us the groceries from the back seat!" (*Maus* II 99). Francoise responds emphasizing the obvious irony: "What?! That's outrageous! How can you, of all people, be such a racist! You talk about blacks the way the Nazis talked about the Jews!" (*Maus* II 99). Vladek's racism forces readers to rethink the ideas of racism in present day context, but it also suggests that being a Holocaust survivor, or a child of survivor, does not make one a saint or a hero (Staub 41). Throughout *Maus* Spiegelman tries to portray his father as realistic

as possible, showing all of his character flaws that may not solely be the consequences of his war experience. In other words, if Spiegelman was to depict his father in a more romanticized way, as a heroic figure, it would necessarily imply that there is a happy ending in the Holocaust story and that all those who did not survive were not heroic as they ultimately failed. As Art's psychiatrist asks him: "Then you think it's admirable to survive. Does that mean it's NOT admirable to NOT survive?" (*Maus* II 45).

Furthermore, by including other animals in the story, like pigs[10], frogs and deer, Spiegelman further supports his allegory and reminds us that not only Jews were dehumanized and considered unworthy of living in Nazi Era. So while animal metaphor serves the author to visually represent the dehumanization of victims, the human characterization allows readers to identify with characters as humans and to focus on the story rather than on animal imagery. Nevertheless, there are moments in the book when Spiegelman subverts the metaphor (including real life photographs, animal masks, asking direct questions about the utilization of the metaphor etc.) suggesting that every representation is bound to be incomplete and inaccurate. In doing so, the author reaches a higher level of authenticity and points to the absurdity of the metaphor utilized in the project of dehumanization by the Nazi Regime (Novalis 37-38).

5.5. Representing the Exclusion of Jewish people in *Maus*

Despite the seeming contradiction, the guiding idea of National Socialism was the improvement of the well-being of the biological body of the nation. According to Agamben,

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[10] Spiegelman's choice to draw the Poles as pigs was particularly criticized as promoting racism and ethnic stereotypes. To such criticism Spiegelman responded claiming that he chose the pigs to represent the Poles primarily because they are not a part of the mouse-cat food chain, and also because Hitler, on several occasions, referred to Slavic people as pigs who were not meant to be exterminated but worked to death.

only by recognizing that National Socialist politics was in fact biopolitics can we fully grasp the sense of the Final Solution. However, in Nazi regime the "care of life" was being absolutized as eugenics and ideologies, police and politics, the care of health and the fight against enemy became entirely indistinguishable (*Homo Sacer* 147). In that regard, the transformation of Jews into second-class citizens was a mean of eliminating the biological degeneration and protecting Aryan blood. It can even be said that the extermination of Jews first began by depriving them of their legal rights, and later by containing them in the camps. However, it wasn't only Jewish people who were scanned in search of biological threats, as there were many German citizens who were considered "unhealthy" and "impure". Individuals who were found to suffer from some type of disease, mentally and physically disabled, as well as African-Germans and homosexuals, were all excluded from public life and some were even prevented from having children. The moral and ethics behind such politics were not being questioned precisely because it was believed that the extermination of other "races", and "problematic" individuals, is rooted in medicinal context and is effected to make the society and biological bodies healthier (Godamunne 68). For Agamben, it was precisely the moment when Nazi Reich extended itself over entire nation that the biopolitics showed its thanatopolitical face (*Homo Sacer* 150).

In his graphic novel, Art Spiegelman gives us a detailed look of the process of the elimination of Jewish people from the society; from the initial German occupation to subsequent dehumanization of Jews in concentration camps. As Vladek narrates to Art, it all began with Nazis infiltration into their everyday lives, controlling every activity of Jewish people, checking their properties, identification papers and earnings: "They suspect you! Hide the papers quickly! . . . The police went over our house top to bottom. It was nothing to find so they searched the neighbors" (*Maus* I 28). According to Vladek's story, while the constant police control did create fear and confusion among people, most of the Jews did not think of it as the first step in their exclusion, so they went on and tried to lead normal lives.

