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The Representation of Trauma in Art Spiegelman's *Maus*: *A Survivor's Tale*. The Holocaust Experience as Traumatic Memory and its Transformation into Narrative Memory in a Multimodal Medium

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Sometimes the wind from burning houses
would bring the kites along,
and people on the merry-go-round
caught the flying charred bits.
This wind from the burning houses
blew open the girls' skirts,
and the happy throngs laughed
on a beautiful Warsaw Sunday.

Czesław Miłosz, *Campo Di Fiori*, Warsaw, 1943. [trans. Adam Gillon]

It's hard to look, and hard not to look.
And that is as it should be.

Gilles Peress, *The Silence*, 1995.

ABSTRACT

Trauma Studies has been proved to be worthwhile in the representation of history and its relation to memory (Caruth 1995; LaCapra 1998, 2001), acknowledging testimony and witness as central mechanisms in the transformation of traumatic memory into narrative memory (Laub 1992). This field has focused widely on the representation of the Holocaust experience and its aesthetic reconstruction based on personal testimony.

Therefore, the aim of this Master's dissertation is to examine how trauma is represented in Art Spiegelman's graphic narrative *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (1980-1991) from the perspective of Trauma Studies, as an example of the reconstruction of traumatic memory caused by the Holocaust experience, and its translation into a multimodal form, which combines both symbolic and iconic signs in the creation of spaces and temporalities through panels. Special attention is paid to the juxtaposition of the different narratives that compose the comic, reflecting on the transmission of trauma across generations, turning it into postmemory, which characterises second generation survivors (Hirsch 1992). In this respect, Freud's notion of the *doppelgänger*, or the double, is taken into consideration in the analysis of how trauma navigates across time, space and people. Likewise, the notion of "the uncanny" is relevant both in the portrayal of characters wearing animal masks to convey the unsayable, and also in the recreation of *ur*-spaces, or spaces outside society, such as the ghetto, the *lager* and the train, spaces that support the process of dehumanization carried out by the Nazi regime. All in all, *Maus* is considered a memory site, which stands for those absent testimonies, including Anja's, and whose aim is to transform traumatic memory into narrative memory.

Conclusions deal with how *Maus*, as a graphic narrative, brings a new interpretation of the Holocaust experience that join historical accuracy and aesthetic creativity, in an intricate relation of memories and (hi)stories.

Keywords: graphic narrative**,** Holocaust, *Maus*, narrative memory, traumatic memory, Trauma Studies.

RESUMEN

Los Estudios de Trauma han demostrado ser de gran utilidad en la representación de la historia y su relación con la memoria (Caruth 1995; LaCapra 1998, 2001), reconociendo el testimonio como mecanismo central en la transformación de la memoria traumática en memoria narrativa (Laub 1992). Este campo se ha enfocado ampliamente en la representación de la experiencia del Holocausto y su reconstrucción artística basada en el testimonio personal.

Por lo tanto, el objetivo de este trabajo fin de máster es el de examinar la representación de la noción de trauma en la narrativa gráfica de Art Spiegelman *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (1980-1991), desde una perspectiva de los Estudios de Trauma, como claro ejemplo de la reconstrucción de la memoria traumática causada por la experiencia del Holocausto, y su traducción a este medio multimodal, que combina signos simbólicos e icónicos en la creación de espacios y temporalidades a través de las viñetas. Se presta especial atención a la yuxtaposición de las diferentes narrativas que componen el cómic, incidiendo en la transmisión del trauma a través de las generaciones, transformándolo en posmemoria, característica de la segunda generación de supervivientes (Hirsch 1992). En este respecto, la noción desarrollada por Freud del *doppelgänger*, o doble, es tomada en consideración en el análisis de cómo el trauma navega a través del tiempo, el espacio y las personas. De igual modo, el concepto de "lo siniestro" es relevante en el retrato de los personajes ilustrados con máscaras de animal para transmitir lo indescriptible, y también en la recreación de los no-espacios, espacios fuera de la sociedad, como son el gueto, el campo de concentración y el tren, espacios que fomentan el proceso de deshumanización llevado a cabo por el régimen nazi. En general, *Maus* se considera un sitio de memoria que representa aquellos testimonios ausentes, incluido el testimonio de Anja, y cuyo objetivo es la transformación de la memoria traumática en memoria narrativa.

Las conclusiones reflejan cómo la narrativa gráfica *Maus* ofrece una nueva interpretación de la experiencia del Holocausto que aúna rigor histórico con creatividad estética, en una relación intrincada entre memoria e historia.

Palabras Clave: narrativa gráfica, Holocausto, *Maus*, memoria narrativa, memoria traumática, Estudios de Trauma.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Research Statement and Objectives

The aim of this master's dissertation is to examine how trauma is represented in the graphic narrative *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (1980-1991), written by Art Spiegelman, which narrates the experiences Vladek Spiegelman, the author's father, got through during the Second World War and, in particular, his internment in the concentration camp of Auschwitz. *Maus* consists of two volumes, the first part was published in 1980 and the second one in 1991, after Vladek's death and the unexpected success of *Maus* Part I. In 1992, *Maus* became the first comic to win the Pulitzer Prize. The complete edition of *Maus* was published in 1996 by Pantheon Publishing House.

Art Spiegelman was born in 1948 in Stockholm, Sweden, two years after the reencounter of Vladek and Anja after the war. The Spiegelman family migrated to the USA in 1951, settling in Queens, New York. From an early age, having been influenced by MAD magazine, Art led his professional career as an illustrator. He worked as a designer for Topps Chewing Gum until his mother's suicide in 1968, when he abandoned his studies on Art and Design at State-University of New York Binghamton, and began to explore the alternative comic scene from the comic underground movement that emerged in the 1970s in America. There, authors explored other issues related to politics, personal traumas or war conflicts conveyed through narrative forms never seen before in comics. Spiegelman became one of the main representatives of this movement. In 1972, he published the first draft of "Maus", an original three-page comic strip, and "Prisoner on the Hell Planet: A Case History", a comic strip about Anja's suicide. These works, along with others, were published later in *Breakdowns* (1977). In 1980, together with his wife Françoise Mouly, Art founded the underground comic anthology RAW, which consists of "a semi-annual journal of avant-garde cartooning", whose aim was to "raise the status of cartoon graphics to an art form" (Weschler 2-3) and to introduce European and Japanese high-quality comic strip to the American readers who considered comics a medium used mainly for entertaining and making fun.

Art Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (1980-1991) tells the story of his father Vladek Spiegelman, a Polish Jew survivor of Auschwitz. *Maus* is composed of two parts, the first part, entitled "My Father Bleeds History", was published in 1980 and relates the

events that took place between the mid-1930s and the winter of 1944, just before entering Auschwitz. The second part, entitled "And Here My Troubles Began", was published in 1991, and relates the events that took place during the imprisonment at Auschwitz-Birkenau of Vladek and Anja until the end of the war and their reencounter in 1946. The depiction of the characters as animals depending on their nationality or ethnic group is the most recognisable aspect of this narrative. Thus, Jews are mice, Germans are cats, Poles are pigs, Americans are dogs, the French are frogs, Swedes are reindeer and the British are fish.

After the publication of *Maus* Part I by Pantheon Publishing House, Spiegelman worked for *New York Times*, *Playboy* and *The New Yorker*. Since *Maus*, Spiegelman has portrayed disaster and trauma in other works, such as *In the Shadow of No Towers* (2004), based on 9/11 terrorist attacks, and *Breakdowns: Portrait of the Artist as a Young %@&*!* (2008), a collection of comic strips about Spiegelman's professional and personal evolution.

In 2011, *MetaMaus* was published. This work consists mainly of a series of interviews carried out by Hillary Chute to Art Spiegelman from 2006 to 2010. *MetaMaus* is considered the most valuable source of information regarding the process of the creation of *Maus*. This process lasted twenty years since the publication in 1972 of a three-page comic strip entitled "Maus", considered the first draft of what became later as the final comic. *MetaMaus* also brings valuable thoughts regarding the relation of Art with his parents, the main influences in Spiegelman's form and narrative (especially in the process of creating *Maus*) and the dilemmas the author faced during the process of illustrating the comic.

Even though comics have been regarded as a lowbrow medium, they have shown to be a good alternative to convey testimonies, especially those which are associated with traumatic experiences developed within political conflicts, such as war or political upheaval experiences. Hence, *Maus* is considered the epitome of the representation of the Holocaust experience through graphic narrative. In that respect, it is crucial to differentiate between graphic novel and what Hillary Chute refers to as graphic narrative ("Comics as Literature?" 453), which applies to those non-fiction works that relate real experiences. Besides, comics in general pose a self-reflection in terms of form and function, at the same time as they question the legitimacy of this medium to deal with traumatic events such as war or disaster and to represent it in aesthetic terms. Indeed, as posed by this master's dissertation, the interaction between aesthetics and history cannot be seen in conflict to empirical evidence of historical events. Besides, any representation of history implies an active reconstruction of the events, in which aesthetic elements interact with historical facts.

Regarding *Maus*' narratives, Vladek's experience traces the main elements that cause the annihilation of the individual as it was the case with the entire Jew community. Thus, Vladek's testimony describes the dynamics of the Nazi bureaucracy in its attempt (and success) in annihilating and finally exterminating a whole group, rejecting the idea of a widely spread antisemitism as a sole cause for the Nazi genocide to take place. Moreover, *Maus* shows multiple layers regarding narratives and testimonies, so that different traumatic memories are linked to each other and intertwined in a complex relation between Vladek, Anja and Artie, linking masterly trauma across generations.

All things considered, the analysis of the representation of trauma in *Maus* will be carried out from the perspective of Trauma Studies. Special attention will be paid to the notion of testimony and its transformation from traumatic memory into narrative memory and how it is represented in this graphic narrative. These traumatic memories include the interaction between Vladek's testimony as a survivor of the Holocaust and the narrative of his son Artie, as a second generation Holocaust survivor, in such a way that the different spatial and temporal layers juxtapose in this aesthetic representation of history and memory. Moreover, the analysis of the different narratives that compose *Maus* which is carried out by this master's dissertation reveals how this graphic narrative is able to convey the unspeakable, that is, trauma.

With this aim in mind, the main objective of this master's dissertation is to analyse how *Maus* portrays testimony, referring to the transformation of traumatic memory into narrative memory. In order to do that, it is crucial to analyse the aesthetic reconstruction of witness and, consequently, history, by means of the multimodal medium of the graphic narrative. This aesthetic reconstruction includes the interaction between image and word to create multiple and juxtaposing temporalities and spatiality. Since *Maus* portrays witness of the Holocaust experience, analysing traumatic memory means to enumerate the ways the annihilation of the individual is strengthened, mostly throughout the enclosure of Jews in the so-called *ur*-spaces such as the ghetto or the *lager*. Last, the analysis of Spiegelman's comic carried out by this master's dissertation proves how the graphic narrative *Maus* has succeeded in bringing witness throughout the conjunction of an aesthetic representation of testimony and a straight transmission of historical facts, without falling into clichés that are so typical of many aesthetic reproductions of the Holocaust experience.

In order to carry out an exhaustive analysis of how trauma is represented in Spiegelman's graphic narrative, this master's dissertation will provide an overview of the

literature available concerning Spiegelman's *Maus* in section 1.2. Section 1.3. will offer a list of the primary and secondary sources used in the analysis of this comic, together with the organization of this master's dissertation.

1.2. State of the Art

Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* has received a considerable amount of criticism, mostly regarding its contribution to the development on comics as a serious medium, and also its reconstruction of history in aesthetic terms. Criticism includes multiple essays, philosophical theses, monographs and critical editions dedicated to Spiegelman's work. In this respect, most of these works are focused on the representation of historical trauma from a postmodernist perspective. However, there are other issues which scholars are concerned with when analysing *Maus*. Therefore, this master's dissertation will offer a brief overview of some works on Spiegelman's *Maus* from different perspectives, as a way of illustration.

To begin with, Hye Su Park (2011) offers an excellent overview of the available bibliography on *Maus* from different perspectives such as Postmodernism, Narratology, Ethics of representation or gender issues of the representation of Jewish identity among others. There, Park highlights how Spiegelman creates an autobiographical work through the interaction between the mediation of Vladek's testimony and Artie's self-reflexive first person narrator (150). Moreover, Park emphasizes the relation between (post)history, which focuses on relations between history and present in transgenerational memory, and (post)memory, so that *Maus* "faces critical questions regarding how to justify and validate fictional representation of factual terms" (152), in a way that it joins history and memory.

The main issues on *Maus* are the depiction of characters as mice, the representation of the Holocaust through the testimony of Vladek or the relation between father and son among others. One of these reviews that this master's dissertation has taken into account is Joshua Brown's "Of Mice and Memory" (1988). In his paper, Brown states that "*Maus* is not a fictional comic-strip, nor is it an illustrated novel: however unusual the form, it is an important historical work that offers historians, and oral historians in particular, a unique approach to narrative construction and interpretation" (91). This allegation highlights the value of *Maus* as a work of oral history, since it is based on the recordings of the interviews with Vladek Spiegelman. Art Spiegelman's duty is then to "'materialize' Vladek's words

and descriptions, transforming them into comprehensible images" (98). He also refers to the use of language in that "Spiegelman's use of language is remarkable in its exactitude and lack of bravado. The language has the peculiar mix of confusion and clarity of spoken words" (96). Brown goes on describing the main themes in *Maus*, supported also by an interview he conducted with Spiegelman in 1987.

On the depiction of characters as animals, it is worth noting Andreas Huyssen's work (2000) on the mimetic representation of the Holocaust by means of this animal imagery, which raises the reader's awareness on how stereotypes are constructed, as the portrayal of Jews as rats in the Nazi propaganda, or the stereotypes evoked in popular tales. So, the mice-and-cat representation cautions the reader against stereotyping the relation between perpetrators and victims, and also it enhances self-reflexivity in Spiegelman's identity construction. Following this line, Gopnik (1987) explores the use of the animal imagery in history and the impact its use had on readers when the first part of *Maus* was published. He states that "Spiegelman's animal metaphor captures something crucial about the psychology of Holocaust survivors", in that "it gives dignity to the sufferers without suggesting that their suffering had any 'meaning'" (33), also reflecting the process of dehumanization survivors went through. Focusing on the comic-strip as the medium chosen to tell this story, Gopnik declares that "the cartoon device in *Maus* has been widely seen not as a way of organizing the horror vividly and effectively, but as a way of denying the horror altogether, of turning remembrance into folktale" (31), referring to the transmission of traumatic memories to next generations. Michael Chaney's "Animal Subjects of the Graphic Novel" (2011) also uses the animal imagery to explore humans' behaviours and their relations in the graphic novels *American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang, and *Epileptic* by David B, apart from Spiegelman's graphic narrative.

For further approaches to the analysis of narrative and its different temporalities in *Maus* that go beyond the scope of this master's dissertation, it is interesting the distinction made by Erin McGlothlin (2003) between the three different narrative strands in Spiegelman's work, based on Genette's narrative classification. The first one corresponds to Vladek's Holocaust experience (at story level), the second one to Artie's retelling of this story (at discourse level), and the third one corresponds to Artie's reshaping of Vladek's story (at narrative level), and his struggle to frame it into a visual narrative.

There is a wide amount of criticism regarding the transgenerational transmission of trauma and its appropriation. Transgenerational trauma is closely related to Hirsch's notion

of "postmemory", defined as "the relation of children of survivors of cultural or collective trauma to their experiences of their parents" ("Projected Memory" 8), experiences that transform into the children's own memories. For instance, Stanislav Kolár's (2013) approach to *Maus* focuses on how this work conveys two different layers of trauma, an indirect one that passes on to Artie, and a personal trauma caused by Anja's suicide. Thus, Kolár asserts that "the transmission of wartime experiences across generations has formed a significant part of the identity of the children of survivors, and has become one of the crucial constituents of their Jewishness" (228). Consequently, Spiegelman's claimed appropriation of traumatic memories becomes undistinguished from his own traumatic memories, shaping his identity. Therein lies the powerful effect that *Maus* has on readers; it is not the plain storytelling of a Holocaust survivor, but the story of how this survivor's telling has forged someone else's personal history.

On another note, Glejzer's essay "*Maus* and the Epistemology of Witness" (2003) centers on the difference between testimony as telling (the narrative) and witnessing as seeing (the drawing), and how *Maus* combines both throughout its multimodal medium. Elmwood's article centers on the transformation of trauma between generations, and how second generation mediates hereditary trauma, producing what Hirsh calls as "hybridized narrative" ("Projected Memory" 16), which consists of a "refusal to appropriate the experiences of others", avoiding an "unethical claiming or a prolonging of the first generation's witness of trauma" (Elmwood 694). Therefore, Elmwood's aim in her article is to analyse "the ways Spiegelman develops his own hybridized narrative in the autobiographical sections of *Maus*" (694). It is interesting to see the way Elmwood analyses how Spiegelman portrays his ghost-brother Richieu, and his failed attempt to represent Anja's narrative, as Anja's death remains in Artie's traumatic memory, thus, the transformation of this trauma into narrative memory has not been accomplished yet.

Martín Sanz focuses on the ethical representation of trauma, especially the visual representation of the Holocaust experience, and how *Maus* successfully combines testimony and image "to generate a literary work based on testimony and sustained on diverse graphic representations[1]" (72). This author also emphasizes the role of *Maus* as a product of postmemory. Michael Rothberg's (1994) article also focuses on the notion of postmemory and the construction of Jewishness in Spiegelman's comic as a second generation witness. There, Rothberg states that *Maus* explores new paths in the "cultural conditions, possibilities

[1] This is a translation from Spanish provided by the author of this master's dissertation.

and constraints of Holocaust representation", and the "inevitable commodification of culture, even Holocaust culture" (670).

Regarding the aesthetic representation of history, James E. Young's work (1998) results in an enriching insight into *Maus* and how it portrays the Holocaust as a vicarious past. Young's essay rests on the assumptions the historian Saul Friedlander makes in his article "Trauma, Transference and 'Working through' in Writing the History of the Shoah" (1992). Friedlander questions "whether at the collective level (…) an event such as the Shoah may, after all the survivors have disappeared, leave traces of a deep memory beyond individual recall, which will defy any attempts to give it meaning" (41). On this respect, Friedlander distinguishes between common memory and deep memory. While common memory "tends to restore or establish coherence, closure and possibly a redemptive stance" (qtd. in Young 666), deep memory "remains essentially inarticulate and unrepresentable, which continues to exist as unresolved trauma just beyond the reach of meaning" (Young 667). Deep memory can be retrieved throughout different modes of representation, including aesthetic enactments of historical events, as *Maus* conveys. This way, both memories are integrated into a single reality. Indeed, Friedlander concludes that both memories are necessary in the historiographic representation of the Holocaust experience, where "the contingent truths of the historian's narrative and the fact of the victims' memory" are embedded into each other (Young 668). This distinction reflects what Friedlander calls "working through", which refers to "the imperative of rendering as truthful an account as documents and testimonials will allow, *without giving in to the temptation of closure*" (52). By closure, Friedlander means "an obvious avoidance of what remains indeterminate, elusive and opaque" (52). In this respect, *Maus*' final panel implies continuity across generations, rather than closure or redemption.

For an analysis of Spiegelman's *Maus* from a gender perspective, it is interesting the work by Nancy Miller (2003) which explores the "gendered self-representation", in a way that "what these male-authored works [Spiegelman's *Maus* and Philip Roth's *Patrimony* among others] have in common is precisely the structure of self-portrayal through the relation to a privileged *other* that characterizes most female-authored autobiography" (44-45), which means that women's testimonies on the Holocaust are minimized in favour of male testimonies, if not erased completely, as it is the case with Anja's testimony. In more general terms, it is worth noting the work of Barbie Zelizer (2001), who centers her studies on the representation and reinforcement of gender norms in photographs of women

survivors. Nonetheless, most works on Spiegelman's *Maus* emphasizes the construction of gender difference through the silenced testimony of Anja and the portrayal of Mala.