Interestingly, Spiegelman also represents small signs of resistance and unity of Jewish people at the beginning of the war. For example, after Vladek's factory was robbed and closed, and his family was forced to leave their house, Vladek went on to earn money by selling sugar at the black market. It was at that time that Vladek sought help of former business partners and acquaintances, who were Jewish, so he could earn money, forge work permits and hide elder members of his family. However, as the war progressed we see more and more Jews working for the Nazis mainly by helping them capture other Jews so, as Vladek explains, they could save themselves. One of the most illustrative examples is when Vladek's cousin Haskel refuses to help him and Anja escape Auschwitz without payment. As Vladek observes: "At that time it *wasn't* anymore families. It was everybody to take care for *himself!*" (*Maus* I 114). And although Haskel later did help Vladek and Anja escape, he ultimately refused to help Anja's parents leaving them to face the terrors of the Auschwitz. Here, it is important to emphasize that tough biopower eliminates threats to biological body of the population it also manages population by shaping individuals to act in its favor. Individuals who are behaving in the way predicted by the norm are programmed to exclude and eliminate everything that is threatening their well-being and the well-being of the collective. Guided by the state racism, as Foucault theorizes it, such individuals rationalize killing of the Other by believing that the death of the enemy guarantees their own existence, but that it also guarantees the improvement of life in general. Furthermore, concerning particularly the Nazi State, Foucault claims that due to the coexistence of mechanisms of sovereignty and biopower in Nazi society, the power of life and death was given to both the State and to a vast number of individuals (*Society Must Be Defended* 259). That is to say, in Nazi State everyone had the power of life and death, whether it was German soldiers marching down the street, or citizens informing on their neighbors. In the Nazi State "murderous power and sovereign power [were] unleashed throughout the entire social body" (Foucault *Society Must be Defended* 259)

Such coexistence of mechanisms of sovereign power and biopower is also visible in several different episodes in *Maus*. The most obvious example is an episode in which Vladek recalls how incredibly lucky he was as all those Jews who were caught doing business, or otherwise opposing the regime, were hanged in public as a warning to others. According to Foucault, it was precisely in times of sovereign power that punishment was seen as public spectacle and as the visible extension of sovereign's rule. Public torture of King's opponents was presented as extremely brutal and inhumane so as to prevent all potential enemies from standing up to the sovereign. The spectacle of torture allowed to transform the body of the condemned into visible lieu where the crime was reproduced, the vengeance of the sovereign was exercised, and ultimately, the power was restored (Foucault *Discipline and Punish* 55).

Figure 8. Maus I 83

It is also worth mentioning how during the war Jewish people were visibly branded as the Others as they were forced to wear a badge in the form of David's star. The badge was just another mean of further violating their rights and isolating them from the rest of the population. They were considered to be contagious "race" that required a special identification so they would not mix with the rest of the population and threaten their well-being. In his book, Spiegelman does not pay a specific attention to this matter, partially because Vladek, as a

narrator, never references it. However, in order to show the progress of the war and worsening treatment of Jews, at one point Spiegelman begins illustrating Jewish people as mice wearing the badge on their shoulders. The star symbol is most visible when Vladek is drawn walking down the street and a large star appears in the background as he begins to realize that he can no longer walk freely in the streets of Poland; he is guilty just because he is Jewish. As he himself wonders: "Will I walk slowly, they will take me… Will I run they can shoot me!" (*Maus* I 80).

But the visible markers on the clothes were not enough for Nazis to exclude both physically and symbolically Jewish people from the rest of the population. As Paolo Giaccaria and Claudio Minca note, the Nazi biopolitics were closely linked to a process of localization since, ultimately, the removal of the Jewish presence, as sickening elements, was expressed through the spatial planning (71). At first, Jewish people in Europe were extracted and contained in numerous ghettos; closed ghettos, work ghettos or transit ghettos leading to either concentration camps or extermination camps. As it is documented in *Maus*, families with a lot of children, sick and elderly, were all immediately sent to destruction ghettos, while the younger generation, eligible for work, was transported to work ghettos where they were forced to do unskilled jobs in terrible living conditions. According to Vladek, at the beginning they all had very little information concerning the existence and the real function of the camps until one day they received a notice that all Jews must present themselves at the city stadium. The registration was actually announced as an inspection of the documents that is necessary for authorities to protect all citizens of the region. In Vladek's conclusion, though people realized that it might be a Nazi trap, they had no choice but to show up and hope they will (not) be selected: "'Old people, families with lots of kids, and people without work cards are all going to the left!'…We understood this must be very bad" (*Maus* I 90).

Figure 9. Maus I 90

As it was mentioned earlier, depriving Jewish people of legal rights was the first, and also necessary, step in their extermination. To be deprived of legal rights and excluded from the political community is, in Agamben's terms, an act of banning. This banning and exclusion, in effect, create a bare life that is at the same time both excluded and included in politics. In the state of exception, that what is taken outside is removed and captured in the form of the exception and in the relation to the rule of the inside (*Homo Sacer* 18). According to Agamben: "The banishment of sacred life is the sovereign nomos that conditions every rule, the originary spatialization that governs and makes possible every localization and every territoritalization "(*Homo Sacer* 111). Furthermore, in the Nazi project of the exclusion (and extermination) of Jews, entire Europe was imagined as Germanized location dominated by the Aryan race. At the center of this biopolitical project was an attempt to "racialize" new, subjected areas and to categorize and mark every individual in search of distinct Aryan or non-Aryan characteristics. However, in an attempt to make Europe a "racially" pure setting they soon faced the problem of lack of space where to re-locate all the "unhealthy" individuals they extracted from the population. It was necessary to think of a new location for the growing mass of human

"leftovers" i.e. for the Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, disabled etc. According to Giaccaria and Minca, this lack of space for the disposal of the "human rest" was a key moment at which territorial solution slowly began to turn into the politics of extermination and the revival of the camps (73).

5.6.Mauschwitz and the Dehumanization of Jews

The sole branding and the exclusion of certain individuals as threats to the biological body of the nation were not enough to justify their extermination. It was necessary to devalue entirely their biological lives by reducing them to beings that do not deserve to live (Godamunne 59). Spiegelman's utilization of anthropomorphism is the most prominent narrative strategy for addressing the dehumanization of victims that consequently led to genocide. The idea for the use of anthropomorphism to narrate such a serious and heavy topic came evidently from the Nazi propaganda and their portrayal of the Jews as animals, rats and vermin. One of the ways in which Spiegelman makes clear that he attempts to subvert anti-Semitic ideas is when he begins the first volume of *Maus* with Hitler's quotation about the Jewish "race", and the second volume with the literal quotation from a German newspaper article published in 1930s:

Mickey Mouse is the most miserable ideal ever revealed…Healthy emotions tell every independent young man and every honorable youth that the dirty and filth-covered vermin, the greatest bacteria carrier in the animal kingdom, cannot be the ideal type of animal…Away with Jewish brutalization of the people! Down with Mickey Mouse! Wear the Swastika Cross! (*Maus* II 3)

Though readers are well-aware that Spiegelman's characters are in fact all human, there are several instances in which the author highlights their animal identity, as well as those in which he reminds us that the victims are human. Interestingly, in those scenes in which the tragic events, torture, death and suffering are depicted, the characters are mostly drawn with distinct human features. Specifically, in the representation of tragic events the Jewish characters do not have a tail, they are dressed in human clothes and their facial expressions are human expressions of pain and suffering. For instance, when Vladek narrates about the selection of the healthy Jews to work in camps, Spiegelman visually depicts their naked bodies with human genitals as a clear reminder of their humanity. Hence, each time tragedy and suffering is portrayed, the characters are drawn in such a way that the human condition is highlighted (Ravelo 14).

Figure 10. Maus II 82

Furthermore, alongside the use of anthropomorphism Spiegelman employs other strategies as well to show the effects of the German control and dehumanizing treatment of victims. With the drawing of his characters as animals, Spiegelman demonstrates how the Jews were treated as animals by visually depicting the unhealthy living conditions in the ghettos and