Issues regarding the use of language focus on Vladek's use of "broken English" and how Spiegelman mediates and encapsulates Vladek's words into the different panels, which are reduced to the essential information. One of these works is Alan Rosen's "The Language of Survival: English metaphor in Spiegelman's *Maus*" (1995). There, Rosen poses how English functions as a means for Vladek's survival in different situations (his skills in speaking different languages saves him in many occasions). The use of language also reflects Spiegelman's formal concerns on the representation of history, since the author "represents the complicated entwining of the past and the present by 'packing' the tight spaces of panels" (Chute "'The Shadow…'" 202). Miller (2003) also reflects on the difference of language between the recording interviews with Vladek (available at *MetaMaus* DVD), and the reinterpretation of his words by Artie, so that "in 'distilling' his father's language to fit the comic strip, the son fractured the father's tongue" (55). Spiegelman's decision to adjust Vladek's discourse into a more standard English is a clear example of how testimony is a negotiated process between the speaker and the listener, explained later on in this master's dissertation.

1.3. Methodology and Structure

The methodology adopted in this master's dissertation focuses mainly on a descriptive analysis from Trauma Studies perspective of the primary source, Art Spiegelman's *Maus*. Nevertheless, *MetaMaus* (2011) will be taken into consideration as a source for supporting the analysis carried out in chapter 4. As explained above, this work consists of a series of issues which deal with Spiegelman's background, his main influences and first works, his relation with his parents and with other survivors of the Holocaust, and some reflections on how he defines his own work, his strategies to convey his father's testimony and other issues.

MetaMaus includes a DVD divided into two differentiated parts. The first one, entitled "The Complete Maus", is divided into three subsections. The first one offers an introduction to Voyager's design of the DVD (led by Bob Stein), adding more content to the printed version. The second subsection provides several sketches and drafts, together with some explanatory audios of *The Complete Maus*, page by page. This way, the reader can

trace the crafting of *Maus* as an arduous process as a result of a series of decisions on form and content. The third subsection submits some excerpts from a 1993 interview called "Art on Art". The audio files are accompanied by photos, sketches and drawings from other artists who influenced directly on the creation of *Maus*.

The second part of the DVD, entitled "MetaMeta", contains two main sections. The first one, called "Supplements", is in turn divided into seven subsections. The first one displays unedited audios and their corresponding transcripts of Vladek's interviews (almost four hours of interviews). The second subsection shows interviews with women who met Anja in the camp and after (this is also included at the end of the printed version of *MetaMaus*). These interviews are accompanied by some photos of Anja and her family before the war. The next section conveys a fully-developed research on the genealogy and family history of Spiegelman family, made by Simon Spiegelman, before and after the war. The fourth subsection provides a 44-minute footage made by Art and Françoise when they visited Auschwitz a second time in 1987. The fifth subsection offers Art's notebooks of *Maus*, which contain the original outline of the different chapters and pages, along with some sketches and the scripts for each page, made from 1983 to 1990. Last section compiles over 7,500 sketches and drafts of *Maus*.

The second section, entitled "Supplementary Supplements", contains different essays on *Maus*. First, Weschler's (1986) "Art's father, Vladek's son" offers an interview with Art Spiegelman after the publication of the first part of *Maus*. There, Spiegelman touches some themes such as his childhood and the relation with his parents, the problem with Spielberg's cartoon movie *An American Tail*, and the use of the animal imagery.

The second essay corresponds to Chute's "'The Shadow of a Past Time': History and Graphic Representation in *Maus*" (2006), which centers on the narrative form of *Maus* and how it represents in aesthetic terms history as it is the Holocaust experience. Chute provides the reader with valuable insights on the representation of trauma in comics in general, and the representation of traumatic history in Spiegelman's *Maus* in particular. Therefore, this master's dissertation follows Chute's interesting thoughts on these issues.

The next essay corresponds to "Cats, Mice and History: the Avant-Garde of the Comic Strip" (1985), written by the music critic for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* Ken Tucker. This paper centers on the reception of *Maus*, Part I, and on the intellectual background of Spiegelman, which comes from the 1960s underground comics, led by Robert Crumb, one of the founding fathers of this movement.

Finally, the reader is provided with three short essays by Art Spiegelman. The essay entitled "Looney Tunes, Zionism and the Jewish Question" (1989) relates the inspiration for drawing mice, and the representation of Jewishness in his work. The essay "MAD youth" (1992) centers on the figure of Anja throughout the description of a photo where Anja and a 12-year-old Artie appear, the latter holding a MAD magazine. The last Spiegelman's essay, entitled "Little Orphan Annie's Eyeballs" (1994), focuses on the relation between language and comics. He also questions the use of new vocabulary to refer to new realities, instead of changing the existing ones (as is the case with "comic book" and "graphic novel").

Last, the DVD also provides readers with a broadcast interview with Art Spiegelman, conducted by Michael Silverblatt in 1992, shortly after the publication of *Maus*, part II. In this interview, they comment on different issues such as the status of comics as an entertaining medium (especially, superheroes comics), or the architecture of a comic, which Spiegelman defines as a building with windows.

Secondary sources will be used to support the theoretical framework and also to support the analysis of *Maus* and its main elements. Thus, Marianne Hirsch's "Family Pictures: *Maus*, Mourning, and Postmemory" (1992) and the notion of postmemory in relation to the transmission of trauma across generations, widely applied to photographs, will be paramount in the analysis of *Maus*. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (1992) and their work on testimony and witness as an essential element in the construction of history will be crucial in the definition of what testimony is and how it is constructed through the interaction between the speaker and the listener. Cathy Caruth's *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) will be taken into account as the basis for the definition of trauma and how it works on memory, along with Geoffrey Hartman (1995), whose work is centered on the representation of trauma in literature, and Dominick LaCapra (1998, 2001) and his work on history and memory and the distinction between structural and historical trauma. Finally, Anne Whitehead's *Trauma Fiction* (2004) supposes a refreshing approach to Trauma Studies applied to literary works. These and other authors will be consulted in order to define trauma, witness and testimony, and the transformation of traumatic memory into narrative memory by means of fictional and non-fictional artworks. Sigmund Freud's notion of "the uncanny" (1919) will be also defined, as it is closely related to trauma. There, the uncanny will be analysed in relation to the different narratives that compose *Maus*, in the creation of symbolic spaces and the interaction between aesthetic elements and history.

Regarding comics as a medium, and particularly, graphic narrative, sources will be mainly from Hillary Chute's (2006, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2016) valuable approach to this issue, as well as Art Spiegelman's (2011) ideas about comics in general and his own contribution to this medium in particular. Some of the authors cited in section 1.2. will be also taken into account in the analysis of *Maus*. In order to analyse the process of annihilation that the Jews suffered during the Nazi regime, and the way it is represented in *Maus*, the sociological approach to the Holocaust made by Zygmunt Bauman in his work *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989) will be considered.

All things considered, the structure that is going to be followed in this master's dissertation contains the following points. In Chapter 2, a brief theoretical introduction to Trauma Studies will be given, describing the main concepts that are going to be borne in mind in the analysis of *Maus*, such as the definition of trauma, the importance of testimony in the transformation of traumatic memory into narrative memory, the forge of collective memory in the Holocaust experience and the subsequent transgenerational trauma in second generation survivors. Freud's notion of "the uncanny" and the concept of the *doppelgänger* will be used in the analysis of *Maus'* narratives.

Chapter 3 will centered on an introduction to Spiegelman's *Maus* as a graphic narrative. First, it will be displayed a brief overview of the definition of comics, especially on graphic narrative, its main elements and its representation of trauma. Second, it will be provided a brief preamble to the origin of Spiegelman's *Maus* and its representation of traumatic memory. Next, an overview of Art Spiegelman's main influences in the crafting of *Maus* will be offered. Third, it will be commented on the problems that arose when the first part was published in 1980, regarding its classification as non-fiction or the representation of the Holocaust experience in comic format. To finish with, the controversy generated by the portrayal of characters as animals will be explored.

Chapter 4 will be devoted to the analysis of Spiegelman's *Maus*, from Trauma Studies perspective. First, an exhaustive analysis of the narrative of Vladek, Artie and Anja will be disclosed, including an analysis on how Spiegelman reflects in his graphic narrative the process of creating *Maus* itself, along with his fears regarding the legitimacy of comics as a valuable medium to convey trauma, and the appropriation of Vladek's traumatic memories. Second, the process of annihilation of the individual carried out by the Nazi regime from Vladek's personal perspective will be dealt with. And third, The analysis will go on with the exploration of this process of annihilation of the Jew community by the Nazi

regime through *ur*-spaces, or spaces outside society, such as the ghetto, the *lager* and the train as the means that connects these places.

Finally, the last section of this master's dissertation will provide some conclusions on the ways *Maus*, by means of a combination of aesthetic and empirical elements, is able to transform traumatic memory, especially Vladek's testimony, into narrative memory. Insights on the forge of trauma in Vladek and Artie and how it interacts at different levels (spaces and temporalities) will be disclosed, as well as a necessity for a deeper analysis of *Maus* from a Psychoanalysis perspective, especially applied to the creation of spaces and the portrayal of absence. Further research following the methodology used in this master's dissertation and how it can be applied to other graphic narratives will be proposed.

2. TRAUMA STUDIES

The main theoretical framework of this master's dissertation is Trauma Studies. Therefore, this section will offer an overview of the notions of trauma and traumatic memory in a broader sense. Special attention will be paid on how traumatic memory is transformed into narrative memory by means of testimony and the mechanisms involved in that process. To do so, the main issues concerning Trauma Studies will be analysed following Cathy Caruth's (1995) valuable introduction to this approach.

Trauma Studies are defined as the corpus of academic research on traumatic events and their effects on people (Baldick). From its beginning in the field of psychology with the acknowledgement in the 1980s of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) produced by a traumatic event, these studies have spread to other fields such as literature, history, philosophy, and others such as films, documentaries, journals and diaries, interviews, photography and graphic narrative. Their main topics are memory, forgetting and narrative, widely applied to many different traumatic experiences such as sexual abuse, witnessing death or war experiences among others, being the Holocaust experience one of the most prolific areas. In literature, the most influential work has been Caruth's work *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995), which is considered the milestone in the beginnings of Trauma Studies in the early 1990s. Caruth's aim is to examine how trauma questions established notions of experience, history and temporalities. Caruth bases her definition of trauma on the psychiatric approach to Post-traumatic Syndrome Disorder, developed during the 1980s when this disorder was included for the first time in the diagnostic canon of the

medical and psychiatric professions, as a consequence of a sustained campaign by Vietnam veterans (Whitehead 4). Thus, trauma is defined as "a response to an event outside the range of usual human experience" (Caruth 3), that is, "the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it", since "to be traumatised is precisely to be *possessed* by an image or event" (Caruth 4-5). This possession means that, although images of traumatic reconstruction remain accurate and precise, they stand inaccessible to conscious recall and control. In other words, the image of the traumatic experience has been split from its original content or meaning, namely, its narrative, so that the person is unable to integrate the whole experience (that consists of both the image and its content, its significance) into her/his own personal history. For this reason, traumatic events resist narrative structures and linear temporalities as "the traumatised carry an impossible history within them" (Caruth 5). Due to the split between the image of the experience and its content, this wordless image haunts the individual when triggered by a later event that, somehow, the unconscious connects with the previous one. This is what Caruth explains as the *belatedness* of the traumatic memory (Caruth 6). Caruth's notion of belatedness is based on Freud's term *Nachträglichkeit*, translated as "deferred action" or "afterwardness". This term refers to the ways in which certain experiences, impressions and memories that are not fully acknowledged at the time they occur, are revisited later in time as a consequence of linking them with new experiences that provoke an intense emotional crisis.

With this in mind, Whitehead stresses how fiction and non-fiction is capable of narrativizing trauma even if it resists language or representation (3). This is possible through the transformation of traumatic memories into narrative memory, crucial in testimony as one of the most suitable forms to conceptualise past experiences and incorporate them into one's personal history. Through this process of transformation, traumatic discourses characterised by disruptive narratives, repetitions, the collapse of temporality and chronology and indirectness can be converted into coherent and linear temporal narratives. Thus, in order to give relief to the traumatised mind, this process of conceptualising the traumatic experience is decisive, so that this memory can be incorporated into conscious memory (Whitehead 3).

As suggested above, testimony is decisive in the transformation of traumatic memory into narrative memory in order to incorporate that memory into one's personal history. Testimony is defined as "personal or documentary evidence or attestation in support of a fact or statement" (Baldick). From the perspective of Trauma Studies and psychology, the

concept of testimony has been explored by Felman and Laub in their work *Testimony* (1992), a text that focuses on the Holocaust experience, presented as a "crisis of witnessing" (xvii) where the traumatic event is erased by its own witness. Indeed, within the Holocaust experience, testimony became crucial during the trial against Adolf Eichmann, a former Nazi official who fled to Argentina and lived there for almost twenty years until his arrest in 1961. This case acknowledged the importance of witnessing and recalling these experiences through the survivors' testimony.

In *Testimony*, Laub – a psychiatrist and also a Holocaust survivor – differentiates three levels of witnessing. The first one is placed at the level of being a witness to oneself, proper of autobiographical testimony, which depends on the survivor's cognitive development at the moment of the traumatic events. The second level is placed at the level of being a witness to the testimonies of others, where the listener plays a crucial role in accompanying the survivor in his struggle to narrativize his experience. And the third level is placed at the level of being a witness to the process of witnessing itself, which refers to the double task of the listener or interviewer who alternates "between closer and then retreating from the experience – with the sense that there is a truth that both are trying to reach" (Laub 62), so that testimony is ultimately a collaborative process in the searching for the truth.

Testimony is triggered by the necessity of telling by the survivor, and the subsequent necessity of others to know. The reason for this necessity of being acknowledged is due to the fact that the witnesses sometimes "become victims of distorted memory" that "contaminate their daily lives" (Laub 64), distorting also self-appreciation of themselves, to an extent that they perceive themselves as perpetrators and not as victims. Moreover, this inability to verbalise one's story – that is, to being witness to oneself – favours annihilation of the individual, one of the main goals in the Nazi administration with respect to Jews.

Similarly, Laub argues that the process of dehumanization carried out in the Holocaust experience destroys the conceptualisation of the *Other*, defined as the counterpart one is responsible for, in such a way that "there was no longer an *Other* to which one could say 'thou' in the hope of being heard, of being recognised as a subject, of being answered" (66). This leads to silence for the victims, as they are transformed into objects. Therefore, Laub redefines the concept of testimony as "the process by which the narrator reclaims his position as a witness", rebuilding "the internal 'thou' and thus the possibility of a witness or a listener inside himself" (69). In other words, the first step in this transformation of

traumatic memory into narrative memory is to verbalise it to oneself, so that this "wordless" image, as mentioned before, can be assigned a meaning.

Testimony does not only belong to oneself as both witness and listener, but it is shaped through the interaction between the speaker and an external listener, in a dynamic and creative process of reconstructing the past events so that they become a coherent discourse. Since there exists an impossibility of telling – so silence dominates – this process needs for an active involvement on the part of the listener.

As indicated hereinbefore, testimony is the process of recalling a memory from past events. Memory remains traumatic, which means, wordless and unspeakable, until it is put into discourse, so it is transformed into a narrative. In this respect, Pierre Janet's (1889) research on traumatic memory and its effects on consciousness is crucial to deal with memory in Trauma Studies. Janet, one of the founding fathers of psychology and a contemporary of Freud, distinguishes two types of memory. The first one is called traumatic memory, which describes a confrontation with a shocking event which does not fit into prior frameworks of understanding, so that the traumatic experience is not fully integrated at the time it occurs, and consequently, the event remains unchanged, returning lately (Whitehead 140). These memories also become dissociated from conscious awareness and voluntary control, but, once they are verbalised, they are adapted to present circumstances (van der Kolk & van der Hart 160-3). As well as Freud claimed, Janet insists that in order to heal from this traumatic event and incorporate it into one's conscious historical life, the traumatic memory must be transformed into narrative memory, into a discourse that is transmitted and shared with a given listener, in such a way that narrative memory is seen as a social act in which the listener serves as the final interpreter of this consciously elaborated discourse.

As Whitehead observes, memory as narration also differs from truth-telling in that narrative memory makes possible a form of self-understanding although it is not entirely based on empirical evidence (42). What follows from Whitehead's assertion is that testimonies, although they are expected to reflect some empirical evidence, are nonetheless highly subjective. Indeed, testimony, once verbalised, is transformed into a form of narrative that is composed both of empirical evidence, distorted memories and moral judgements without losing its referential truth. In Caruth's words, "for history to be a history of trauma means that it is referential precisely to the extent that it is not fully perceived as it occurs; a history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence" (8). This means that testimony does not belong entirely to a purely objective account of events, even from a

personal perspective, but memory is constructed around other elements that do not reflect real time and place. As the traumatic memory loses its anchor to a particular time and space, it also produces what Laub calls a "collapse of witnessing", which refers to the impossibility of approaching empirical reality, so that new forms of approaching to memory are necessary. These new forms include an active participation of the listener, as testimony needs "not just to be *known*, but to be *read*" (xv).

Communication of traumatic memory implies both the transmission of this traumatic experience by the speaker and the reception of testimony by both the speaker herself/himself and the listener. In this way, trauma can fulfil its integration into one's own and others' personal history through verbalisation or the conversion of traumatic memory into narrative memory. However, this integration carries also a danger that "may lie not in what it cannot understand, but in that it understands *too much*" (Caruth 153). This "understanding too much" is what the filmmaker Claude Lanzmann calls "obscenity" in the process of understanding the impossibility or what remains outside the conventional parameters of how reality *should* be. This impossibility is perceived as a gap. Nonetheless, the process of understanding that forms part of the dialogue between speaker and listener helps a kind of "reconciliation of two worlds – the one that was brutally destroyed and the one that is – that are different and will always remain so" (Laub 73).

This dialogue is not exclusively private, but it belongs to the collective memory, as is the case with the Holocaust experience. Hence, this "crisis of truth", as Caruth calls it (6), is produced by the return of the traumatic memory against one's own will, and it "extends beyond the individual to affect the ways in which historical experience can be accessed at a cultural level" (Whitehead 7). Since most historical experiences are conceptualised and transmitted in ethical terms, testimony plays a crucial role in this transmission of ethical values, as Felman and Laub confirm in their 1992 work. For this reason, the listener bears a dual responsibility, that is, to receive the testimony, and, consequently, making it possible the conversion of traumatic memory into narrative memory, and also to avoid appropriating the story as his/her own. In relation to this, Geoffrey Hartman's work on the reader's reception and interpretation of traumatic memories (1995) is essential to deal with the interaction between the text and an active reader who constructs meaning out of the text.

From all this, it follows that the reading process conveys an ethical response, as Felman and Laub acknowledge as a fundamental step in dealing with collective traumatic memory. In this respect, the Holocaust experience is considered one of the most influential

collective memories that has shaped the Western culture. The Holocaust "remains a contemporary concern (…) because the event itself has come to represent a rupture in historical continuity, problematising the relationship between past and present" (King 94). The Holocaust, as traumatic memory, is reluctant to conventional historical, cultural and autobiographical narratives, so, in order to approach it, it is necessary to explore new modes of referentiality. These new modes take as a base the fact that "traumatic knowledge cannot be fully communicated or retrieved without distortion" (Whitehead 84). Notwithstanding, Caruth points out that there is not a single approach to these narratives, as "we face the difficulty of listening and responding to traumatic stories in a way that does not lose their impact, which does not reduce them to clichés or turn them all into versions of the same story" (viii). Hence, one mode to transmit traumatic stories is by means of an aesthetic approach to them, being the graphic narrative a clear example.