the torturing of the victims. Among the less obvious examples of the German control are the moments in which we see German guards referring to prisoners by numbers or calling them animal names so as to further establish their "racial" superiority. Upon arrival to the camp, as Vladek remembers, the Germans took away their names, the strongest mark of their identity, and assigned them numbers as though they are cattle and not humans: "They registered us in…They took from us our name and here they put me my number" (*Maus* II 26). Inside the camp, as it was in the ghettos as well, the prisoners had no information whatsoever about the world outside the gates or about their family members; whether they are among the dead or living. The complete isolation allowed for fear to spread quickly among the prisoners who began losing all hope, thus giving the Germans the ultimate control. However, despite the all surrounding fear, Vladek gladly remembers all the small signs of resistance in the camps. Vladek gives us insight into undocumented activities of the camp prisoners while explaining to Art how he managed to send a letter to his wife who was in a different barrack, or how it was possible to trade food for cigarettes: "I starved a little to pay to bring Anja over. All what I organized I kept in a box under my mattress" (*Maus* II 64). On the other hand, those prisoners who were caught in "illegal" activities, or in an attempt to escape, were immediately shot in front of the others.

And while many visual artists, dealing with the theme of the Holocaust, avoid showing the inside of gas chambers or sanitary conditions in the camp, Spiegelman specifically focuses on depicting the torture techniques and unhealthy living conditions. The visual representation of horror and human suffering, facilitated through the use of anthropomorphism, should also be regarded as the author's attempt to further claim authenticity and stay true to his father's story: "'Their fingers were broken from trying to climb up the walls…' Enough! I didn't want more to hear, but anyway he told me" (*Maus* II 71)

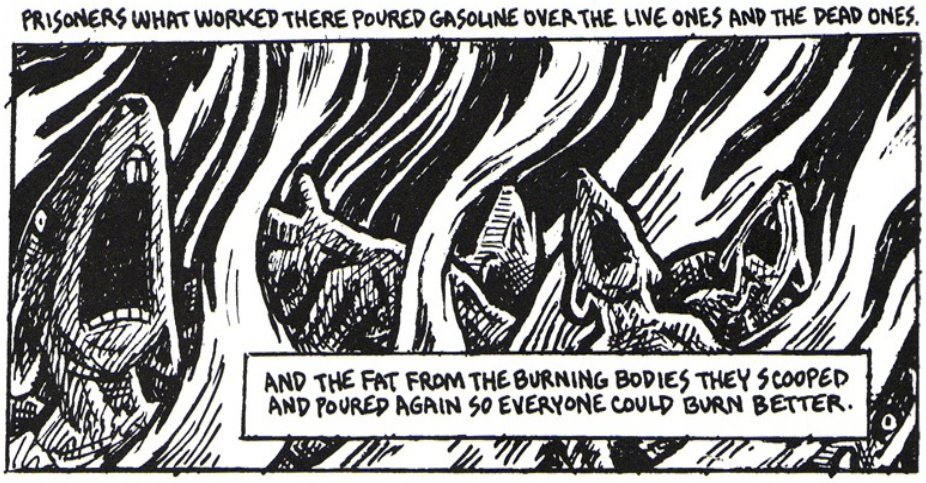

Figure 11. Maus II 72

For Jessica Copley, the representation of horror in *Maus* takes place on three different levels. Firstly, readers are presented with the graphical nature of the panel designed so as to evoke different emotional reactions. After the initial shock, we notice the text accompanying the panel that further describes the tragic events whilst contributing to the psychological effect on readers. However, there is a gap on the textual level as we move from Vladek's commentary with a descriptive function to the more reflective commentary. This technique allows for Spiegelman to demonstrate how each individual episode forms both a singular moment and is a part of a greater whole. On the other hand, the space of the in-between is also the space where psychological engagement occurs offering readers a moment to think through or even to resolve underlying complexities (5).

The entire chapter entitled *Mauschwitz* is devoted to exploring the inhumane conditions of the camps and the effect such dehumanization had on prisoners. While Vladek narrates the horrors of Auschwitz, readers are presented with detailed images of gas chambers, chimneys, weak and tortured bodies and piles of rotting dead bodies. One of the scenes in which the subhuman conditions and the quality of hygiene are particularly well explored is a scene in which Vladek recalls typhus epidemics at Auschwitz. Vladek describes how, at that time, there were so many dead people all over the camp that he had no choice but to walk over them,

stepping on their heads and slipping over their wet skin. His morbid narration is accompanied by equally disturbing images of lice and piles of dead bodies. Following Agamben, such dehumanizing and horrific treatment of prisoners was possible precisely because the camp became the manifestation of the state of exception. In other words, in the space in which human beings are reduced entirely to their physical existence, and the exception becomes the rule, the acts that were labeled as crimes in the state of law are no longer defined as such. Thus, according to Agamben, there is the biopolitical potential of Nazi death camps as they are not simply sites of extermination but also sites of production of bare life (*Homo Sacer*171)

Spiegelman also touches upon the architecture and technology of the camps so as to further explain how the spatial planning served to maintain control over prisoners. The author includes several diagrams, maps and hand written sketches that, along with Vladek's description, give readers insight into the spatial structure of Auschwitz. As Robinson remarks, looking into the architecture of Auschwitz is not simply a matter of historical insight, it is also a spatial analysis of a true manifestation of the space of exception (27). Germans could easily exercise sovereign power over the prisoners because all activities were functionally separated. The camps, designed in a geometric shape, were commonly zoned into different sites; places of accommodation, work sites and execution sites were spatially separated. This strict design and spatial zoning allowed for the visible control of the prisoners while maintaining the social distance between the guards and the prisoners. And though acts of violence could erupt just about anywhere in the camp, the mass

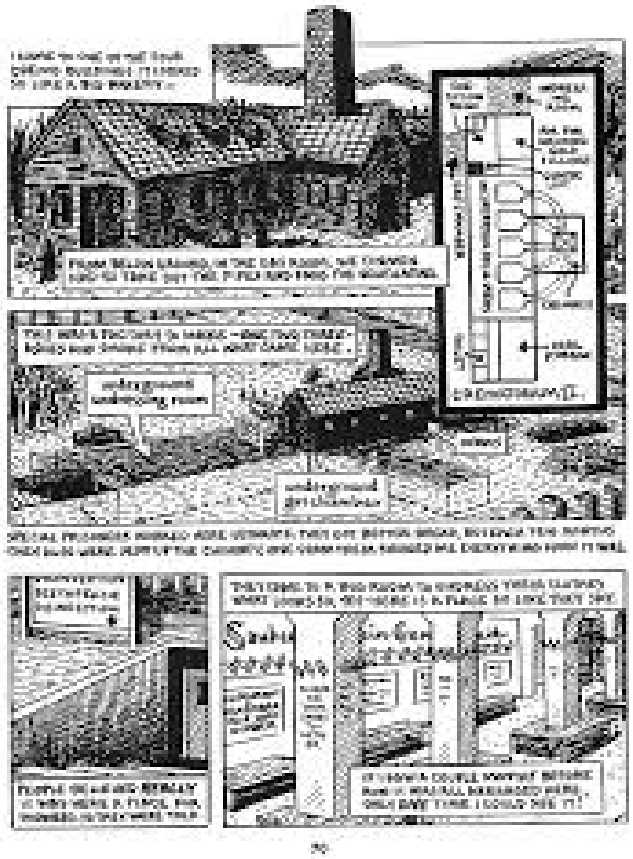

Figure 12. Maus II 70

killings usually took place at specially designed sites of extermination, located outside the main prison camp. Slightly hidden from the view of the prisoners, those sites were in a sense a taboo, places of mystery "where the power to kill could unfold unhindered, especially from prisoners who had figured out the purpose of the building they were now entering" (Robinson 29). As the expression of the ultimate control, it was not unusual for Germans to keep some of the Jewish prisoners alive to assist them by building death factories that they themselves would later enter. While describing his hand written sketch of the camp, Vladek also touches upon the mentioned German strategy: "Special prisoners worked here separate. They got better bread, but each few months they also were sent up the chimney" (*Maus* II 70). In another panel we witness how the German utilization of the Jewish body often continued even after their death: "And the fat from the burning bodies they scooped and poured again so everyone could burn better" (*Maus* II 72). Even though there are no characters presented in the panel describing the spatial organization of the camp, the sole drawing of camp's architecture reminds the readers of unimaginable terrors of the Nazi regime, but it also points out how just about anything is possible in the state of exception.