The transmission of the Holocaust experience as collective memory is crucial to understand the so-called transgenerational trauma, so that second generation Holocaust survivors have to deal with their parents' traumatic memories that are transmitted to them as children. In this respect, Rashkin (1988) observes that:

> Should the child have parents 'with secrets' (. . .) he will receive from them a gap in the unconscious, an unknown, unrecognized knowledge (. . .). The buried speech of the parent becomes a dead gap, without a burial place, in the child. This unknown phantom comes back from the unconscious to haunt and leads to phobias, madness and obsessions. Its effects can persist through several generations and determine the fate of an entire family line. (39)

Consequently, in many occasions, the verbalization of the Holocaust experience of parents to little children is unattainable, due to the disturbing feelings these experiences disclose, which are based on the annihilation and destruction of the individual. However, once children become adults, this dialogue can be settled only if both parts are willing to cope with the impossibility. In this dialogue between parents and children, the children's task as listeners is double, as explained before, that is, to express sympathy towards the speaker's sufferings, while at the same time, the listener remains distant, acknowledging the "otherness" of the experience without appropriating or over-identifying it as her own. However, in this kind of dialogue, appropriation of the other's traumatic memory may be unavoidable, as these children have grown up and, consequently, internalised the fears and nightmares of their parents in subconsciously and dissociative multiple ways.

Accordingly, LaCapra considers that history and memory are two supplementary viewpoints in trauma that interrogate each other constantly, in a dialectical exchange where

there is no place for closure (*History and Memory* 20). This author also distinguishes between structural and historical trauma (*Writing History*); whereas structural trauma deals with transhistorical trauma, which spreads across generations because it is "not related to a particular event to which we are all subject" (Whitehead 13), specific historical trauma deals with the individual loss. In the context of the Holocaust, structural and historical trauma are intertwined in such a way that trauma surpasses the individual to create a historical memory formed by a myriad of individual experiences. As trauma conveys what Caruth calls "belatedness", the traumatic memory travels across generations, provoking an over-identification and the consequent inability to acknowledge the *other* in the traumatic memory, taking it as one's own. LaCapra warns that second generation survivors can take the Holocaust "as a founding trauma and thus a paradoxical, perhaps impossible source of meaning and identity" (*History and Memory* 177). Transgenerational trauma, thus, disconnects totally from its prime experience that caused the traumatic memory, making it almost impossible to turn into narrative memory. This is why testimony is crucial for transforming the traumatic memory into narrative memory carried out by the initial traumatised person. Otherwise, trauma navigates from generation to generation like a "phantom" (Whitehead 14), as the ghost of the lost child haunts Art's relation with his parents in *Maus*. Besides, this phantomic memory that haunts the second generation is what Marianne Hirsch calls postmemory ("Family Pictures" 8), defined as that memory that remains distant from the event that provoked this traumatic memory, yet it possesses a deep personal connection to that moment. Therefore, postmemory is a construction that comes from both narration and imagination.

Another issue is that Trauma Studies have been influenced by other disciplines such as psychoanalysis. One key term developed within this field and closely related to trauma is "the uncanny" (*Das Unheimlich* in German). This term was studied in psychology, first by Jentsch in 1906, and later developed by Freud in his 1919 essay published in *Imago*, in which he analysed Hoffmann's short story "The Sandman", first published in 1816. Freud defines this term as "the class of terrifying which leads back to something long known to us", in which "the familiar can become uncanny and frightening" (220). Thus, the uncanny refers to what was once considered as familiar (Ger. *Heimlic*) for an individual has now turned into something alien (*Unheimlich*) and disturbing due to the process of repression, provoking horror in the experiencer. Freud adds that "what is uncanny is frightening precisely because it is *not* known and familiar" (220). Freud asserts that the term "uncanny" is ambivalent in

that it simultaneously implies two contradictory senses; what is considered familiar or known usually belongs to the private sphere of home, so this privacy is secretly kept. In turn, it is this secrecy that transforms this familiarity into something unknown to others (including oneself at some point). In Freud's words, "this uncanny is in reality nothing new or foreign, but something familiar and old-established in the mind that has been estranged only by the process of repression" (241). This ambivalence in the uncanny is linked to the notion of the double or *doppelgänger*, a concept originally developed by Otto Rank (1914). In this respect, Freud considers that this double is a creation shaped during childhood, where "it wore a more friendly aspect" (236), but now it presents itself as frightening and unfamiliar. This double allows the individual to see oneself as both the subject and the object of one's gaze, so that it grants self-observation. The uncanny is also characterised by the relation of repetition-compulsion with the traumatic event, unconsciously repeated so that it can provoke loss of memory or amnesia.

The uncanny also operates in the collective memory. In relation to the political changes that took place at the beginning of the 20th century in Europe, Freud suggests that these changes can provoke an overall sense of "unhomeliness", in such a way that "the site of the uncanny was no longer confined to the house or the city, but more properly extended to the no man's land between the trenches, or the fields of ruins left after bombardment" (Vidler 7). Moreover, this unhomeliness can be created by the constitution of spaces - both physically and symbolically constructed - such as the ghetto, the trains for cattle or the concentration camps in the case of the Holocaust experience. These non-spaces (or *ur*-spaces) erected outside legitimated spaces, yet in the middle of them, but hidden from the rest of the population, serve in the process of complete reification and annihilation of its inhabitants. Moreover, these non-spaces shape the void and silence, also key elements in the systematic destruction of a whole community. These *ur*-spaces are going to be analysed in detail in the following sections.

To sum up, even though trauma is originally defined as the inability to assimilate a traumatic event and, consequently, be inaccessible to conscious recall, its posterior integration into one's personal history is possible through its narrativization. Testimony has been proved to be essential in this reconstruction of the traumatic event so that it can be transformed into narrative memory. To accomplish this change, memory has to work on different paths, including a non-empirical, aesthetic remaking of the traumatic past. This remaking takes places through the social interaction between the witness and the listener,

since all personal memory forms part of a wider collective memory, as it is the Holocaust experience. This interaction, in turn, highlights how trauma is unconsciously transmitted from one generation to another in an attempt to find an anchor to cling to. *Maus* has been proved to be this anchor for both Vladek and Artie.

Next chapter will present an overview of the notion of graphic narrative in general, its main elements and how it represents trauma. Next, the origin of Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale,* together with a brief commentary on its main characteristics that makes it a memory site will be offered. Then, the sources for inspiration in the creation of *Maus* will be described. Special attention will be paid to the depiction of characters wearing animal masks due to its aesthetic and cultural implications.

3. ART SPIEGELMAN'S *MAUS*: *A SURVIVOR'S TALE*

This chapter will be divided into five subsections. First, an overview of the main theoretical terms concerning comics will be explained, as well as an introduction to the representation of trauma in this multimodal medium. Secondly, Spiegelman's work will be introduced paying special attention to its main elements, and its representation of testimony and witnessing. Thirdly, the main influences in Spiegelman's work in general and the references used in the creation of *Maus* in particular will be listed. Fourthly, the publication of *Maus*, its reception worldwide and its repercussion in literature in general, and comics in particular will be examined. Finally, the animal imagery that characterises *Maus* and marked its controversial reception will be dealt with in detail.

3.1. Graphic Narrative as a multimodal medium

As said above, trauma studies are characterised by their versatility across different disciplines such as psychology, history, and fiction. However, it has been less addressed in comics, and especially, in non-fiction graphic narrative, as is the case with Spiegelman's *Maus*. This subsection will offer a brief overview of the concept of comics as a multimodal medium, and particularly graphic narrative, considered as non-fiction comic, in contrast to the widespread term "graphic novel", which does not distinguish between fictional and non-fictional narratives. Special attention will be given to the representation of traumatic

historical events in the graphic narrative, bearing in mind Spiegelman's *Maus* as its main exponent.

Comics is defined by Chute ("Comics as Literature?" 452) as "a hybrid word-and-image form[2]", where verbal and visual narratives interact in temporal and spatial spaces represented through panels that alternate between gutters or empty spaces. Besides, comics share with new media (including digital media such as videogames) the ability to "woven stories unfold across time and space" (Chute and Jagoda 1), and how they actively involve the reader in the creation of meaning. The term "graphic novel" has been used as an umbrella notion to englobe both fiction and non-fiction comics. However, Chute prefers the term 'graphic narrative' to refer to a non-fiction book-length work in the medium of comics.

The term "graphic novel" appeared for the first time during the second half of the 20th century. It was a term coined by Richard Kyle in 1964 and first addressed to Will Eisner's work *A Contract to God* (1978). Modern comics emerge from previous 1930s comic strips, which consisted of short stories published in magazines and newspapers, as instalments or series. Since then, comics have been developed into more creative and complex productions. Chute also pinpoints the incorporation of verbal content as the main distinction between comics and other pictorial narratives. Thus, the first pictures together with panel borders trace back into the beginning of the 19th century with the work of Rodolphe Töpffer. Later on, Fenton Outcault popularised this format with his comic strip *The Yellow Kid* in America, first published in 1895.

Furthermore, comics as a form is conventionally defined by "its commodity status (…), a mass-market product, easily consumed by a wide range of readers, none of them demanding high quality literature" (Chute "Comics as Literature?" 454). Thus, while conventional fiction is considered a highbrow aesthetic work, comics are there to entertain. This vision changed in the 1960s with the so-called underground comics, experimental narratives that challenge the mainstream industry. As Chute refutes, "out of this 'underground' culture, today's most enduring graphic narratives took shape – serious, imaginative works that explored social and political realities by stretching the boundaries of

[2] Chute refers to *comics* "as a medium, and so when appropriate I give the term a singular verb. I also refer to people who create as "authors" and "cartoonists", switching between the two, as they themselves do" ("Comics Form…" 108). Nonetheless, this master's dissertation has opted for maintaining the term *comics* as a plural noun.

a historically mass medium" ("Comics as Literature?" 456). Art Spiegelman is a clear exponent of this underground comics movement.

Nowadays, Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics* (1993) is considered the first comic that theorises about comics. McCloud, one of the leading figures in comics theory, emphasizes that the key element that relates time and space in comics is the panel. He argues that "comics panels fracture both time and space, offering a jagged, staccato rhythm of unconnected moments" (98, 99, 67). The gutter is also crucial to what remains silent between panels, as "it plays host to what is at the very heart of comics, and that it is the only element of comics that is not duplicated in any other medium" (66). Chute also adds that the gutters "paradoxically suggest stillness and movement" (*Disaster Drawn* 16), functioning as the configuration of a "psychic order outside of the realm of symbolization, a space that refuses to resolve the interplay of elements of absence and presence" (*Disaster Drawn* 35). In other words, the interaction between the panels and the gutter moves the narrative forward in space, while it moves the narrative back and forth in time. This relation between space and time in comics depends on the reader's active reading. Chatman calls this process "reading out" (41) in a way that it is the reader who brings coherence and cohesion to the narrative, who decodes comics, as Spiegelman suggests.

In short, comics are based on the "representation of time as space on the page" (Chute & Devoken 769). Comics are both handwritten and drawn, they are mass cultural art that feeds from both low and high art indexes and references, and, most importantly, comics do not merely synthesize verbal and visual narratives, but they create a cross-discursive medium, since "in comics, the images do not necessarily illustrate the text but can comprise a separate narrative thread; verbal and visual narratives do not simply blend together" (Chute "'The Shadow…'" 222). That is, the signifiers and signified that images and words construct in each panel are sustained in a reciprocal rapport. Furthermore, Spiegelman compares the form of comics with the windows of a building (*MetaMaus* 167), and, similarly, Ware suggests that "you can look at a comic as you would look at a structure that you could turn around in your mind and see all sides of at once" (qtd. in Raeburn 25).

Regarding the representation of trauma in graphic narrative, Chute's *Disaster Drawn* (2016) presents an account on "historical, formal and theoretical context for contemporary comics that seek to document histories of war and disaster" (7). In her book, Chute traces the origins of graphic narrative as witnessing of war and disaster back to the 17th century Callot's paintings about the Thirty Years' War, and Goya's *Desastres de la Guerra* series.

She argues that the two great wars played a crucial role in the development of sensational journalism, as many fictional comics recreate alternative histories to inspire patriotic feelings.

In *Disaster Drawn*, Chute defines graphic narrative as a form of witnessing or documentary that challenges conventional classification, so that they can pose some problems when classifying them as non-fictional biography or fictional (1). Indeed, as this author asserts, "despite the numerous studies on trauma and visuality, there has been no book-length work focusing on comics in this context, though there are numerous books on, say, trauma and photography" (*Disaster Drawn* 268). Thus, the relation between the visual representation of traumatic historical events and comics still lacks a well-established theoretical framework. Chute observes that "comics can express life stories, especially traumatic ones, powerfully because it makes literal the presence of the past by disrupting spatial and temporal conventions to overlay or palimpsest past and present" ("Comics Form…" 109). In this respect, comics, which call attention to the representation of histories and historiographies, "demonstrate that accuracy is not the opposite of creative invention" (Chute *Disaster Drawn* 2). In representing trauma, comics question history, war histories in particular, in such a way that comics express trauma ethically. Chute also stresses the fact that "the syntactic organization of comics – its empty gutters between panels and its logic of arrangement – challenges traditional notions of chronology, linearity and casualty" (*Disaster Drawn* 4). Consequently, comics also take the risk of representation, as Chute states, as they attempt to represent the unrepresentable in the interplay between absence (that rests in the gutter, the empty space between panels) and presence (the panels as such). Accordingly, Chute considers that Spiegelman's *Maus* "represents the accreted, shifting 'layers' of historical apprehension not only through language but also through the literal, spatial layering of comics, enabling the presence of the past to become radically legible on the page" ("'The Shadow…'" 212). In other words, *Maus* is also representative of how comics portray time through space.

It follows from this that drawing is not just an act of mimesis, but a new artifact, a representation of its own. Moreover, the focus is not on what to represent but on how to do it. This fact is present in the analysis of *Maus* that Chute offers in her work. As she observes, *Maus* "troubles the link between the traditionally conceived categories of documentation and artistic practice in particularly obvious ways because of the visual abstraction of its animal metaphor" (*Disaster Drawn* 18). Similarly, Hirsch ("Family Pictures" 26) points out that

comics intermingles documentary and aesthetic readings in multiple ways, so, unlike witnessing expected in trials, witnessing in comics is narratively elaborated, so that there is not a clear cut between empirical evidence or distortion of memory in both conscious and unconscious ways to convey the same but, at the same time, a slightly and unique testimony among thousands, especially, when dealing with the Holocaust experience.

In general terms, comics offer an alternative path in representing trauma, in which temporalities and spaces are easily juxtaposed in such a way that they succeed in representing how memory works. Therefore, *Maus* proposes an aesthetic approach to memory and history regarding the Holocaust experience.

3.2. Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and its representation of traumatic memory

The first draft of *Maus* was first published in 1972, in the single-issue underground comic magazine *Funny Animals*, as a three-page comic strip. It tells some of the events that took place in a nameless ghetto just before being deported to *Mauschwitz*, narrated by Vladek to his son, a little boy called Mickey. The comic ends when Vladek and Anja are deported to the concentration camp. The narrator, unable to continue his story, says to his son that "I can tell you no more now", since what happened next was already part of Vladek's traumatic memory, so he feels unease to continue the story. However, these traumatic memories Spiegelman's father kept were later released and interpreted in the long version of this comic strip. It is also worth noting how the second narrator changes his name from Mickey (an allusion to Disney's Mickey Mouse) to Artie, a character much more closely related to the figure of Spiegelman. Like the long version of this comic, characters are depicted as mice.

Spiegelman's long version of *Maus* is considered a non-fiction narrative that conveys testimony, in particular witnessing the Holocaust experience. Shortly, *Maus* reproduces the memories of Vladek Spiegelman, the author's father, during the Second World War. Art Spiegelman stresses that:

> The subject of *Maus* is the retrieval of memory and ultimately, the creation of memory. The story of *Maus* isn't just the story of a son having problems with his father, and it's not just the story of what a father lived through. It's about a cartoonist trying to envision what his father went through. It's about choices being made, of finding what one can tell, and what one can reveal, and what one can reveal beyond what one knows one is revealing. (*MetaMaus* 73)

As Spiegelman poses, *Maus* is the interaction between Vladek's memories of the war and Artie's memories of the interviews with his father when writing *Maus*, along with his memories after the publication of the first part of *Maus* and its unexpected success, and

Vladek's death. Accordingly, time and space fuse into each other in the narratives of Vladek and Artie, translated to the different panels that are at the same time connected and disconnected through the gutter. As Young explains, in *Maus* and in comics in general, "the panels convey information in both vertical and horizontal movements of the eye", so that "the roundabout method of memorytelling is captured in ways unavailable to straighter narrative. It is the narrative that tells both the story of events and its own unfolding as narrative" (672-3). This visual interaction between past and present time and space is one of the fundaments that differentiates comics and novels.

Maus is the attempt to connect memories that bump from the past to the present and the way round, from one traumatic memory to another. Indeed, *Maus* does not only deal with the Holocaust experience through the testimony of a survivor, but it also tells the traumatic memory of loss and shame; loss for those who died during the war, including Vladek and Anja's first child, Richieu; loss for Anja's suicide without leaving any note; shame for surviving while thousands did not; shame for being the mere substitute of the beloved child. Nonetheless, although *Maus* relates the personal experiences of a single person, the weight of this graphic narrative rests upon its account on a historical event that shapes Western collective memory, or what Vladek refers to as "a tragedy among tragedies" (*Maus* 111).

Maus, as a graphic narrative, has the power to convey traumatic memory since it is capable of representing the unrepresentable in multiple layers thanks to the visual interaction that goes beyond a reiteration of the text (Spiegelman *MetaMaus* 168). In this respect, comics are more related to pictography rather than to pure illustration or painting, in such a way that "the work that actually works best deploys information visually to give you the necessary signs and not too much more" (Spiegelman *MetaMaus* 168). Spiegelman stresses the ability of comics in condensing the essential information into the minimal space, so that they lend direct communication and clarity, so that comics are "made aware of different times inhabiting the same space" (qtd. in Silverblatt 35, qtd. in Chute "'The Shadow…'" 202). In order to get this, comics must find a balance in the visual load in each panel in order not to interfere with the process of reading. Two clear examples of this condensation can be appreciated on pages 86 and 239 respectively in *Maus*, which will be analysed later in depth. As can be deduced from these examples, Spiegelman reflects on the close relation comics establish between memory and space. As Spiegelman points out, "you've gotta boil everything down to its essence in comix (…). It's a great medium for artists who can't remember much anyway" (*MetaMaus* 12). As Vladek's memories are fragmentary and, in

some occasions, contradictory, these are reflected in *Maus*, in such a way that "all kinds of elisions and ellipses and compressions are a part of any shaped work, and my goal was to not betray what I could find out or what I heard or what I knew but to give a shape to it. But giving shape also involves, by definition, the risk of distorting the underlying reality" (*MetaMaus* 33). This is what Spiegelman does in portraying the music band Vladek is unable to remember (*Maus* 214).

These and other aspects that characterise *Maus* in its form and content will be widely discussed in chapter 4, focusing on the mechanisms that the multimodal medium brings to represent traumatic memory and its transformation into narrative memory.

3.3. Sources for inspiration and Intertextuality in *Maus*

From an early age, Spiegelman has been influenced by several illustrators and authors that marked a turning point in the development of visual art. One of the main influences on Spiegelman's creative narrative and form that characterise his works comes from experimental authors, such as the German avant-garde filmmaker Klaus Wyborny (and his remake of *Citizen Kane*) and his treatment of space and its relation to the plot and the characters in geographical terms. According to this author, characters move from a common physical space to different 'branchings' (*MetaMaus* 185), to finally converge in the same space. This can be appreciated in the movements of Vladek and Anja, who at first share the same space, such as Sosnowiec, the town they and their families live in, and later the ghetto. Then, their personal spaces split when they entered Auschwitz and Birkenau respectively until their final reencounter at Sosnowiec again.

Another referent is Harvey Kurtzman, the former editor of MAD magazine, an avant-garde postmodernist who coded the narrative dynamics into the different sizes of the panels to stress rhythm (Spiegelman *MetaMaus* 190), a technique that is present in some moments in *Maus*, as, for instance, when Vladek narrates to Artie the procedures prisoners went through when entering the concentration camp (*Maus* 185). There, the small panels that belong to the present time are disposed in such a way that they resemble a series of instant photos typically made by a photo booth, creating a sense of hurry (indeed, prisoners were forced to accomplish all the procedures as fast as possible). Kurtzman is also paramount in Spiegelman's conception of comics in his "self-reflexive, satirically questioning not only the word, but also the underlying premises of the comics medium" (qtd. in Young 675).

Regarding the interaction between words and images in comic, Spiegelman leans on the aforementioned 18th century educational theorist Töpffer, since this author managed to integrate image and words as a one single unit, so that "the drawings without their text would have only a vague meaning; the text without the drawings would have no meaning at all. The combination makes up a kind of novel" (qtd. in Young 672). This perspective led Spiegelman to use the term commix[3], instead of the more generic term comic, because comics "brings to the mind the notion that they have to be funny", but "humor is not an intrinsic component of the medium". Commix, on the contrary, means "to mix together, because to talk about comics is to talk about mixing together words and pictures to tell a story" (qtd. in Young 672). Young adds that "the commixture of words and images generates a triangulation of meaning - a kind of three-dimensional narrative - in the movement between words, images, and the reader's eye" (672). As Spiegelman explains to Silverblatt in an interview, the pictures must fit the words uttered by Vladek in the recordings, at the same time Vladek's words must be condensed to fit the pictures. This is shown in the choices Spiegelman makes when transcribing Vladek's testimony. The translation of Vladek's words and their inclusion into the different panels entails a certain degree of appropriation of the survivor's discourse, as Spiegelman states:

> It's a lot more challenging than trying to simply tell a story. In a prose story, I could write 'Then, they dragged my father through the gate and into the camp'. Here I have to live those words, to assimilate them, to turn them into finished business – so that I end up 'seeing' them and am then able to convey that vision. Every panel requires that I interrogate my material like that over and over again. (qtd. in Weschler 4)

The choosing of words that fit into each panel, adding the right amount of information, is an example of how the author must decide which information to convey and how to portray it visually.

For the portrayal of the Holocaust experience in *Maus*, it is worth mentioning the different sources of inspiration regarding this issue, such as history monographs, illustrations, photographs and documentaries. Spiegelman confesses that there was not much literature available on the Holocaust experience back to the 1970s. He states that "my research and work wasn't propelled by any interest in Judaism and Jewishness. If anything, I shared an ambient '60s countercultural disdain for that sort of staff" (Spiegelman "Looney Tunes…" 2). As a second generation survivor, he states that "the Holocaust / the Shoah / the

[3] To avoid any reading mistakes, this master's dissertation maintains the terms "graphic narrative" or "comic" to refer to Spiegelman's *Maus*.

Genocide has become one of the central holy sacraments of secular Judaism, the primary bond that many of us have to the faith of our fathers" ("Looney Tunes…" 3). Indeed, Jewishness has acquired a new hint after the Nazi extermination of thousands of Jews, becoming the central milestone in Judaism. Nonetheless, Spiegelman's account of the Shoah does not pretend to offer a closure or meaning to the fate of thousands of Jews, including those who survived and were driven away from their homes. Many of them opted to move to Israel. However, Spiegelman considers Israel a "spacious ghetto", a "bum steer, a quick-fix solve for the world's guilt that was an all-too-inadequate response to the urgent and profound questions Auschwitz should have raised" ("Looney Tunes" 5).

Nevertheless, there were some academic works available on the Holocaust experience. For instance, the history monograph written by Raul Hilberg, who "succeeded in balancing the necessary distancing or 'numbness' with elements of intense emotion" (Friedlander 51), referring to the way the historian is conscious of the two tendencies, one that provokes disturbance due to intense emotion, and the other that provokes an excessive intellectual distance when working on the Shoah. Other authors such as the historian Lucy Dawidowicz or Primo Levi and his sober testimony and later thoughtful reflections are clear sources of reference in *Maus* when depicting Auschwitz as blunt as possible, avoiding any sentimentality or redemptive feeling (Spiegelman *MetaMaus* 44).

Illustrations and drawings made by survivors were used by Spiegelman for his own compositions, such as Alfred Kantor, Kóscielniak, or Paladij Osynka's 1946 hand-drawn pamphlet *Auschwitz: Album of a Political Prisoner*, which Anja brought from Poland to Sweden, and then to the United States after the war. Film documentaries such as Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985) or Alain Resnais' *Night and Fog* (1956) were also enlightening (for instance, Spiegelman mimics some scenes from Resnais' documentary). Photographs of the liberation of concentration camps, as those made by the American photographer Margaret Bourke-White were also employed as sources of inspiration and also as empirical evidence, as for instance in the first scene in the draft of *Maus* (Spiegelman *MetaMaus* 58). Spiegelman also visited Auschwitz to find out about the architecture, materials and disposition of the barracks, as the latrines in Birkenau and the toilets in Auschwitz, drawn in *Maus.* In this respect, Spiegelman emphasises that "a quest for exact verisimilitude might have pulled me further away from essential actuality as I tried to reconstruct it" (*MetaMaus* 59). So, this is why the scenery is drawn to its minimal expression in some panels, as they function as

symbolic spaces rather than real depictions. In fact, Spiegelman asserts that an overloaded panel could distort the reader's attention to what the author is trying to convey.

This searching for simplicity, according to Spiegelman, help avoid a simplistic vision of the Holocaust experience. So, regarding the vast material of documentaries, novels and films that deal with the Holocaust experience in an over-sentimental way, such as Spielberg's *Schindler's List* or Roberto Benigni's *Life Is Beautiful* among others, Spiegelman coined the concept *holokisch*, which refers to the easiest path to think about people's strong eagerness to live. This implies depicting the Nazis as the bad guys and the survivors as the good ones. In contrast, what Spiegelman tries to look for in *Maus* is "how to avoid despair or cynicism without becoming fatuous" (*MetaMaus* 70). As Chute emphasises, Spiegelman's work and other graphic narratives on witness and disaster differ from Hollywood-based films such as Spielberg's *The Schindler's List* on one hand, and Lanzmann's laureate documentary *Shoah* on the other, in that:

> Operating in between the poles that Spielberg and Lanzmann represent on the cultural and aesthetic spectrum, these works of witness eschew the seamlessness that has been criticized in popular narratives such as *Schindler's List*, while they also eschew the obsession with invisibility and irrepresentability that characterizes such lauded avant-garde films as *Shoah*. (*Disaster Drawn* 33)

Hence, Spiegelman's *Maus* conveys Vladek's narrative in simple and plain terms, regardless the crudity of what is being told. It also eludes ethical assessment towards Vladek's actions to survive at the ghetto and later at the *lager*: Vladek is not, indeed, a hero or anti-hero. He only did his best to get food, to help his family and to stay alive. Similarly, Friedlander advocates for the "acceptance of two contradictory moves: the search for ever-closer historical linkages and the avoidance of a naïve historical positivism leading to simplistic and self-assured historical narrations and closures" (52). *Maus* proposes that, although redemption is far from being attained, a kind of incorporation of trauma into one's history through testimony and verbalization is essential in the interaction between common and deep memory, in Friedlander's terms.

3.4. The publication of *Maus*

Maus Part I was first published in serialised form in Art and Françoise's magazine RAW. In 1980, Spiegelman decided to publish this first part in a single volume, named as *Maus Part I: My Father Bleeds History*, in the absence of printing the second part, which was still in progress. The decision to split *Maus* in two volumes was due to the fact that

Spielberg was to launch a cartoon film entitled *An American Tail*, which tells the story of a mouse family who flees from Old Russia in search for the American dream. In order to avoid any comparison between his work and Spielberg's film, Spiegelman hastened in the publication of his work. Spiegelman openly states that Spielberg may find inspiration in the first draft of *Maus*, arguing that "the specific use of mice to sympathetically portray Jews combined with the concept of cats as antisemitic oppressors in a story that compares life in the Old World Europe with life in America was unique to *Maus*, not Spielberg's film" (qtd. in Weschler 5-6).

Nevertheless, the publication of Part I supposed a challenging business, since, at first, it was rejected by many publishing houses. Some of the reasons for the turndown of the comic were the topic (the Holocaust in comic form), the relationship between Artie and Vladek, the depiction of characters as mice or the apparent trivialised and naïve vision of the Holocaust through Vladek's testimony (*MetaMaus* 77-8). Spiegelman comments on one of these responses that belongs to St. Martin's Press, which replied that "I'm sure you realize the difficulty of publishing this one - a novel about the Holocaust in comic book form?" (qtd. in *MetaMaus* 78). Finally, the publishing house Pantheon accepted to publish part I in 1980. Since then, *Maus* has been translated into more than thirty languages, being the Polish edition one of the most controversial. Since Poles were depicted as pigs, the symbolic connections between Poles and these animals in fiction, plus a remaining feeling of guilt for most of the Poles' attitudes against Jews during the war, made the issue of the Holocaust still a complicated approach to deal with. Regarding the sudden success of *Maus*, Spiegelman confesses that:

> Neurotically, the anhedonic way I experienced the success of *Maus* was to spend the next twenty years trying to wriggle out from under my own achievement. The fact that *Maus* looms fairly large in contemporary literature, and certainly in comics, is something that affects not just me but – in ways that I can imagine might be annoying – most other serious comics artists. (*MetaMaus* 80)

This success brought contradictory and complex feelings to Art, specially about how he conceptualises the relation with his father, once he has died just before the publication of Part I. Spiegelman reflects on it in the second part, when Artie confesses to his therapist that Vladek's ghost "still hangs over me" (*Maus* 203). In fact, Spiegelman feared of being turned into a representative figure of the second generation survivors, thus dissolving his own personal traumatic memories regarding his relation with his parents. Still, Spiegelman's *Maus* is considered an emblem of the Jewish second generation in the transmission and interpretation of the Holocaust experience. Indeed, Vladek's death, as well as other Jews'

deaths portrayed in fictional and non-fictional works by second generation writers, serves as a "metaphor for the emergence in the Jewish community of a new under-standing of 'the Holocaust' in the late 1960s, an understanding which testified to the spatially and temporally displaced effect on Jewish-American identity of the extermination of European Jewry" (Rothberg 664), so that Spiegelman "transgresses the sacredness of Auschwitz by depicting in comic strip images his survivor father's suffering and by refusing to sentimentalize the survivor" (Rothberg 665). For Michael Rothberg, *Maus* is a fresh interpretation of the Holocaust experience, brought to the new generations as part of the collective memory and history.

Also, Spiegelman, as a multifaceted and innate experimenter of new forms of comic narratives, was worried that both criticism and readership categorise him as trauma events narrator. Nevertheless, Spiegelman is fully concerned with tragedy, as his comic about the 9/11 attack *In the Shadows of No Towers* (2004) suggests. This concern was introduced in chapter 2 of part II of *Maus*, which shows an Artie at the end of the 1980s, wearing a "new" mouse mask, as a symbol of his "new" present. This chapter also introduces interesting insights on how Artie underwent his own success as a traumatic experience. The idea that he got famous and earned a lot of money at the expense of others' sufferings did not abandon his thoughts.

On the other hand, criticism that followed the publication of *Maus* highlights the preconceptions that both readers and publishers had in the 1990s about the literary and creative limits of comics as a suitable medium to convey serious issues, such as the Holocaust experience. For instance, when *Maus* was published, *The Independent* magazine posted that "one of the clichés about the Holocaust is that you can't imagine it – like nuclear war, its horror outfaces the artistic imagination. Spiegelman disproves that theory" (cover of *Maus I*). Most of the criticism emphasizes the fact that the Holocaust is an issue difficult to deal with and comprehend, so many survivors are reluctant to tell their experiences, yet, *Maus* succeeds in both.

Overall, although the publication of the first part of *Maus* faced many inconveniences due to its original aesthetic representation of such a serious issue as the Holocaust, it has become one of the milestones in 20th century literature, causing a great influence on later comic authors.

3.5. The controversy about the animal imagery in the reception of *Maus*

The depiction of characters as animals, especially the Jews as mice, caused difficulties in classifying *Maus* as a non-fiction comic, although it has become its hallmark. The use of the animal imagery was triggered by Spiegelman's contribution with the first three-page draft of *Maus* to the comic anthology and revisionist animal comics *Funny Animals*, created by Robert Crumb, where Spiegelman was invited to participate with a comic strip in 1971. At first, inspired by his friend and avant-garde filmmaker Ken Jacobs and his work on the relation between black people and their depiction as mice, Spiegelman thought of portraying the black experience in America. However, he immediately turned into the representation of Jews as mice, since the animal imagery of *Maus* is embedded in the European traditional tales that portray Jewishness. For instance, Kafka's short stories "A Little Fable" or "Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk" depict Jews as mice. Mice and rats were also used in Nazi propaganda and antisemitic works to depict Jews as undesirable. In this respect, whereas the rest of the characters in *Maus* are characterised depending on their nationality (Poles are pigs, Germans are cats, Americans are dogs), the Jews, regardless of their nationality, are all depicted as mice. This also encompasses the idea that "the Jew does not truly belong to the country in which he lives, for as the Jew from Poland is not a Pole (…), so the Jew from Germany cannot be a German" (qtd. in Bauman 54). Thus, the portrayal of characters as animals also conveys the idea that Jewishness is a category that remains outside society.

According to Spiegelman, one of the decisions to draw animal characters is that they may trigger complex meanings in readers, far beyond the stereotypes assigned to animals that behave as humans. As Chute considers, "the drawn animal imagery, especially because it registers as an abstracted style interacting with other styles of documentation, destabilizes *Maus*' own mode of expression; it is one of the book's inscriptions of collision and rupture, here in the very heart of the death mechanism of Auschwitz" (*Disaster Drawn* 186). This leads to a reluctance in considering *Maus* as a non-fiction work, although it brings an alternative path to representing a crude reality, as it was the process of dehumanization of the Jews. In fact, mice look more alike than if they were portrayed as totally humans. As Gopnik posits, "for the contemporary artist, it is the ultimate obscenity, the ultimate profanity, that must somehow be shown without being shown" (33), so these masks enable the depiction of the unrepresentable, as Young also states (687).

In formal terms, the use of the animal imagery can carry also some problems regarding size. In order to avoid significant differences between cats and mice, Spiegelman decided to use human bodies with animal heads. Yet, cats are drawn bigger than mice, so that every time a cat appears, it fills in almost completely the panel, in the same way the Nazi propaganda and policy based on terror filled the daily life of many Jews. Besides, characters seem to wear "masks", an element Spiegelman uses in several occasions, for instance, when Vladek and Anja tried to hide themselves as Poles. As mentioned before, one of the controversies that caused *Maus* in its translation into Polish was the depiction of Poles as pigs. According to Spiegelman, pigs should be part of the cats' food chain; whereas pigs can be fed and later on slaughtered and eaten, rats are utterly undesirable, so that their only fate is to be totally eradicated. Nothing good can be extracted from them (*MetaMaus* 121). In Spiegelman's words:

> If I think of Hitler as my collaborator, in his plan for the Thousand Year Reich, the Slavic races, including the Poles, (…). In my bestiary, pigs on a farm are used for meat. You raise them, you kill them, you eat them. If you have mice or rats on the farm, there's only one thing to do which is kill them before they eat all your grain. So my metaphor was somehow able to hold that particular vantage point while still somehow acknowledging my father's dubious opinion of Poles as a group. (*MetaMaus* 122)

Moreover, Spiegelman adds that most readers would prefer being cats, so this identification turns readers into accomplices of the perpetrators (*MetaMaus* 128). Animal masks have a clear function in the narrative of *Maus*, since, throughout these masks, the author is capable of approaching the unsayable. Furthermore, masks, due to their loss of specificity, allow empathy, in such a way that "it allows one to identify, and then get stuck with having to embrace one's own corrupt and flawed humanity" (Spiegelman *MetaMaus* 132). Masks also question the dichotomy human vs. animal in the process of dehumanization the Jews suffered, so that "our ideas of the animal (…) are the ones which enable us to frame and express ideas about human identity" (Baker 6, qtd. in Chaney 130). For instance, Vladek compares the killing of a prisoner who tried to escape with the killing of his neighbour's dog (*Maus* 242) or when Vladek and Anja are hidden in Motonowa's cellar, a Polish woman who helped Jews. The cellar is infested with rats (*Maus* 149), which provoke disgust in Anja, as well as Jews were portrayed as disgusting in Nazi propaganda.

These moments, along with others, such as the inclusion of "Prisoner" and its depiction of characters as distorted humans, help subvert the animal metaphor, since, during these scenes, "the metaphor is ruptured and renders its absurdity conspicuous, to force a kind of free fall" (Weschler 17). Similarly, Tucker adds that "this is Mr Spiegelman's triumph in

Maus: he tempts sentimentally by suggesting a pop culture cliché – wide-eyed mice menaced by hissing cats – and then thoroughly *denies* that sentimentality with the sharp, cutting lines of his drawing and the terse realism of his dialogue" (3). Accordingly, the intentionally simple, often scarcely defined lines that compose these mouse faces capture the uncanny feeling of the unsayable, paving the way to the transformation of traumatic memory into narrative memory and its incorporation into one's history, at the same time as it challenges historical and political portrayals of collective memory such as the Holocaust. Furthermore, Brown remarks the use of masks in its socio-political dimension:

> In fact, we are not really confronted by animals playing people's roles but by humans who wear animal masks. Through the metaphor *Maus* palpably confronts the reader with the social relations of Eastern Europe, of nations divided by nationalities and by culturally-constructed, politically-exploited stereotypes. (105)

As a result, masks enhance the uncanny feeling produced when a culturally constructed notion such as nationalities, Jewishness or the supposedly supremacy of the Aryan race are taken under the spotlight, where their artificiality is plainly shown.

Another motive for depicting characters as animals, according to Spiegelman, is to distance himself emotionally from what he is narrating, and also to distance the reader from the emotional load of the Holocaust experience as collective memory, creating an "otherness" (Chaney 130) or estrangement that contributes to the feeling of the uncanny. Moreover, Chaney goes on by stating that the "animal-human hybridizations", as is the case with *Maus*, "tend to assume a self-conscious air about their visual infractions against the serious (…) combining the animal and the human visually in such a way as to ultimately repost the human as the undisputed subject of authority" (134). This way, human bodies remind the reader that the characters are, ultimately, humans with animal masks, and that these masks veil individual desires, values and motivations, at the same time they benefit the homogenisation of a whole group under one single political unit. This group moves towards a unique goal: on the one hand, those who wear cat masks are seen as perpetrators, no matter whether they disagree or not with the ideology. On the other hand, those who wear the mouse masks are the victims who must be eradicated, no matter if they are Jews or not, as the prisoner who claims his "pure" German origin (*Maus* 210), so he was mistaken for a Jew/mouse. In this respect, Spiegelman points out that "one thing that fascinated me (…) was the fact that the people sent to their slaughter as Jews didn't necessarily identify themselves as Jews: it was up to the Nazis to decide who was a Jew" ("Looney Tunes" 3-4),

like Sartre posits: “a Jew is someone whom others call a Jew” (qtd. in Spiegelman “Loony Tunes” 4).

Portraying characters with animal masks also avoid realistic or photographic representation of the concentration camps and all it entails, so that the reader has to work on the associations with a given ‘inaccurate’ face expression. In addition, by depicting characters as animals, Spiegelman also questions the relations between history, memory and truth, so that Spiegelman’s own interpretation of facts were considered “an intrusion into the process of trying to visualize and inhabit my father’s specific memory and understanding of what happened. That process is indeed the story inside the story of *Maus* (…). What is being portrayed is, specifically, his [Vladek’s] story, based on his memories” (*MetaMaus* 54). He goes on by saying that:

> My father could only remember/understand a part of what he lived through. He could only tell a part of that. I, in turn, could only understand a part of what he was able to tell, and could only communicate a part of that. What remains are ghosts of ghosts, standing on the fragile foundations of memory. (*MetaMaus* 55)

This way, animal masks function as those “ghosts”, shadows of this “fragile foundations of memory” as Spiegelman refers to. Likewise, realistic or photographic representation of the concentration camps, which is characteristic of films, threatens the creation of places as reduced to ‘physical’ spaces, and not as mental spaces, as Spiegelman tries to recreate in *Maus*. Yet, Spiegelman includes three real photos that are crucial in conveying traumatic memory, in contrast to narrative memory. These three photos – Anja’s, Richieu’s and Vladek’s photo – reflect what Hirsch calls “fragments of a history we cannot take in” (“Family Pictures” 27). Accordingly, these photos function as documents of Artie’s postmemory, memories “that of the child of the survivor whose life is dominated by memories of what preceded his birth” (Hirsch “Family Pictures” 8). Indeed, photography serves as the link between the survivor’s memories and the survivors’ children’s postmemory. They also “acknowledge the significance of personal memory in the context of large-scale historical events”, so that these photos “are meaningful to the reader because Spiegelman has conveyed in part the individual life stories” (Elmwood 713). Besides, these photographs bring the uncanny in their fixation: these photos show three figures that do not longer exist, even Artie as a child. Besides, this fixation enhances the role of the *doppelgänger* in that the “indexical nature of the photo (...) intensifies its status as a harbinger of death and, at the same time (…), its capacity to signify life” (Hirsch “Family Pictures” 6).