5.7.The Useful Jewish Bodies

At the core of concentration and death camps of the Nazi regime were both extermination and forced labor. It was through forced labor that Germans decided to make the most out of the Jewish bodies before they eliminate them and dispose them as human rest. In a sense, it was an extermination through labor as the prisoners were forced to do humiliating, physically exhausting jobs, and even at times morally demanding jobs as they often assisted Germans in mass killing. However, despite the awful working conditions, bad nutrition and

torture, those prisoners who were sent to labor camps were considered lucky as it meant that they escaped the death for the time being. Similarly, in *Maus* Spiegelman depicts the admission of the prisoners and their segregation into healthy ones, capable of work, and weak ones ready for immediate elimination. Prisoners were divided and selected based on their strength, age, health and overall medical condition. In another passage, which somewhat mirrors the scene of the admission in the camp, Vladek describes how he had to deprive himself of food and sleep for months to avoid going to army: "And a few days before the exam, no sleep and no food…Only a gallon coffee a day for my heart" (*Maus* I 46).

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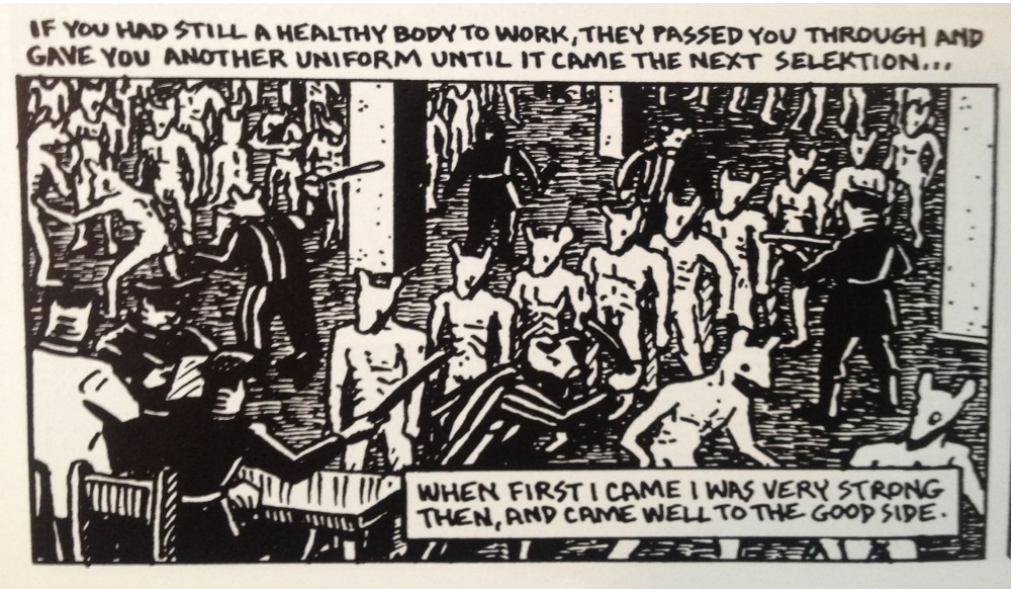

Figure 13. Maus II 26

As Foucault claims, in every society the power has the grip over the biological body (the individual body or the body of the population) in as much as it aims to make the bodies docile in order to control and monitor them. In the machinery of power, docile body is a body "that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved" (Foucault *Discipline and Punish* 136). According to Foucault, it was through disciplinary methods that the constant control and subjection of the body was made possible. Specifically, different methods of coercion and

supervision, and partitioning of time, space and movement allowed for disciplinary techniques to impose on the body the relation of docility-utility (Ibid. 137). Foucault further elaborated the techniques of the discipline by taking 18th century soldiers and their military training as an example:

"…holding their heads high and erect; to standing upright, without bending the back, to sticking out the belly, throwing out the chest and throwing back the shoulders… Likewise, they will be taught never to fix their eyes on the ground, but to look straight at those they pass . . . to remain motionless until the order is given, without moving the head, the hands or the feet. . ." (ordinance qtd. in Foucault *Discipline and Punish* 135-136).