The inclusion of photos of real people marks the fact that *Maus* is, after all, a real story. Indeed, one of the reasons of *Maus'* success is that, even though it is contextualised in a widely documented and exploring issue such as the Holocaust, it tells a personal tale, the experience of a real person, the author's father. It is personal in two ways: because it tells the personal story of Vladek, and because the one who draws and writes *Maus* tells also his own personal tale: the story of his father, which, in turn, tells his own story. Everything in *Maus* is "so personal", as Vladek's second wife Mala asserts. In fact, the process of creativity involves some kind of personal attachment.

All things considered, it can be said that the characters in *Maus* are not animals with anthropomorphic bodies, but humans hidden behind animal masks. This element, which resulted in his most outstanding feature, was also the first cause of *Maus*' rejection to be published by many publishing houses, together with the touching topic it represented. Nonetheless, the animal imagery has become an essential aspect in the recreation of the process of dehumanization thousands of Jews suffered, at the same time these masks maintain such a palpable human essence that makes the reader feel sympathy towards the characters, even though their acts were sometimes ethically questionable.

Next section will be dedicated to the analysis of Spiegelman's *Maus*, taking into account the theoretical framework described above, that is, how *Maus* represents trauma and traumatic memory in its multimodal form, paying special attention to the portrayal of the process of dehumanization carried out by the Nazi regime.

4. ART SPIEGELMAN'S *MAUS:* THE REPRESENTATION OF TRAUMA AND THE HOLOCAUST EXPERIENCE

This Chapter will analyse in detail the three main narratives that compose *Maus*, including the absent narrative of Anja, taking into consideration how traumatic memory is conveyed through the interaction of words and images, in such a way that it is transformed into narrative memory. Also, a brief overview will be offered regarding the self-reflection on the creation of *Maus* through the character of Artie, a characteristic inherent in many graphic narratives. Then, the analysis will turn to the main elements that are portrayed in *Maus* that illustrate the process of annihilation of the individual as one of the main goals of the Nazi regime, along with the recreation of spaces – both physical and symbolic spaces –

that support this process. Indeed, the so-called *ur*-spaces, places outside society, replace what once was considered familiar into something weird and frightening, referring it to Freud's term "the uncanny". Examples from Spiegelman's *Maus* will be reproduced when necessary, along with some figures from the graphic narrative to support this analysis.

The illustrations on the book flaps of the *Complete Edition of Maus*, together with the single pictures that introduce each chapter are essential elements, since they convey multiple and juxtaposed meanings. Thus, the image of the front cover shows a close-up shot of Vladek and Anja, depicted as mice (figure 1[4]). Vladek is squeezing Anja's shoulder tightly as they seem afraid of something. At the background, there is a huge black swastika and a cat-face that reminds of Hitler at the centre of it. The letters of the title are in red (probably resembling blood), standing above the name of Art Spiegelman, written in white and using the same font. It is worth noting that the letter *s* in the titles of the chapters is similar to the one that was used in the badge of the SS, the so-called *Schutzstaffel,* a paramilitary organization that served as guards and officials for the Reich. Words inside the comic are written in capital letters, and bold letters are used to emphasize some terms. The image of the back cover shows a map of Poland during the Nazi Regime, and a smaller map of Rego Park, New York, the place where Vladek and Anja lived when they arrived to America. At the foreground, there is an image in black and white of Vladek and Artie in the present time of the narrative, Vladek sitting in an armchair while Art is laying on the floor listening attentively to Vladek's story. The juxtaposition of different maps that correspond to different moments in time encourages the reader "to see the events of one as contiguous with the events of the other" (Elmwood 698), creating a sense of continuity across time and space, as well as across generations. Indeed, although Artie did not live in Poland during the war, his father, sitting in the armchair, looks at him as if he was transmitting to Artie his past experiences, to a listener who was never in Poland but grew up in Rego Park, New York, the second home for Vladek and Anja.

[4] The figures that appear in Annexes keep as close as possible the original size, following Chute's recommendations:

> The importance of the size of pages and panels in comics is one that came to me more gradually than it should have. Writing about *Maus* several years ago, I had already discussed how crucial the one-to-one ratio of composition and product is for that work (in other words, Spiegelman drew it the same size that it appears to readers) (…) I realized then that I myself had enlarged this very same image [an image that appears in *Maus* II which shows Hungarian Jews burning alive at Auschwitz] in my own (as yet unpublished) work on the text. The size of an image is constitutive of its meaning, of how it functions. (*Graphic Women* ix)

The images that cover both endpapers are also illustrative of the way Jews were dehumanised in a process of removal of the individual self; in the front endpaper, there appear lots of mice dressed in civilian clothes, wearing the Star of David on their chests. The same picture covers the back endpaper, but this time all mice are wearing the prisoner's uniform, so they become undistinguishable from each other.

There is also a meaningful picture in the inside flap of the book cover. It appears Artie (it can be easily recognised by his vest), holding a real mouse between his hands (figure 2). At the background, it can be appreciated an image of Mickey Mouse. These three levels of meaning are intermingled in a way that contributes to the meaning of the whole book, and how Jewishness is politically and culturally shaped and transmitted across time. Moreover, it shows how the animal imagery, especially the depiction of Jews as mice, works on the readers' cultural background and apprehended stereotypes.

Each chapter has its corresponding cover. These covers prepare the reader to what is to come, establishing casualty relations among the different events, relations between the private lives of Vladek and Anja and the political events during the outbreak of the war. Therefore, the second chapter in part I and the last chapter in part II are linked in such a way that the narrative circle is closed with the reencounter between Vladek and Anja (figure 3). This way, chapter 2 is entitled 'The Honeymoon', a term that, although it is commonly related to a happy event in someone's life, does not fit with the picture that accompanies this title. In there, some mice are looking at a Nazi flag (the *swastika*). This cover serves as a warning of the outburst of the war in Europe. Besides, the swastika is enclosed in a circular form, a form that Spiegelman associates with threatening moments in Anja and Vladek's lives (*MetaMaus* 183). These circular lights also resemble the lights used in films, as it is used in the cover for chapter 1 in part I. The use of the circle also helps connect different chapters and moments in the narrative. Another cover that is worth mentioning is the one for chapter 2 in part II, entitled 'Auschwitz (Time flies)' (figure 4). This image shows two principal elements, the bodies burning and the flies. The bodies in flames suggest the burning of bodies at Auschwitz, in an attempt to erase any evidence of the Nazi genocide, while flies illustrate both the passing of time for Spiegelman since the publication of the first part of *Maus*, and also how Jews were perceived by the Nazi regime: they are human waste to get rid of. These flies are also the connection to the gas chambers where thousands of people were killed. Indeed, Artie relates the way he easily gasses flies to the Zyklon B used in the gas chambers (*Maus* 234).

In general terms, *Maus* is entirely drawn in black and white ink, with no distinctions regarding color of those panels that portray past events and those which take place in the present. In this respect, Spiegelman states that any visual differentiation between past and present would have broken the fluid narrative connection between past and present, so black and white colours, which also resembles old photos from the War period, were chosen instead.

To conclude, parts I and II of *Maus* are introduced each by a quote that summarizes antisemitism values during the Nazi regime. The first part of *Maus* is introduced by the following quote ascribed to Hitler: "The Jews are undoubtedly a race, but they are not humans", a prophetic statement as the Nazi regime carried out the process of annihilation against the Jews, mainly through deportation, which meant, the spatial separation from the rest of the society, as Bauman states in his work *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989). Besides, it is interesting the fact that the character of Hitler does not appear in the narrative, only his face in the middle of a swastika, but nothing more. Actually, Vladek never saw Hitler in person. The quote that appears in the introduction to the second part of *Maus* comes from an article published in the 1930s in the German magazine *Pomerania*: "Mickey Mouse is the most miserable ideal ever revealed (…) [T]he dirty and filth-covered vermin, the greatest bacteria carrier in the animal kingdom, cannot be the ideal type of animal (…). Away with the Jewish brutalization of the people! Down with Mickey Mouse! Wear the Swastika Cross!". This quote also links to the image shown above that appears in the front flat of the *Complete Edition of Maus*. As a matter of fact, Mickey Mouse masks were very popular among children during the Second World War, since this figure was created by Walt Disney and Ub Iwerks in the 1920s. The characters in *Maus* resemble these children's masks, helping the author establish a relation between him as an artist and him as witness of his father's memories. Figure 5 shows an image of a 1935 mask that has survived in very good conditions.

Taking all these formal elements into consideration, the first section of this chapter deals with the traumatic narratives of Vladek, Artie and Anja, the way trauma is portrayed, and the mechanisms used to transform traumatic memories into narrative memories, except in the case of Anja's discourse, whose voice is absent from the beginning, triggering the trauma shared by Vladek and Artie, and, at the same time, fostering the creation of *Maus*.

4.1. Traumatic narratives

In a nutshell, *Maus* is a story about trauma and its transmission across generations. Trauma is conceived, and portrayed, as an everchanging and multifaceted product that sometimes eludes fixation or moral judgement. According to Chute:

> Spiegelman insists on the persistence of trauma – in his choices of titles, in his textual practice of spatial intrusion, overlaying, and overlapping – in order to show how memory can be treated as an ongoing creative learning process, rather than something anchored in insuperable trauma. ("'The Shadow…'" 213)

That means that trauma, though triggered by a past experience not fully integrated into one's memory, can be lately retrieved in multiple ways and facets, can be enhanced and moulded in various aesthetic forms, as *Maus* does. In this way, traumatic memories - Vladek's past, Artie's relation to his parents, Anja's suicide and Richieu's death - are intertwined creatively.

On a basic level, *Maus* portrays traumatic memories caused by the Holocaust experience. As explained by Hirsch, the different media that deal with the Holocaust experience question "the clear-cut distinction between the documentary and the aesthetic" ("Family Pictures" 11). Accordingly, the narratives that constitute *Maus* are re-created by Spiegelman as an example of the interaction between truth-based witnessing – Vladek's testimony and Art's whereabouts – and aesthetic aspects proper to graphic narratives. Indeed, Chute observes that, through the subjective drawing of characters, spaces and events, the graphic narrative is able to be:

> [P]roductively self-aware in how [it] 'materialize' history (…). This awareness of representation, especially the representation of history through narrative, is integrated into comics through its framed, self-conscious, bimodal form; yet it is precisely in its insistent, affective, urgent visualizing of historical circumstance that comics aspires to ethical engagement. ("Comics as Literature?" 457)

Following this line, Caruth (viii) also suggests that new modes of dealing with trauma, though these modes include distorted elements of the imagination or subjective elements, are necessary to transform trauma into narrative. In this sense, aesthetic representation of history in the graphic narrative cannot be seen as contrary to historical accuracy, but as a blending of multiple layers in the interpretation of historical moments that, although they seem to occur apart in time and space, they converge through the different panels and the gutters between them.

Overall, *Maus* is composed of three main temporal narratives. The first one is Vladek's past during the war, considered the main narrative. The second one belongs to the narrative of Vladek and Artie in a present time at Rego Park, New York, when Artie

interviewed his father while he was drafting the first part of *Maus*. And the third narrative shows Artie's "new" present time that takes place after the publication and great success of *Maus,* Part I. During the lapse of time between the publication of part I and the drafting of the second one, Art's father died at the same time Art's family increased with two children. The decision to introduce a new present time was the necessity to express how the success of *Maus* had affected Spiegelman. Whereas Artie is depicted as a mouse, just like his father, in this new present Artie appears wearing a "real" mouse mask, in order to differentiate both characters, as he has gone through a transformation as an author and also as an individual. This way, Spiegelman deals with the implications that comics possess regarding the different levels of abstraction, with temporal juxtapositions – past and present – and how the author tries to impose a coherent and chronological order out from the incomprehensible (*MetaMaus* 165). Spiegelman depicts the juxtaposition of these different narratives through the variation in the size of the panels (*MetaMaus* 181). For instance, there is a combination of small panels that rests upon an open panel that portrays a panoramic shot of Auschwitz-Birkenau (*Maus* 211).

Moreover, regarding the juxtaposition of temporalities by means of playing with space through panels (that is, the gutter), Spiegelman explores the means of comprising information in *Maus* (*MetaMaus* 33) by combining different scenes (one from the past, the other from the present) in one single panel. This combination supports the idea that traumatic memory blurs past and present in such a way that what happened in the past returns to the present in a repetition-compulsion, as Freud observed. Thus, there are two clear examples of this combination in *Maus*, being the first one when Vladek witnesses the hanging of some Jewish businessmen in Sosnowiec (*Maus* 85). The image of the hanged men's feet swinging in the air appears later on when Vladek is at home with Anja and Richie (*Maus* 86). This panel transmits the idea that Vladek becomes terrified by the sole idea of being hanged – he and his family – because, like the hanged men, he runs his own business. The other moment of combination is much more later on, when Vladek recalls the hanging of some female prisoners at Birkenau for plotting against Nazi officials. The combined image is similar to the first one; women's feet rocking in the air are interspersed in the woods in Florida, as the car of Françoise and Artie passes by (*Maus* 239). Both examples can be appreciated in figure 6. The image that predominates in both panels, the rocking feet, can be conceptualised as the "possessed image" of the traumatized mind, as posed by Caruth (5), which stands immovable in time, yet inaccessible to its verbalization. With these two panels, Spiegelman portrays

Vladek's inmost fear of being caught and killed through the image that triggered that feeling, even if Vladek did not directly witness the hangings (as it probably happened in the case of the hanged women). This way, the image remains "wordless", connecting it with the present time.

In the first part of *Maus*, and in most of its second part, the narrative of Vladek's past memories and the narrative of the encounters between Vladek and Artie are central to this analysis. The interaction between Vladek and Artie's narratives reveals the fact that the process of witnessing implies the necessity of a listener to interpret the speaker's testimony, as posited by Laub (73) and Hartman (541), the latter supporting the interpretative conversation when receiving the story (in Whitehead 8). Similarly, Chute considers that "testimony and memory here are collaborative procedures generated by both speaker and listener", to such a degree that in *Maus*, as a representation of the Holocaust experience, "the artist's hand is the visibilized link between the personal voice of the primary witness and its translation, the voice of the secondary witness" ("'The Shadow…'" 209). Hence, *Maus* does not simply convey a testimony of a survivor from Auschwitz, but it is indeed a "cross-discursive" ("'The Shadow…'" 209) dialogue, a discordant negotiation of meaning, between the primary witness and second generation witness. It is worth noting that Vladek's story is conveyed all the time through Artie's testimony. In this respect, Glejzer remarks that "rather than relating a content of the event, a historical narrative, *Maus* presents us with a testimony about testimony" (129), highlighting the multiple levels in which one is inscribed in the other, so that Anja's narrative stands in the centre, retrieved by Vladek's testimony, at the same time as Vladek's testimony is retrieved by Artie's, whose narrative stands at the periphery of these concentric circles. Similarly, these three levels of witnessing reflect Laub's classification (61). Accordingly, level 1, being witness to oneself, is played by Anja's testimony, since she wrote in her diaries, but nobody read them. Level 2, being witness to others, is fulfilled by Vladek's testimony, telling his experience to Artie. Level 3, being witness to the process of witnessing, is carried out by Artie, because he is the responsible for transcribing and transmiting Vladek's testimony.

As said before, Anja's memories, though she is a crucial character in the narrative, underlie her absence in the narrative; indeed, Anja's own voice is absent from *Maus*, so the reader only gets to know her through what Vladek remembers about her – or 'wants' to remember. As Glejzer stresses, "[Artie] works very hard to focus on one strand of testimony, his father's story, even as he keeps encountering possible moments of witnessing concerning

his mother that he refuses to recognise" (134). On this behalf, *Maus* is the attempt to recover Anja's narrative throughout Vladek's testimony. Nevertheless, the searching for Anja's voice turns out to be fruitless. This unattainability reflects also the impossibility for Anja to transform her traumatic memory into narrative memory, as Vladek does to a certain extent.

All in all, narratives are divided into Vladek's, Artie's and Anja's narrative, being the latter reconstructed by others. Vladek's narrative will be analysed in detail, paying special attention to his "innate" ability to survive any perilous situation using his wit. Focus will be also on Vladek's forge of trauma, regarding his failure in saving Anja (she committed suicide in 1968) and his son Richieu, poisoned in 1943 to avoid the gas chamber. Then, Artie's narrative will be centered on the forge of second generation trauma, regardless Spiegelman's reluctance to identify himself as such. Special attention will be paid to the inclusion of the comic strip "Prisoner on the Hell Planet". Third, Anja's absent narrative and the depiction of other women will be dealt with.

4.1.1. Vladek's narrative

Vladek Spiegelman is the father of Artie, and, consequently, the father of Art Spiegelman. Born in Czestochowa, Poland, in 1906, he married Anja Zylberberg, a young lady who belonged to an affluent family in Sosnowiec. Vladek is the main narrator in *Maus*, so his testimony regarding his experience at the ghetto and later at the *lager* is central to the narrative. Because of Anja's absent testimony, Vladek becomes the only source of information of the experience inside Auschwitz. Although it seems at first that Vladek can be considered a likely objective narrator of the events, his words and memories (that can be translated into images) are also the product of the same experience he tries to recollect. Thus, both images and words, and the interaction between the Vladek of the past and the Vladek of the present, draw a complex personality.

In formal terms, Vladek's testimony is conveyed through his role as narrator, so what he narrates is mostly done through narratory blocks or captions. These rectangular panels serve also as further explanations to the background regarding relations to other characters and places. Due to space matters, these captions tend to be brief and informative.

Although Artie insists to his father several times that he should maintain a chronological order in his narrative (*Maus* 84, 228), Spiegelman is conscious of the breaking of time and space in the representation of memories, so that "nothing ultimately is

chronological. As soon as you're asked to tell any story you will break it – either in your mind, thinking of something else that happened later or earlier – or something will interrupt the telling and you're in the present of what's being told rather than in the past that's being recounted" (*MetaMaus* 206). In fact, Vladek's narrative constantly goes back and forth in time, where, unlike the past, the present time seems to deal with trifles. For instance, Vladek interrupts his narrative of the past to talk about his crystal eye and the glaucoma he suffered (*Maus* 41). Indeed, once Vladek is compelled to keep close to the chronological order of events, he argues that, in Auschwitz, prisoners did not have watches (*Maus* 228). This breaking of the linear temporality into repetitions and circular narratives, questions the reliability on memory, but also the difficulties encountered in the transformation of traumatic memory into narrative memory. In this respect, Brown points out that "*Maus* makes a great contribution as a work of oral history by interrogating the limitations of our techniques for recording experience, and be engaging the problematic of memory as evidence" (96). He goes on by asserting that "Spiegelman confronts the perennial obstacle facing any oral historian (…), the reliance on one memory to record an event" (96). The relation between memory and history, is also highlighted by Rothberg, when he asserts that *Maus* is not "simply a work of memory or a testimony bound for some archive of Holocaust documentation", but it "actively intervenes in the present, questioning the status of 'memory', 'testimony', and 'Holocaust' even as it makes use of them" (674). Brown and Rothberg's assertations suggest the necessity of some creativity - and consequently, aesthetic construction - when retrieving memory in order to release its carrier from this imposed silence or, rather, ghostly presence, as Caruth refers to.

Vladek's narrative is introduced through a dynamic illustration of him cycling on his static bike (15). This dynamic introduction of Vladek's traumatic narrative reflects what trauma means, which is "not the moment of the event, but of the passing out of it that is traumatic; that survival itself can be a crisis" (Caruth 9). That is, trauma is forged throughout time, and it remains in time. Chute also observes that Vladek's body occupies several panels, while at the background it stands a framed photo of Anja, introduced later in the story ("'The Shadow…'" 205). This loading the page with Vladek's body, as it occurs again at the end of the narrative, highlights the importance of Vladek's narrative as the main story in *Maus*, at the same time it implies the absence of Anja's story. This page suggests, according to Chute, how the past is "articulated (spoken), inscribed (tattooed) and documented (photographed)" ("'The Shadow…'" 205). This image also serves as the door to enter into

one's memory, as Spiegelman asserts: "you enter into the past for the first time through that wheel" (*MetaMaus* 209). Moreover, the spinning wheel of the exercycle also transmits the idea of the circularity in Vladek's narrative.

As explained before, Vladek's body loading several panels stands for those who are absent, since Vladek has survived most of his family, including Anja and Richieu. Like Vladek, many survivors experience feelings of guilt due to the fact that, while many comrades died, they survived without any apparent reason. Vladek, in his behaviour, tries to give some sense to why he has survived so long, so he creates in himself the innate survivor: he has survived because he possesses a special power to do so. Moreover, the reader knows from other characters such as Mala or Artie himself that Vladek has turned into a very difficult person to deal with, with apparently non-sensical obsessions as counting and classifying everything, or keeping useless things (paper, wire or whatever he comes across). In some other occasions, Vladek admits that he is unable to throw anything away because "I cannot forget it… ever since Hitler I don't like to throw out even a crumb." Artie's response is somehow hurting: "then just save the damn special K, in case Hitler ever comes back" (*Maus* 238).

Nonetheless, Vladek's narration of past events gives some clues about this erratic behaviour, and how the Holocaust experience has moulded Vladek as an individual. Indeed, Vladek's current behaviour is part of the trauma he forged inside when facing such a crude reality. To a certain extent, Vladek may represent the capitalist spirit, as he takes advantage of everything at the ghetto and later at the concentration camp; he gets things, keeps them and used them later to obtain some benefits. He also bribes officials and superiors to, in return, have privileges such as food or better clothes. Indeed, at the concentration camp, some prisoners consider Vladek a capitalist organiser. For instance, the *kapo* whom Vladek gives "gifts" complains when the present is not what he expected: "only one apple for me today? Is business bad, Mr. Capitalist?" (*Maus* 220). In this way, Vladek attends the demands of others in his own benefit. For instance, he uses a neat shirt he gets from another prisoner he helped before passing inspection and get his soup, as prisoners with lice were not allowed to take the soup (*Maus* 254). Even when he contracted typhus, he uses his wit to get food and to keep it (*Maus* 256). On another occasion, as a means of livelihood once the war is over, Vladek sells old-fashionable female stockings along with American stockings in Sweden, considered more fashionable (*Maus* 285).

Despite the fact that Vladek uses his wit to survive, he claims many times that it is a question of good luck (*Maus* 193). Moreover, although Vladek has survived a near-death experience at the concentration camp and that experience is rarely to repeat, he is still afraid of dying (*Maus* 28). Indeed, he feels a strong duty to stay alive, because this is what he did during the war, no matter what happened to others, including his son Richieu. Overall, Vladek may be considered a pragmatic person, whose ability is to take advantage of everything to stay alive. He learns that doing the chores as fast as possible and being skilful is essential to survive (*Maus* 54). And, accordingly, he repeats to himself how to survive, as when he asserts that "you see, it's good to know how to do EVERYTHING[5]!" (*Maus* 220) or "If you want to live, it's good to be friendly" (*Maus* 222).

Besides, with this behaviour, Vladek also contributes to the perpetuation of the stereotype of the Jew as money-grabbing and mean. Indeed, Vladek keeps everything, so "in some ways he's just like the racist caricature of the miserly old Jew", as Artie states (*Maus* 133). He also externalises this stereotype in Mala, who, according to Vladek, only wants his money. In fact, this behaviour is an essential part of the self-construction of Vladek as an innate survivor. Moreover, Vladek subtly explains why he is mean with certain things, so that saving things helped Vladek save his life and others at Auschwitz: "even paper was hard to have there. My friends came always to me when they needed… I found and saved" (*Maus* 223).

This 'obsessive' pragmatism makes Vladek behave differently from other survivors. This is one of the main issues the other characters discuss about Vladek. In one occasion, Françoise suggests that "maybe Auschwitz made him like that", to what Artie responds that "Maybe. But lots of the people up here are survivors – if they're whacked up it's in a different way from Vladek" (*Maus* 182). Mala and Artie also discuss whether Vladek's behaviour is pragmatism or meanness. According to Mala, Vladek is simple stingy: "Pragmatic? Cheap! It causes him physical pain to part with even a nickel" (*Maus* 133). Mala is partly right: not making the most of everything for Vladek opens the wounds of the Holocaust, as doing this is the key to survive for him. In this respect, Artie's therapist also gives some clues about Vladek's behaviour, and answers some questions. He considers that "maybe your father needed to show that he was always right – that he could always SURVIVE – because he felt GUILTY about surviving." (*Maus* 204). Indeed, the sole idea of surviving others feeds Vladek's trauma. He is an innate survivor, so he cannot help being like that and, as a

[5] Capital letters appear in the original.

consequence, he survived others, even Anja, whom he was unable to save (and also his son). Vladek's wit has been proved to be effective, yet useless in protecting his beloved ones. Thus, this is a reason why he tries to separate himself from others.

Vladek's pragmatism in keeping everything is also closely related to his obsession with counting and classifying things, as well as with keeping what others consider waste. There are many instances where Vladek appears in the present time counting and organising his things, as when he counts his pills (*Maus* 28). Accordingly, the clue to why Vladek is obsessed with counting things can be traced back to an episode that took place at Auschwitz. There, a *kapo* saw Vladek throwing a package to Anja, who was on the other side of the wire, at Birkenau. The *kapo* caught him and punished him with a bat: "Count the blows, if you lose count – I'll start again!", to what Vladek confesses that "So he beat me, what can I tell you? Only, thank God, Anja didn't get also such a beating. She wouldn't live" (*Maus* 217). This way, Vladek feels that he has saved Anja's life (because the focus of punishment was on him). Thus, counting turns a repetitive trauma in Vladek's mind: by counting, he is saving Anja again and again (figure 7).

Mala also reflects on Vladek's obsession with retaining things, by pointing out that "he's more attached to things than to people" (*Maus* 95). Indeed, whereas people may be taken apart and largely suffer, things remain the same, unchanged and unaltered by events. Vladek also survived because he took advantage of things at the right moment, so he feels that it is still his duty to go on with this attitude of keeping everything just in case. He also classifies things into two poles. For instance, he classifies his nails between short and long (*Maus* 110), just resembling the classifications Nazis do that divide people between the right side (to live) and the left side (to die). This obsession also conditions Artie as an individual. For instance, he tells Mala that, when he was a child, his father forced him to eat everything (because Vladek starved during the war). This experience is connected to Vladek's previous one when he was a young man and lived with his family, and his father did not allow Vladek and his brother to eat and sleep too much in order to look ill and, thus, not to be chosen as candidates for the Russian army (*Maus* 47-8). Somehow, Vladek's father was violent with his children because he tried to save them from war and death. These examples show how past and present juxtapose in a repetition-compulsion of ritualised actions that retrieve traumatic memories back, and also a clear example of hereditary trauma. On many occasions, Artie must give in to Vladek's commands and desires, despite the fact that they may be decontextualised, as trauma loses its anchor to a particular time and space (Laub xv).

In relation to this repetition-compulsion behaviour, it is interesting to analyse the circularity of history in Vladek's forge of trauma. In this respect, there are many elements in Vladek's narrative that, although they are distant in time, they are interconnected. One example is when certain characters that help or harm Vladek in the past are encountered later. As an illustration, when Vladek is called up for duty when the war breaks up, he kills a German soldier, applying again his *motto* for surviving any situation: "Who knows; otherwise, he could have shot me" (*Maus* 50). Later, he has to bury the corpse and discovers the soldier's name, Jan, making him aware of the fact that he has taken someone's life (*Maus* 52). Situations similar to this are repeated lately in Vladek's experience, as when, at the concentration camp, he buried the corpse of the person who betrayed him and his family when they were hidden at the ghetto (*Maus* 119).

Under certain circumstances, such as the continuous sense of instability and danger that the Nazis impose over the Jews, making choices can lead to negative consequences. Both Vladek and Anja are obliged to take some decisions over the years, which lead them to the loss of their beloved ones. One of them can be considered the trigger of trauma: the loss of their child Richieu. At first, a friend of Vladek offers to hide Richieu together with his own son. Anja is reluctant to leave his son behind, so they decline the offer. Whereas Ilzecki's son survived, Richieu died later on (*Maus* 83). Vladek, who is telling this to Artie, stops pedalling, transmitting the idea that this memory is so overwhelming that it annuls Vladek's will and energy (figure 8). This also affirms that Richieu remains in the traumatic memory for Vladek. Richieu's fate is revealed later on, when his parents decide to send him, together with his aunt and cousins, to the ghetto of Zawiercie, where a friend of Vladek has a certain influence over some officials, so there is a chance for them to stay alive. However, the ghetto is dismantled and its inhabitants taken to the concentration camps, most of them directly to the gas chambers. To avoid this destiny, Anja's sister Tosha poisons her own children and Richieu. After being acknowledged of their son's death, Vladek reprehends Anja for not letting Richie away the previous occasion: "You see? I wanted to send Richieu someplace safe a year ago" (*Maus* 109). So, Anja has felt guilty since then, because Vladek put that huge burden on Anja's shoulders by reproaching not having hidden Richie before. Another bad (and desperate) decision is trusting the smugglers, the Poles responsible for helping Jews crossing to Hungary. These smugglers finally betrayed Vladek and Anja and they are arrested in Bielsko, the same town they used to live and work (*Maus* 157). In the

comic, Vladek and Anja are literally unmasked, because they are wearing a pig mask to have the appearance of Polish citizens.

Despite the fact that Vladek's narrative lacks fanciful facts, there are two moments where the magic element is present, and closely related to the magic sometimes conferred to numbers. These two moments appear when Vladek is going to face a dreadful situation, the first one when he is destined as a soldier to fight against the Germans, and the second one when he enters Auschwitz. In the first one, being a prisoner of the Germans, Vladek dreams about his grandfather. In this dream, his grandfather foretells that: "Don't worry, my child. You will come out of this place – FREE! On the day of *Parshas Truma*" (*Maus* 59). This name refers to a section from the Torah that is read once a year in February. The grandfather is depicted like a gigantic, furry mouse, and wearing the complements used to read the Torah. As his dream has foretold, Vladek is finally liberated on this day, so this date becomes important in Vladek's life: it is the same day when he married Anja, when Artie was born and the day Artie celebrated his *Bar Mitzva* (*Maus* 61). The other encounter is related to Vladek's prisoner number (175113). The first time the reader sees Vladek's number tattooed in his forearm is when he starts pedalling, and starts telling his experience at the beginning of part I. In part II, once Vladek enters Auschwitz and goes through the process of annihilation, including the tattooed number, he feels devastated and defeated for the first time. Then, a Catholic priest approaches him and gives him hope by telling him that Vladek's number was a good omen: "I can't know if I'll survive this hell, but I'm certain you'll come through all this alive" – "I started to believe. I tell you, he put another life in me" (*Maus* 188). Both encounters can be seen in figure 9 and figure 10 respectively.

Vladek, though he has suffered alienation and contempt for being Jew, he nonetheless shows racist attitudes towards others. Thus, in some occasions, he shows hatred towards Communists (*Maus* 28), so that he puts the blame on the Communists because they put Anja and her family at risk by hiding some confidential documents (*Maus* 29). Vladek also shows a racist attitude towards black people (*shvartser*, as he calls them). Françoise does not understand this attitude when Vladek, as Jew, has suffered the same discrimination (*Maus* 259). Vladek also felt resentful towards any German – official or civilian – once the war was over. When he returns in search for Anja, he sees that the Americans have destroyed many German villages. Vladek does not feel compassion for them: "let the Germans have a little what they did to the Jews" (*Maus* 290). As Spiegelman posits, Vladek and other survivors insisted that "suffering doesn't make you better, it just makes you suffer!"

(*MetaMaus* 36). This statement questions also how some aesthetic works, such as films, documentaries or novels, have depicted the survivors as heroes, and the perpetrators as devils, as commented before regarding Spiegelman's term *holokisch*. Alike, Rothberg has focused on the way Spiegelman portrays characters, and especially his father, "beyond innocence and redemption, in that implausible ethical space which Jews must occupy in relation to their troubled history" (682). Rothberg also suggests that Vladek's mean attitude towards Mala is the product of long suffering, where victims become "agents of violence and torture" (681). Indeed, Spiegelman's anti-heroic portray of his father has been one of the most controversial issues that emerged when *Maus* was first published.

To finish with, the inclusion of Vladek's real photo (*Maus* 294) contrasts greatly with the characterisation of Vladek as a mouse. Notwithstanding, this photo plays a crucial role in the portrayal of Vladek in relation to Artie's traumatic memory; somehow, the past of Artie's family (including Richieu) remains outside Artie's personal history, as "unverbalised" memories. These photos also, as commented above, function as the uncannily fixed, double figures of Vladek, Anja and Richieu respectively. In the case of Vladek, his photo portrays him after being released from the *lager*, wearing the concentration camp uniform, to show that he, indeed, 'had survived' the final solution. By wearing the concentration camp pyjamas, he mocks at his prosecutors, but also at himself; although he has overcome the horror, the trauma that this horror forged lings inside him, creating a double Vladek. Thus, the one who survived went to the US and went on with his life, and the one who still wore the striped pyjamas was the one who "did not survive Auschwitz", as Artie observes (*Maus* 250).

To sum up, Vladek is the main source of information for Artie in his attempt to reconstruct his parents' past, a past that is also part of the collective memory. His portrayal in *Maus* shows that he is far from being considered a hero. Indeed, what Vladek has gone through at the ghetto and later at the concentration camp does not make him a redeemed individual, but an even more miserable person. In fact, he has lost Anja and his first son Richie, he has distanced from his only alive son Artie, and he feels unhappy in his second marriage. All he has left is this sense of duty to survive at all costs.

4.1.2. Artie's narrative

Artie is Vladek's son, so it can be considered the aesthetic portrayal of Art Spiegelman. Above all, *Maus* tells the story of Vladek's experiences through the interpretation of Artie. In this respect, *Maus* can be considered "a narrative concerned with the communication of testimony", as Chute observes (*Disaster Drawn* 158). Accordingly, Artie represents the "son who becomes the interlocutor of the survivor-witness, trying to visualize his father's experience as the opening narrative act of the story" (Chute *Disaster Drawn* 158). In this way, *Maus* works as a form of visual witness. Artie, as listener, must accomplish two main objectives, as mentioned above. First, he must receive the testimony so that the speaker's traumatic memory can be transformed into narrative memory. And second, he must do this without appropriating the speaker's testimony. However, as Artie also represents second generation witness, Vladek's trauma is settled in Artie's unconsciousness as a "gap" or as "unknown phantom", as Rashkin observes (39). In these cases, acknowledging the "otherness" of the experience becomes impossible, since these experiences have been incorporated into one's own history from an early age, as it happened to Artie.

Another thing is that the role Artie plays as interpreter of his father's testimony reflects the problem of identity inherent in Spiegelman; *Maus* "is the author's need to write himself into a family from whose founding trauma he was absent" so that "Spiegelman creates an identity for himself with respect to his parents' experience of the Holocaust" (Elmwood 691). This constructed identity is called Artie. Similarly, as LaCapra states about the appropriation of the traumatic experiences of parents by their children, Elmwood asserts that "Spiegelman has found meaning and identity in his (indirect) relation to the Holocaust" (701). Through the character of Artie, his role as "family scribe and transmitter of family history" (Elmwood 716), and the inclusion of the process of creation of *Maus* within itself, Spiegelman interiorises and verbalises this hereditary trauma of the Holocaust, as well as his own traumatic memories, such as his mother's suicide. This also reflects what Friedlander (53) comments on the mediation established between the witness' testimony – Vladek's testimony – and self-awareness of the historian, since Artie plays the role of a historian in reinterpreting Vladek's experience.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, Artie functions as the *doppelgänger* (or double) of Art Spiegelman. Spiegelman creates the character Artie inside *Maus* as the subject of his father's testimony, but also as the object of the author's self-criticism on representing his

father's testimony and the legitimacy in doing so. Artie is a character who does not only reflect the process of writing *Maus*, but also the complicated relationship he had with his father. It is this relation that boosts Artie's interest in doing comics: "one reason I became an artist was that he thought it was impractical - just a waste of time… it was an area where I wouldn't have to compete with him" (*Maus* 99). Indeed, the main influence in Spiegelman's way of doing comics and comprising as much information as possible in space is due to his parents, especially Vladek's pragmatics and Anja's intellectual inclination to arts (*MetaMaus* 37). At the same time, he chose comics as a way of artistic expression because it was an unknown place for his parents, so that he could construct a world out of his parents' world that still revolved around their past.

All in all, *Maus* starts with a brief comic strip in which the narrator, Artie, appears in his childhood. Artie falls down from his rollerblades and runs to his father, who doubts whether Artie's friends are really that: "if you lock them together in a room with no food for a week… THEN, you could see what it is, FRIENDS!..." (*Maus* 5). This brief memory from childhood illustrates how trauma can be inherited by the second generation, especially those children of Holocaust survivors. Young observes that "the historical facts of the Holocaust (…) include the fact of their eventual transmission. This is why the "autobiographical history of the survivor's tale necessarily begins, then, no in the father's experiences [or the father's childhood] but in Artie's own [in the son`s childhood]" (678).

Likewise, Art sails between two contradictory impulses, greatly depicted in his underground comic strip "Prisoner on the Hell Planet"; he longs for sharing the same past experience their parents did to get emotionally closer to them; on the contrary, he also feels disappointed because he is conscious their parents have transmitted to him the traumatic burden that he is not supposed to bear. Indeed, Artie confesses to Françoise that, as a child, he used to fantasize about Auschwitz and the gas chambers (figure 11). Formally, Spiegelman establishes other connections between Artie and Auschwitz, so that both elements, though distant in time and space, are intertwined through the transmission of trauma (*MetaMaus* 214). As an illustration, the smoke of Artie's cigarette coincides with the smoke of the gas chambers (*Maus* 229). This connection also suggests that Artie's habit of smoking can be linked to this desire for self-destruction through gassing and burning.

In general, Artie's traumatic memory is composed of two main elements: the shadow of his dead brother, Richieu, and the suicide of his mother, who left no farewell note. Richieu was born in October 1937 and died in 1943, so Artie never knew him. Yet, his ghost still

haunts Artie in many ways. Because he died when he was a little boy, Richieu has become a static image in their parents' mind, being always perfect and silenced, impossible to mistake or miscarriage, as Artie does. Moreover, Richieu belongs to the realm of Vladek and Anja's past, the part that has shaped what they were in the present, the same past that Artie is not allowed to share: "of course, you never knew him [Richieu]. He didn't come out from the war" – "Yes, I know" (*Maus* 32). Although Richieu belongs to the past, his figure is linked to Artie, as if they were the two sides of the same coin. Hence, when Vladek introduces Richieu's birth in his narrative, he introduces at the same time a 'funny' anecdote of Artie's birth. The doctor broke Artie's arm to take him from Anja's belly, because he raised his arm "like Hitler!" (*Maus* 32). This comparison between the two births increases the idea that Artie is imperfect just from the beginning. It also reinforces Artie's feeling that he is a faulty substitute for Richieu, who would remain always perfect and innocent. In this way, Richieu functions as a shadow in Artie's life; although it is Artie the "alive" child, the only photos in Vladek and Anja's bedroom are of Richieu, the "non-child" (the absent child). In some way, Artie is jealous of Richieu because he shared the same experience as his parents, and because Richieu, as an eternal child in his parents' memories, is perfect, while Artie is not so (figure 12). Indeed, Spiegelman dedicates the second part of *Maus* to his brother, so a real photo of a little boy (probably Richieu) presides the first page of this second part. This photo "becomes the emblem of the incomprehensibility of Holocaust destruction" (Hirsch "Family Pictures" 23). It also helps the fixity of Richieu's figure, as commented above, in such a way that, while Vladek's photo means survival, Richieu's reminds the reader of the cruel reality; the vast majority of people, mostly children and elderly, perished irremediably.