Such strict and rigorous military discipline was also, to a certain extent, imposed on the prisoners and citizens of the Nazi regime. As it is depicted in *Maus*, everyday routine and working conditions in camps were systematically and strictly regulated by the regime. From the moment prisoners arrived at the camp until the moment of their death, every aspect of their work and containment was systematized and carefully organized. While at first registered and divided into productive and unproductive bodies, at the main camp, prisoners were also spatially organized to maximum their obedience and efficiency. For example, women prisoners were held in special barracks where they performed different jobs than men. Moreover, as Vladek describes, prisoners were spatially divided and separated based on the job they were assigned to do; "special prisoners" working in gas chambers were separated from prisoners working in a tin shop or from prisoners working in the kitchen etc. According to Foucault, the segregation and spatial organization is simultaneously functional, architectural and hierarchical. The division into enclosed and distinct spaces ensures the better control of individuals, their obedience, but also a better economy of time (*Discipline and Punish* 148). Spiegelman also

depicts the dictated everyday routine of camp prisoners; from their long working hours, constant physical examination, to lining up and forced marching. However, discipline was not internalized in prisoners as the guards forced them to march, and generally to conform to the rules, by threatening them with guns and beating, or by shooting some of them as a warning to others. In other words, Vladek and other inmates were obedient because they feared for their lives: "All night I heard shooting. He who got tired, who can't walk so fast, they shot. The more we walked, the more I heard shooting…" (*Maus* II 82). After all, the Nazi State was, as Foucault explained, both "universally disciplinary and regulatory society, [and] a society which unleashed murderous power…the old sovereign right to take life" (*Society Must Be Defended* 259).

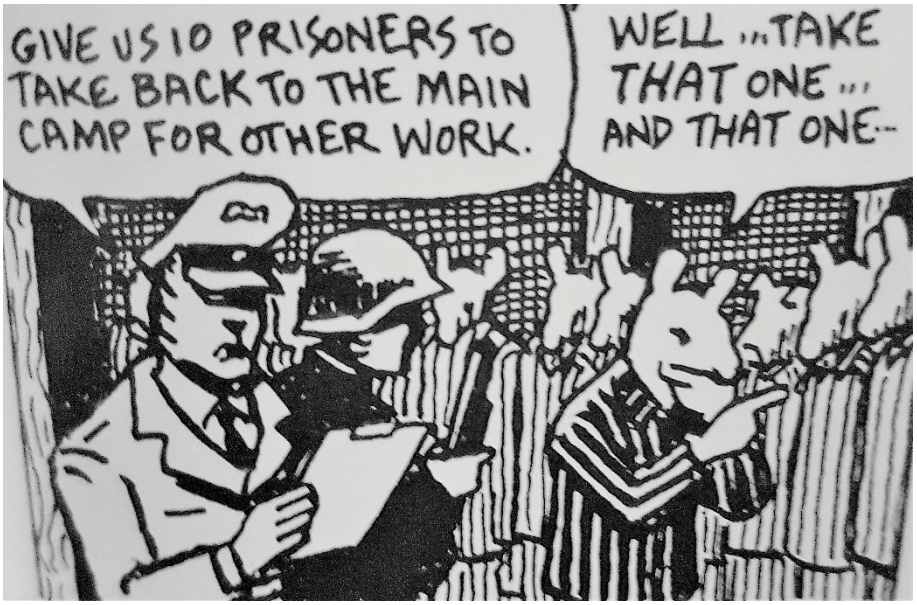

Figure 14. Maus II 55

6. Conclusion

As a seminal work in the field of comic studies, Art Spiegelman's *Maus* is a testimonial text that manages to successfully portray the trauma experienced by the Holocaust survivor while capturing the very process of transmitting the memory. By using different narrative strategies, Spiegelman achieves to demonstrate the interconnectedness of past and present and to raise questions about the construction and shaping of memory. Thus, throughout *Maus* we see how Vladek's narration is constantly interrupted by Art's questions and by his insistence to hear more about the certain events. In that way not only does Spiegelman claim authenticity, but he also demonstrates how the traumatic experience of survivors affects the present day life of their children. Furthermore, Spiegelman's inclusion of real-life photographs, archival documents, sketches and diagrams, further highlights how strongly the generation of postmemory relies on photographs and family stories in receiving the knowledge and memory of the events. On the other hand, photographs in *Maus*, to a certain extent, represent "remnants" of the Holocaust history and serve to undermine potential dilemmas about the authenticity and the appropriate nature of the comic book.