From a psychoanalytical perspective, as well as Artie functions as the double of Spiegelman, Richieu functions as the double of Artie. This *doppelgänger* has been created in Artie's earlier stages of his childhood, provoking in Artie an interiorization of Richieu's figure in such a way that what remains is the reverse of what Richieu was thought to be. Thus, Artie sees himself as a troublesome son to Vladek and Anja rather than a beloved son, as Richieu, in his short infancy, was. According to Freud, "the 'double' has become a vision of terror" (87). Therefore, the symbolic union between Richieu and Artie, that is, between Vladek and Anja's happiness of the past and the traumatic memory they have to bear in the present is clearly established in two occasions, when Vladek mistakes Artie for Richieu. The first one is when Vladek relates the first massive classification at Sosnowiec Stadium, where

he loses his father and his sister and her children (*Maus* 93). The second one occurs at the end of the second part of *Maus*, when Vladek is very ill and Artie visits him at his bed: "I'm tired from talking, Richieu, and it's enough stories for now…" (*Maus* 296). It is worth noting that both cases correspond to moments where Vladek has lost some members of his family (his father and sister, and then Anja, because she did not live "happy ever after"), so these are instances where traumatic memory remains as such, so the projection Vladek does of Richieu onto Artie comes when the telling of the events results in an "obscenity", which means, understanding *too* much, as explained above. Young states that "the still apparently unassimilated trauma of his first son's death remains inarticulable – and thereby deep – and so is represented here only indirectly as a kind of manifest behavior" (667). As explained above, deep memory is closely linked to traumatic memory, while common memory relates to narrative memory. Nevertheless, both memories are the two sides of the same reality; the one is the void of the other. Alternatively, Elmwood suggests that "the idealized dead boy's phantom presence serves to exonerate Art from feelings of guilt resulting from his estrangement from his parents by shifting the cause for such alienation away from himself" (702). This way, the emotional and physical distance that Art imposes on his parents rests on the feeling that he will be always a stranger to his parents' past, extrapolating this feeling to his parents' present. This imposed distance can be also appreciated in "Prisoner on the Hell Planet".

The other element that has forged Artie's traumatic memory is Anja's suicide in 1968. This event was illustrated in 1972 in a four-page comic strip entitled "Prisoner on the Hell Planet: A Case History". Spiegelman decided to include this comic strip in *Maus* because Vladek found a copy of this strip and read it, so it forms part of Vladek's memories, and because it is related to Artie's own trauma, so it responds to why Artie shows such a distant attitude towards his father. Moreover, as Chute observes, "*Maus*'s page numbers stop while "Prisoner" unfolds" ("'The Shadow…'" 207), conveying an uncanny, defamiliarized rupture in the narrative, establishing a connection with Art and Françoise's conversation while driving on a highway, a scene that also stops momentarily Vladek's narrative to center on Artie's childhood, desires and fantasies regarding his parents' past (Silverblatt "Interview").

At this point, the reader has become so familiar with the mouse masks, that the portrayal of the same characters as human (distorted, but yet human) makes him/her uncomfortable. Furthermore, the inclusion of "Prisoner" in the middle of *Maus* adds new

meanings that may not probably convey it by itself: "Prisoner" implies that something is wrong in *Maus*, that the whole "picture" is not completed. Besides, its inclusion clearly contrasts with end scene, where Vladek insistently claims that Anja and him were "happy, happy ever after" (*Maus* 296). "Prisoner" shows that Vladek is, after all, a liar; the reader knows that Anja ended committing suicide, Vladek remarried but he is unhappy and the relation with his son is distant. In addition, Vladek may be unreliable when he relates fantastic events, such as the premonitory dream he has about his grandfather, the encounter with the Catholic priest at Auschwitz or the meeting of Anja with the Gypsy fortune-teller.

In formal terms, "Prisoner" is reproduced inside a black frame, in contrast with the rest of the graphic narrative. Artie's hand appears in the first page of this comic, holding the magazine. Unlike *Maus*, this comic strip illustrates characters as human, although both their bodies spaces are somehow distorted to create an atmosphere of oppression and madness. The short strip is introduced by a real photo of Anja and Artie as a little child. This photo reveals the trauma in both Vladek and Artie, so unassimilable that Spiegelman opts for using a photo instead. In fact, Anja's death supposes the shared trauma that triggers the creation of *Maus*. Yet, Anja's voice remains silent, so her figure is hardly reconstructed between Vladek's 'lost' memories of her during the war and Artie's memories blurred with guilt and remorse. In this sense, Hirsch points out that Anja's "photograph (…) connected to the body of her son, is there for everyone to see. Seeing her photograph is an act of 'memento mori': her picture a sign of the 'having been', of Anja's one-time presence and of her subsequent, perpetual, and devastating absence" ("Family Pictures" 21). Thus, Anja, more than Richieu, inhabits the silent gutters of *Maus*, rather than in its panels or windows, as her aura somehow dissolves in favour of Vladek's presence. In other words, "Prisoner on the Hell Planet" is the uncanny double of Anja's imposed silence, not only by Vladek, when he burnt her diaries, but also by Artie himself, when he refused to acknowledge his mother's past sufferings, and also by the patriarchal, manly construction of the Holocaust experience in the Western culture.

In "Prisoner", Artie appears much younger, wearing a black-and-white striped pyjamas (*Maus* 102), which reminds of those used at the concentration camp, perhaps, as an attempt by Artie to get closer to his parents' traumatic past. Indeed, Artie appears as a patient released from a psychiatric hospital that, more than a hospital, seems like a prison (figure 13). Figures pose in distorted angles, as in a nightmare (*Maus* 102). Bodies are extremely large with cadaverous faces. Both Artie's cousin and the doctor are illustrated as evil figures

who mock at Artie's sufferings. Indeed, these distorted figures and the other members of the family that appear at Anja's funeral and put the blame on Artie (*Maus* 104) may function as Artie's self-consciousness. Although Artie blames his mother for his current suffering, as when he yells "You murdered me, mommy, and you left me here to take the rap!!!" (*Maus* 105), deep in his mind, he feels guilty for his mother's suicide. Indeed, days before committing suicide, Anja tried to talk to Artie, but he "turned away, resentful of the way she tightened the umbilical cord" (*Maus* 105).

It is worth noting that in panel 2, page 105 (figure 14), Art intermingles different images that conjugate to drive his mother crazy and desperate. Along with Anja's naked body lying in the bath, with a razor cutting her tattooed arm, it appears a pile of bodies, dead Jews at the *lager*, and also an image of Anja reading a book to Artie when he was a child. Words accompany this collage as if they were in a twisted sled: "menopausal depression; Hitler did it!; Mommy, Bitch", suggesting an obsessive overlap of different "temporalities in one tiny frame, understood by the conventions of the comics medium to represent one moment in time" (Chute "'The Shadow…'" 208). Miller adds that "the mosaic of image proposes the pieces of truth to which no single answer is available" (51), since Anja did not leave any note. Even this ultimate testimony has been lost forever. Moreover, through this image, especially the depiction of the pile of dead bodies, Spiegelman connects the silence imposed on Anja to the silence imposed on his inability to convey all the missing testimonies of those who did not survive, representing through, again, the pile of corpses under his drawing desk at the beginning of chapter 2, in part II (*Maus* 201).

In this comic strip, not only Anja and Artie are portrayed miserably, but also Vladek appears as a phantomized figure, with dark holes as eyes, and totally devastated by Anja's death. In panel 8, page 103, Vladek embraces Artie tightly. At the corner of this panel, the reader can appreciate an eagle with the words "Protect what you have". In a way, Vladek protects everything he has, but only material things, because he was unable to protect what he loved most, his wife.

Like in *Maus*, the narrator shows two contradictory feelings, as said before. On one hand, he wants to share the same experience his parents went through so, that way, he may feel closer to them (for instance, by depicting the hospital as a prison). On the other hand, he is resentful because his parents have transmitted trauma to him, and this is partly the reason why he suffers from mental problems and is unhappy. These same contradictory feelings are also explained by Artie himself in *Maus*. Furthermore, Weschler observes a

contradiction in the depiction of Vladek in the first three-page draft of "Maus" as an "empathetic father", and his depiction in the long version of *Maus*, and the depiction of Anja in "Prisoner" as a "cruelly manipulative mother" and her lately portrayal in *Maus*, producing a "complete reversal" of both characters (13).

All in all, "Prisoner on the Hell Planet" plays a crucial role in *Maus*; while it tells the source of the only trauma that both Vladek and Artie share, that is, Anja's suicide, it also highlights the absence of Anja's voice. Chute also points out that the inclusion of this comic strip somehow breaks the "narrative flow of *Maus*, interrupting its pagination, style, and tone" ("'The Shadow…'" 206). She also observes the fact that it is Mala who introduces "Prisoner". Like Anja's voice, Mala's is also forced to remain silent in favour of Vladek and Artie's male discourses.

It is worth noting that the figures of Richieu and Anja function also as fetishes, as Elmwood points out, where "the disruptions resulting from the Spiegelman family traumas take the forms of fetishes, silenced testimonials, and specters – memories of the dead that continue to influence the living" (692). This is the case with Richieu (he died too young to tell his story), and Anja's imposed silence. The burning of Anja's personal documents causes Artie to lose the only chance to redeem his lack of empathy when his mother was still alive. Thus, the only way to 'fill' the void Anja's words have left is to imagine her writing these documents (Figure 15). Although the reading of "Prisoner on the Hell Planet" brings back bad memories to Vladek, he understands the necessity of expressing such feelings as remorse, sadness and emptiness: "it is good you got it outside your system. But for me it brought in my mind so much memories of Anja" (*Maus* 106). On this wise, though this comic strip is disturbing in its form and content, it helps release traumatic memory and transform it into narrative memory to a certain degree. In this respect, LaCapra states that "there is a sense in which Artie seeks a memorial to the missing mother, a necessarily inadequate gift of mourning that tries to compensate both for her suffering in life and for her untimely, unjustified death…" (*History and Memory* 172). Although Spiegelman rebukes his mother for causing such a traumatic impact on her son with her suicide when he bursts out "Congratulations!... You've committed the perfect crime…" (*Maus* 105), the creation of "Prisoner" implies a "masked" apology.

As commented above, Artie's trauma is also boosted by the success of *Maus* Part I. The feelings and thoughts that this success provoked in Spiegelman are widely reflected in the second part of this graphic narrative. Accordingly, Spiegelman, in the process of writing

his father's memories, found it important to incorporate his own creative process to the narrative, so that "one doesn't want to give a counterfeit experience; better to give the problematics of reconstructing that experience" (*MetaMaus* 208). Thus, he includes "the telling as well as what's told." He adds that "The fact that you're told that I'm trying to show you what I understand of what Vladek is telling me is built into the fabric of the narrative itself, and allows that narrative to get told" (*MetaMaus* 208). Chute also states that "by explicitly centering portions of the text on its own enunciative context, he [Spiegelman] offers his doubts as to his adequacy to represent the Holocaust, as a secondary witness and as a cartoonist" (*MetaMaus* 208). This self-reflexivity is a common characteristic of graphic narrative, since their authors are unconsciously compelled to justify their choice of representing history through a multimodal, aesthetic form that has been considered a lowbrow medium for a long time.

Therefore, this inclusion of the process of creating *Maus* inside *Maus* can be possible through the character of Artie who, apart from representing the double of Spiegelman, it also serves both as an excuse and as an explanation of why the comic is chosen as the medium to deliver a survivor's testimony. Hence, the first time the narrator-character Artie talks about his intention of writing a book about his father's experience at Auschwitz takes place at the beginning of Part I (*Maus* 12). Curiously, Vladek responds that probably nobody would be interested in his story and personal experience. Another instance is when, at the end of Part I, Artie shows the first draft of *Maus* to Mala and Vladek. Mala emphasizes the importance of Artie's book: "It's an important book. People who don't usually read such stories will be interested" (*Maus* 135).

In general, *Maus* Part II reflects more on the process of creation, such as the design of the characters. For instance, this second part of *Maus* starts with Artie experimenting with different animals to draw Françoise, his wife. Françoise poses some questions to Artie: she is French, not Polish or Vladek's daughter, but she has converted to Judaism: "what kind of animal should I make you?" – "a mouse, of course" – "But you're French" (*Maus* 171). In this sense, Artie shows some implicit prejudices against other nationalities, including American Jewish women. Conversations between Artie and Françoise also reflect other issues, such as the legitimacy of writing about the Holocaust experience when Artie did not experience it by himself, and also to write it down in a comic form, a medium considered a minor art (figure 16).

One of the these passages that center on the creation of *Maus* takes place in chapter 2, part II. Artie is illustrated as a human wearing a mouse mask and drawing at his desk (*Maus* 201). He connects different dates (Vladek's death, the first time Vladek started working as a tinman at Auschwitz, the birth of Art's daughter, the date of the publication of *Maus*, the suicide of his mother, Art's depression...). Panel 5 shows an Artie standing on top of a pile of corpses. This image reflects the sense of guilt for being famous thanks to a story of horror and death, a story that he has not experienced, so many could think that he has not the right to tell these things, less in a comic format. Outside the window, it can be appreciated the security tower that reminds of Auschwitz (figure 17). He talks about the desire of many to make a film adaptation of *Maus*, but he feels reluctant to do so. He is also interviewed by an American reporter who asks him "Tell our viewers what message you want to get from your book" (*Maus* 202). At the same time, a German reporter rebukes that the book, recently translated into German, may cause controversy because it perpetuates the feeling of guilt in later German generations. All these insecurities cause Artie to diminish literally, until he turns into a little mouse. Then, he decides to visit his therapist Pavel to discuss these issues, and about Vladek's complicated behaviour (*Maus* 203). Accordingly, Miller states that the inclusion of this therapy session in *Maus* serves to show the "ambivalence inherent in his project: being fair and staying angry" (47). The fact that Artie's comic conveys one of the most traumatic episodes in collective memory does not exclude his troublesome relation with his father, even if he died.

Throughout Pavel's observations, the reader can relate the feeling of guilt Vladek felt for surviving others with the guilt Artie feels when writing about the Holocaust experience. Interestingly, Artie quotes Beckett, who said "every word is like an unnecessary stain on silence and nothingness" (*Maus* 205). However, as Artie stresses, "on the other hand, he SAID it". Thus, while many testimonies of those who did not survive remain silent, even Anja's memories, *Maus* supposes the ethical attempt to represent what seems to be beyond any possible representation or conceptualization, as Martín Sanz observes (70), and to transmit it to the following generations. Even if these testimonies are useless in avoiding another Holocaust, they nevertheless help the survivors to incorporate these memories into their personal histories and also into the collective memory. This necessity of telling is what Rothberg calls "the impossibility of staying silent" (684), at the same time the pile of corpses under Artie's drawing desk reminds the reader that silence prevails for those who did not survive or were silenced, as Anja.

On the whole, the figure of Artie is clearly the link between the portrayal of Vladek's testimony, and the non-portrayal of Anja's testimony. Although *Maus* is centered on Vladek's past at the ghetto and at Auschwitz, every element that conforms the graphic narrative – the drawing of spaces and temporalities and the insecurities in depicting the Holocaust in comic form – revolve around Artie. Throughout this figure, Spiegelman conveys multiple and complex layers to the narrative, such as his own traumatic memories shaped by the shadow of Richieu and by his mother's suicide. This figure also helps portray his troublesome relation with his father since he was a child, along with the necessity of representing Vladek's testimony and character as fair and transparent as possible. Artie is also the key figure who connects the different temporalities and spaces, creating a continuity in the transmission of memory from one generation to the next.

4.1.3. Anja's absent narrative

Anja Spiegelman is Vladek's wife and Artie's mother. The crafting of *Maus* took place almost ten years after the suicide of Anja in 1968. Despite the fact that Anja's voice remains silent in *Maus,* her phantomized figure hangs over Vladek and Artie's narratives. Indeed, the trigger for the creation of *Maus* is the searching for Anja's memories, an enterprise that reveals as unsuccessful. Glejzer points out that:

> At the end [of part I], Artie walks away and the possible testimony on Anja is foreclosed – he will never know what she wanted him to know – there is no memory that will cover over this moment of forgetfulness. She is forever lost. This is the traumatic kernel that this text cannot put into words but cannot help but speak. It is the moment in *Maus* where the impossibility of testimony speaks over the very real testimony of Vladek or even Artie's remembrance of his youth. (136)

Anja's sudden death, and the disappearance of any written testimony by her, complicate the recovery of her memories. Nevertheless, the patriarchal, male approach to the Holocaust experience would have made it almost impossible to recover her testimony even if Anja had still been alive. Indeed, this is the case for almost all the female characters that appear in *Maus*, such as Mala or Tosha, badly mistreat in Spiegelman's recreation of Vladek's memories.

In general terms, female figures such as Anja or Mala are depicted as submissive and emotionally weak characters. The first time Anja appears in the graphic narrative, she is illustrated as a small, fragile and modest young "mouse" (*Maus* 19). Indeed, Vladek chooses Anja because she seems to be a good housewife only by looking at her wardrobe. She is presented as a weak, unstable person, since she suffers a severe post-partum depression.

When Anja is reluctant to live after giving birth to Richieu, she is depicted laying on a black-and-white striped sofa, which resembles the pattern of the prisoners' uniform (*Maus* 33). This panel can be seen as premonitory of what is going to happen (figure 18). Besides, this panel appears slightly leaned, so it transmits an idea of mental and emotional destabilization (Spiegelman *MetaMaus* 182). This strategy also applies to the inclusion of the three real photos, as they are the bearers of traumatic memory or postmemory, in Hirsch's terms.

Anja has an imposed secondary acting role in *Maus*, due partly to her own husband, since Vladek burnt Anja's diaries after her suicide, in a failed attempt to erase all the sufferings Anja had gone through. Consequently, what the reader can know about her is through Vladek's narrative. And most of the times Vladek refuses to talk about Anja's past. For instance, he suddenly changes the conversation when Artie asks him about Anja's experience at Birkenau (*Maus* 196). Even Artie refuses to talk about her. The only exception is in Spiegelman's former comic strip "Prisoner on the Hell Planet", but again this story is through Artie's eyes and focused on his sense of guilt rather than on Anja's trauma and the possible reasons that led her to commit suicide. Besides, Elmwood (709) observes that, in *Maus*, there is not any scene, image or panel that illustrates Artie in his childhood with his mother, as it is the case with Vladek (indeed, the graphic narrative starts with an episode of Artie's childhood and a conversation with his father). This is due to the fact that these memories of Anja through Artie's narrative are missing because they remain in his traumatic memory.

Notwithstanding, as Vladek narrates, Anja wrote many notebooks and diaries during the war and after (*Maus* 86). At the ghetto, Anja writes all day and night, as Vladek remembers: "the whole day and night Anja sat writing into her notebook" (*Maus* 125). When Vladek confesses to Artie that, after Anja's death, he had burnt all her diaries because "these papers had too many memories. So I burned them", Artie calls him "murderer" (*Maus* 161). Besides, the only sentence that Vladek seems to remember from her diaries concerns Artie and his labour of writing *Maus*: "I wish my son, when he grows up, he will be interested by this" (*Maus* 161). To erase one's memories by destroying his/her words, photos and other personal works is the same as the Nazis tried to do; to erase a whole ethnic group, and then, destroy the evidence of their crimes by dismantling the gas chambers and the concentration camps. Thus, Vladek, by burning Anja's diaries, acts in the same way, but rather to erase the sufferings of the one he loved the most (figure 19). In relation to this, Chute observes that "Art accuses his father of murdering his already dead mother by incinerating her notebooks

after her death", establishing a parallelism with the incinerations of bodies at the *lager*, in order to "destroy any remnant" (*Disaster Drawn* 192).