Indeed, well-aware of the status comic books have, Spiegelman avoids aestheticizing the Holocaust in any way and manages to undermine the common tropes and stereotypes. The use of neutral drawing style, together with anthropomorphism, allows the author to avoid sentimentalization and sacralization of survivors whilst, at the same time, emphasizing *Maus*'s biographical documentary. And though, in *Maus,* there are certain symbols commonly associated with the representation of the Holocaust (swastika, leather boots, gates of Auschwitz…), Spiegelman's detailed visual representation of practices of regulation and dehumanization of the Jews in concentration camps proves that there is no single way to represent the Holocaust. As it is commonly noted, *Maus* is the work that tells the story about

the Holocaust in the graphic medium and it is also the story about the medium itself. Moreover, drawing on works by Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben, we tried to analyze the political conditions leading to the regulation practices of the Nazi regime, while at the same time raising questions on how successful is *Maus* in demonstrating, and understanding, control and management practices. In *Maus*, Art Spiegelman gives readers a detailed look into practices that led to the elimination of Jewish people; from the initial German occupation and monitoring of people's activities to subsequent branding and dehumanization of "unworthy" individuals. Interestingly, on several instances in *Maus,* Spiegelman emphasizes how depriving Jewish people of legal rights was the first, and necessary, step toward their extermination. Moreover, the use of anthropomorphism allowed Spiegelman not only to visually represent all the horrors of the camp, but also to discuss the complex theme of devaluation of human life and individual freedom. It is important to emphasize that *Maus* is also the text capable of raising questions about the ethical consequences of such practices while avoiding to offer some type of great explanation or conclusion. On the other hand, being thoroughly ambivalent, it is also a text extremely self-aware of its limitations and ethical dilemmas behind the Holocaust representations. Thus, as *Maus* demonstrated, it is safe to say that when it comes to the Holocaust representations, there is no (in)appropriate genre or mode for telling the story that will continue to haunt generations.

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Abstract

Remebrance and Control: History and Biopolitics in Art Spiegelman's *Maus*

Given the rise of the Holocaust representations in film, literature and visual arts, the question is no longer whether to represent the Holocaust, but rather how to represent it. In that regard, Art Spiegelman's depiction of the Holocaust in a graphic narrative is often cited as particularly interesting and groundbreaking work. The aim of this thesis was to analyze the representation of the Holocaust and the memory process in Art Spiegelman's graphic novel *Maus*, drawing mainly on Giorgio Agamben's and Michel Foucault's understanding of biopolitics, and Marianne Hirsch's concept of post-memory. The analysis revealed that through the employment of different narrative strategies, notably anthropomorphism, *Maus* explicitly deals with the themes of governmentality and devaluation of biological life, while simultaneously raising questions about the ethical implications of the representation of the Holocaust and personal history. Moreover, the use of the comic medium allowed the author to problematize the construction of memory by illustrating both the survivor's experience and the very process of recording that memory.

Key words: Maus, Spiegelman, biopolitics, postmemory, the camp, history

Sažetak

Sjećanje i kontrola: povijest i biopolitika u Art Spiegelmanovom Mausu

S obzirom na učestalost prikazivanja holokausta u filmu, književnosti i vizualnoj kulturi, pitanje više nije usmjereno k tome možemo li prikazati holokaust, već na koji način. S tim u vezi, Art Spiegelmenov prikaz holokausta u grafičkom romanu često se navodi kao iznimno zanimljivo i revolucionarno djelo. Cilj ovog rada bio je analizirati prikaz holokausta i procesa pamćenja u grafičkom romanu Art Spiegelmana *Maus* oslanjajući se prvenstveno na tumačenje biopolitike kod Giorgia Agambena i Michela Foucaulta te primjenjući koncept post memorije Marianne Hirsch. Analizom se pokazalo kako je *Maus,* uz pomoć različitih narativnih strategija, naročito antropomorfizma, tekst koji se eksplicitno bavi temama vladanja i devaluacije biološkog života, istodobno postavljajući pitanja o etičkim implikacijama prikazivanja holokausta i osobne povijesti. Štoviše, upotreba grafičkog medija omogućila je autoru da nadalje problematizira i proces konstruiranja memorije prikazujući kako iskustvo preživjelih tako i sam proces bilježenja tog sjećanja.

Ključne riječi: Maus, Spiegelman, biopolitika, post memorija, kamp, povijest