One of the episodes that shape Anja's personal trauma is the fact that she, together with a brother, are the only survivors of their family (*Maus* 124), so she suffers a total disintegration of the family as one of the pillars in her life; most of the members, even her own child, died during the war, they were gassed or killed by starvation, or poisoned, as Richieu. It was Tosha, Anja's sister, the one who killed her children, including Richieu, and then killed herself with poison in order to avoid the gas chamber: "I won't go to their gas chambers!... And my children won't go to their gas chambers" (*Maus* 111). Richieu and his cousins' deaths were also the fate of thousands of children who were gassed, because they were too young to work, and because they represented the next generation of Jewish families, so they had to be eradicated. Spiegelman also implies the possible trigger for Anja's depression and posterior suicide: the sudden death in a car accident of her only surviving brother in 1964, so that "some life force starts to drain out of her" ("MAD Youth" 4).

The disintegration of the family supposes also an active role of both the perpetrators (the Nazi officials and institutions) but also of the families themselves, when they must choose which member will live and which one will die. This is what happens to Anja when the family must decide to turn her grandparents in to the authorities in exchange for her father. Unfortunately, Anja ends losing also her father and mother (*Maus* 89). As for her internment at Birkenau, there is no much information, only the moments when Vladek could see Anja or when some female prisoners tell him about his wife. At the concentration camp, Anja is, again, depicted as a weak, fragile woman (*Maus* 213).

According to Vladek's narrative, desperate because, after the war, Anja has returned to Sosnowiec but does not find any trace of Vladek, she visits a Gypsy fortune-teller, who says to her that she is going to encounter Vladek, together they are going to have a new life and a new baby (*Maus* 293). This, along with Vladek's dream and encounter with the priest, is another example of the inclusion of magic elements to bring the characters some hope for a better future. However, these moments contrast with the rest of the narrative, characterised by being a down-to-earth telling of the events. Again, the reader cannot know for sure if this encounter between Anja and the fortune-teller was real, because it is Vladek who narrates this experience, an event that he never saw with his eyes. Nevertheless, these magic moments give to Vladek a redemptive, meaningful closure to his sufferings, and also to Anja's (figure 20).

Anja is not the only female character mistreated in *Maus*. Mala, Vladek's second wife, is mistreated not only by her husband, but also by Artie. Like Vladek, she is a survivor of the Holocaust. She was a neighbour from Sosnowiec, the same town where Vladek and Anja lived in, and she also attended the classification at Sosnowiec's Stadium (*Maus* 94). Vladek implicitly compares Mala with Anja (who was a very submissive woman) and in a certain way he puts the blame on her because of Anja's death. As well as Artie, Mala suffers from the "ghost" of the one who has substituted, in this case, Anja. As Artie is the son that substitutes Richieu, Mala is the wife that stands for Anja. Both Anja and Richieu, as dead spirits, are seen as perfect in their fixation (they are dead, so they cannot grow older or betray the ones who love, or disappoint others, as Mala or Artie can do). Mala feels the shadow of Anja in the same way as Artie feels the shadow of Richieu. Vladek has lots of photos of Anja, but only one of Mala (*Maus* 106). Similarly, Richieu's photos are everywhere, but there are no photos of Artie (because he was alive, as Mala).

Regarding the unjust portrayal of women, Hirsch identifies *Maus* as a "story in orphic fashion, on female absence and death" ("Family Pictures" 21), in such a way that "Anja's role in their familial construction makes Art and Vladek's collaboration a process of masculine, Orphic creation" (20), inscribing Anja as the *objet petit a*, in psychoanalytical terms. Following Žižek (12), Anja is transformed into the object Artie and Vladek most desire; they are not ultimately interested in obtaining the unattainable object of desire (Anja alive), but they long for reproducing the desire itself (Anja fixed in her imposed silence, but there, willing to be manipulated). This fixity of the desired object is what Hirsch calls "memento mori" ("Family Pictures" 21), to refer to Anja's photograph at the beginning of the comic strip "Prisoner". In this respect, Rothberg asserts that:

> We should not read "Prisoner", however, as a less mediated expression of angst, despite its "human" characters and the reality-effect of the inserted 1958 photograph of Anja and Art. Rather, the "presence" of the maternal body here vainly attempts to compensate for what, many years later, remain the unmournable losses of Anja's suicide and of the years of psychic and political suffering which her life represents for Art. (679)

Spiegelman observes the power of photography in paralysing (hi)story in time and space, creating an uncanny feeling due to the unattainability of the moment encapsulated in that photo, in this case, when Anja was still alive ("MAD Youth" 4). Similar to the vision of Anja as the *objet petit a*, "Prisoner" poorly stands for Anja's absent testimony. As Elmwood points out, "both Vladek and Art are unable to present her outside of the framework of traditional gender roles" (709), illustrating this way how historiography reinforces gender norms. Miller concurs that "we should understand the question of Anja as that which will

forever escape representation and at the same time requires it: the silence of the victims" (52). This way, the non-representation of silence (the void left) is, after all, a kind of representation. In addition, female voices of the Holocaust define eventually the imposed silence on those who are regarded as second-class citizens.

All in all, Anja's testimony remains silent, so, since she is "not a producer of language", she becomes an "archive" (Rothberg 678); although Artie persistently searches for Anja's voice inside Vladek's testimony, the recovery of her testimony results impossible. This is what Glejzer has referred to as "the forgetfulness that is bound to memory" (128), in his study on the difference between testimony as telling and witnessing as seeing in *Maus*. So, Anja's testimony remains in the realm of the unattainable, in Artie's and Vladek's traumatic memory.

The next section will deal with the process of dehumanization carried out by the Nazi regime and how it is portrayed in *Maus*, especially, through Vladek's narrative, since he is the main narrator regarding the events closely related to the Second World War.

4.2. The Annihilation of the Individual

Since he was a little child, Spiegelman had been exposed to the narratives and stories of the Holocaust, experiences suffered by his parents and close friends who lived in New York after the war. Although Art was not totally aware of what meant the Holocaust in the rupture of social schemas in Europe, he captured the feelings of despair, suffering and guilt of those who survived. In this sense, Spiegelman observes that, contrary to many criticism regarding second generation narrative has claimed, a certain point of appropriation is needed:

> [T]o inhabit and identify with each character. You have to act out their poses, you have to think them through. So, in that sense, even though I am very resistant to the notion of my work being dismissed or understood as a therapeutic exercise, it is true that there is a kind of gestalting necessary just to be able to inhabit each character. (*MetaMaus* 35)

This way, Art fills the empty spaces in Vladek's memory with collective memory and documented evidence. This is how it works, for instance, when deciding on drawing the supposedly music band at Auschwitz, even if his father does not remember this fact, by hiding them behind a group of men marching (*Maus* 214). Moreover, although it deals with a historical event such as the Holocaust experience, *Maus* reflects the personal memories of someone who suffered annihilation of the self and later survive to live with that wound. On this wise, *Maus* is a personal story set in a given historical moment that marked the Western

civilization, combining both common and deep memory, as posited by LaCapra in his distinction between structural (transhistorical) trauma and specific historical trauma. In the Holocaust, both types of trauma, which carry absence and loss respectively, are interconnected so that trauma outweighs the individual to form a historical memory that consists of different individual experiences, as explained above.

Similarly, Young considers that "Spiegelman does not attempt to represent events he never knew immediately, but instead portrays his necessarily hypermediated experience of the memory of events" (669). In fact, second generation survivors are highly influenced by the sometimes distorted or faulty memories about the Holocaust experience that were transmitted from their parents. However, it is interesting the way Spiegelman "side-shadows the history of the Holocaust" through the dialogue between Vladek and Artie, as well as he "side-shadows memory itself" (Young 699). This way, Spiegelman highlights the importance of memory and of recalling and preserving that memory, as he does in *Maus*. The importance of memory and its place in history is also supported by Elmwood, who states that "history and memory can exist in reciprocal relation (…). While memory can serve as historical evidence, it serves also to fill in the gaps of absent events with the material particulars of those who speak their (primary) memories in mediated forms to others (secondary memory)" (717). This interaction is reflected in those occasions where Vladek relates the whereabouts at the ghetto and at the concentration camp, together with those instances where Artie "fills in" Vladek's memories based on well documented testimonies. Nevertheless, as Gopnik observes, "Spiegelman makes the bureaucratic sadism of the Germans uncannily vivid – all the steps and reroutings and sortings and resortings that preceded mass murder" (30). This way, Vladek's discourse, and its ultimate translation into the comic medium, breaks down the details of this process carried out by the Nazi regime.

In general terms, the Holocaust experience is the history of the systemic annihilation of a whole ethnic group, which means, the total erasure of the recognition of the *other* (and, consequently, the responsibility the *self* has towards the *other*), as Laub remarks (66). Although Whitehead, among others, claims that "the Holocaust is a unique and incomparable event" (88), other scholars, such as Bauman, assert that the Holocaust is the most successful product of modernization, and not "a wound or malady of the Western civilization" (xii), also questioning the spread of antisemitism as the sole cause of the Genocide. Thus, the systematic prosecution and later extermination of thousands of Jews (and other minorities) is the result of the bureaucratic organization that characterised Europe, especially Germany,

where the totalitarian government was unimpeded by any moral questioning from other political parties or legitimate voices. Accordingly, morality, conceived as an individual, pre-social feature, is suspended in society, and substituted by a sense of duty towards the system. So, the deportation to ghettos and concentration camps, and later the massive killing during the "final solution" remain out of any ethical assessment.

That way, the solid bureaucratic, hierarchical organization, where everyone's duty was above any ethical consideration, along with the physical distance that was imposed on the Jews, boosted the systematic annihilation of thousands. There, individuals were transformed into an obscure, homogeneous group, losing their legitimacy as equals, their status as the *other*. Hence, individuals turn invisible and, consequently, totally indifferent to the rest of the population. In this situation, choice is reduced to obedience out of fear. Moreover, disinformation reinforces this fear, so Jews are more inclined to expose themselves. Thus, there are rumours about the *lagers*, but no clear information. This causes such confusion and instability in the Jews that annul any reasonable response to protect their lives. They must trust the Nazi precepts and officials because they have no other choice, as Vladek asserts: "To go [to the classification at Sosnowiec Stadium], it was no good. But no to go - it was also no good." (*Maus* 90). Again, at the several classifications the Jews must pass through, their lives are reduced to two sides; the right ('the bad one') and the left side ('the worse one'). This turns Jews' lives into a "push your luck" game, acting in terms of winning (stay alive) or losing (die). Thus, there are not decisions that carry certain consequences in complex situations, but one single choice can mean death. This idea is also examined by Artie's therapist (*Maus* 205), who explains that surviving means to win while dying means to lose, when it was in fact random and did not depend on the survivors' will or wit. In this manner, total annihilation turns people into puppets without a will. If they try to resist, the consequences could be overwhelming. In some instance, Artie asks his father why Auschwitz prisoners did not resist (*Maus* 233). Vladek answers that continuous starvation, fear and tiresome make someone paralyse. When people are deprived of their basic needs, resistance is impossible.

Although the feeling of antisemitism has characterised the Western culture since the Middle Ages, it is not a sufficient condition for the Holocaust to take place. Yet, this feeling eased deportation and extermination. The systematic annihilation begins in the streets, among neighbours. The first signs of Nazi oppression against Jews are depicted in chapter 2, part I, when Vladek and Anja travel to a sanatorium in Czechoslovakia. Page 37 shows

different panels with a dark Swastika at the background, and some Nazi officials, cats in military clothes, stronger and taller than the terrifying mice. In panel 5, it can be read "This town is Jew free". Here, the black Swastika functions as a symbol to represent the Nazi regime and the dangers associated with it. Another instance is when, in page 51, panels 1 and 2, Vladek and others are captured by the Nazis, and an official blames them for the war ("It's all your fault, this war"). This idea is enhanced in such a way that citizens also believe that the Jews are the only ones responsible for the war and their miseries; if the Jews did not exist, there would not be any conflict. Citizens also despise Jews, as Anja suggests before the outburst of the war: "when it comes to Jews, the Poles don't need much stirring up!" (*Maus* 39).

In general terms, the systematic organization of the Third Reich helped the extermination of the Jews and other minor communities. For instance, Nazis were systematic in the way they classified people (*Maus* 61). Systematicity helped in the construction of the institutionalization of the Nazi regime and its ethical values, boosting the spread of antisemitism, making it legitimate and natural. Education also helped spread stereotypes and hatred towards other societies. For instance, children are warned of the Jews because they sacrifice and eat Christian children, commonly known as the ritual murder libel, a false belief widely spread in Europe since Medieval times (figure 21).

Another key term in the process of annihilation of the individual, and also essential in the forge of trauma in the Holocaust experience, is silence. Silence means the void, the hiding and destruction of evidence of the extermination, the disbelief about what happened at the *lagers*, and also the impossibility of facing directly what causes trauma. Silence functions similarly to the imposed absence of female testimony, as it is the case with Anja's testimony, described above. Regarding spaces of extermination, as it was Auschwitz, Lyotard wrote that "the silence that surrounds the phrase 'Auschwitz was the extermination camp' is not a state of mind, it is a sign that something remains to be phrased which is not, something which is not determined" (qtd. in Friedlander 52). As Auschwitz is constructed as an *ur*-space, it remains outside any ethical consideration. This issue will be examined in the next section.

Survivors, such as Vladek, were afraid of not being believed by others of what they witnessed at the concentration camps. While traumatic memory evades language, the image sometimes prevails. This is true for the use of photography in capturing the unbearable and "showing absence" (Chute *Disaster Drawn* 188). Indeed, there exists four photographs

which were secretly taken at Auschwitz by the prisoners in 1944 as an empirical evidence of the fatality they were bearing. One of these photos serves as inspiration for one of the panels in *Maus* (232), which shows prisoners burning Jewish Hungarian corpses (some were still alive, as Vladek asserts). This is an example of how "*Maus* is interested in documenting as the texture of visual articulation, however supposedly direct, mediated, or re-mediated" (Chute *Disaster Drawn* 189).

Silence is what remains of those who were exterminated or disappeared. On many occasions, people stopped hearing from them. Vladek relates many instances of neighbours, friends and family members who were arrested or simply disappeared. For instance, when he talks about the Orbach family, a friend of his uncle, he says that "and then they [Orbach family] stopped to write. Finished" (*Maus* 65). Hence, to stop receiving news about someone means that this person had been killed. In fact, the extermination of whole families weaken bonds between Jews, so that individuals become more and more isolated and turned easy targets. In *Maus*, there are many instances where Anja's family is depicted as an extensive, close-knit and affluent family, formed by three generations (*Maus* 74). The familiar bonds are erased systematically by the Nazi regime by separating the different members at the classifications. As posed above, silence means death: "and those that are taken away – they're never seen again!" (*Maus* 77).

Silence also refers to the attempts by the Nazis to erase any evidence of the gas chambers. Vladek and other prisoners go to dismantle the gas chambers at Birkenau. Vladek describes the building to Artie, and the author illustrates the empty chambers with a map (*Maus* 230). A prisoner responsible for the gas chamber and for burning the corpses (they were called *Sonderkommando*) describes the procedures to Vladek. Vladek does not want to listen, but the prisoner insists on going on, impelled by the urgency of sharing the traumatic vision, and the fact that he becomes an active participant in the massacre of his peers, old people, women and children (figure 22). One of the reasons for drawing the gas chambers empty of prisoners is to represent the silence imposed by those who were there: they were gassed, killed, burnt and their ashes gone, so their testimonies are gone forever as well. These empty panels also reflect the uncanny, since what is considered familiar (a changing room) becomes frightening (the showers turn into a gas chamber). Yet, prisoners followed orders, because they had no choice, although they knew in advance the real use of these showers.

At the end of *Maus*, Vladek summarises the fate of the members of Anja and Vladek's family. Unfortunately, most of them have died, including their son Richieu. The

only ‘witnessing’ that remains from them (that they have once existed) are their photos. The frames of the photos are the same for the different panels (figure 23). This panel contrasts with the following panels in page 276 (panels 3, 5, 6 and 7) which encapsulate a huge Vladek with scarce photos at his feet. In this respect, Spiegelman explains that, as most of his family has disappeared during the war, Vladek must occupy the space that otherwise would be dedicated to his family, so, “Vladek’s body has to stand in for all of the bodies that didn’t make it into the then-present” (*MetaMaus* 224). Spiegelman also adds that, in this scene, Vladek “looks terribly isolated and alone with the photographs. It is immediately understood visually, but difficult to describe. I think even though he’s presumably still on the couch next to Art, like he is in the two small panels at the top (…) [Art]’s not there” (*MetaMaus* 232). Unlike the three real photos of Anja, Richieu and Vladek, these photos are “recreations” of the real ones, so they work as manuscripts of memory traces (Chute “Comics Form…” 113), which make them more “real” than the printed photos of Anja, Richieu and Vladek.

Similarly, *MetaMaus* offers the reader a branch of the Spiegelman family tree, one version before the war and another just after the war (*MetaMaus* 228-231). It can be clearly appreciated the blank spaces in the post-war family tree, representing those who did not survive, including the absence of Richieu in the photo of Vladek and Anja (Figure 24). Therefore, blank spaces, or the absence of any colour, name or whatever, reflect silence, the unattainable and the irremediable loss in visual terms. Although Vladek’s brother has survived, he is not as “lucky” as Anja: “from the rest of my family, it’s nothing left, not even a snapshot” (*Maus* 276), since the photos of Vladek’s family were destroyed during the war. Accordingly, Vladek is capable of keeping material things for a long time (food, clothes, nails), but not photos or memories of his family. This absence of any representation of Vladek’s family, though in photography, strengthens the idea of traumatic memory regarding Vladek’s sense of failure in saving those he loved.

In formal terms, silence is conveyed not only through the conversation between Vladek and Artie in the present (to talk about those who disappeared, so they are hardly depicted in Vladek’s past), but also in the visual absence of those who were silenced. As Rothberg points out, “Richieu’s and Anja’s absence, and, by analogy, the absence of the millions of victims, underlies Spiegelman’s aesthetic choice of grappling with the Holocaust as an impossible visual text” (675). One means to include visually the absent victims is by drawing himself at the top of a pile of bodies, as in page 201, where Artie sits at his drawing desk, with a gesture that indicates a lack of inspiration (to go on drawing). If silence is key

to the annihilation and destruction of the individual, Artie becomes unable to draw the victims that were reduced to mere numbers: they have become a pile of flesh and bones, as in this page, but also in page 255, when Vladek must literally step on corpses to go to the bath when he suffered from typhus.

In the process of annihilation, one of the first steps to carry it out is to humiliate the individual, mostly, in public situations. Thus, at the ghetto, Jews were obliged to dance or sing mockingly, or cut their beard, as the father of Vladek relates (65), a gesture considered a religious insult for male Jews. The first time that Vladek witnesses an open clash against Jews in the street (*Maus* 82), he becomes aware of the fact that Jews are no longer inside the legal system, so they have no rights. Panel 3 on page 82 shows a Vladek inside a Star of David, the symbol used to identify Jews. This same sacred element that characterises Judaism is taken by outsiders and used against them.

Taking someone's clothes away is another way of humiliation. Clothes and appearance are the mirror of the self. For Vladek, physical appearance has always been important. Apparently, worn-out clothes imply misery or self-hatred. Because of this, Vladek decides to throw his son's coat away because he says that it was "an old shabby coat" (*Maus* 71). For Vladek, neat clothes that fit perfectly enhance the self. This episode is similar to the one related to the use of wooden hungers instead of wire ones (*Maus* 13, 75). Wired hungers may remind Vladek of the wired fences of the *lager*, so this is why he prefers wooden hungers.

Another way of humiliation is to show how easy is killing a Jew with no consequences, neither from the state institutions (a legal response) nor from other citizens (a moral response). Indeed, killing a human is as easy as killing a fly with a spray (*Maus* 234). As prisoners at the *lager* are used to seeing their mates being killed, they end seeing each other as animals. For instance, when the prisoners at Auschwitz abandon the *lager* due to the proximity of the Russian soldiers, one of the Nazi officials shoots a prisoner who tries to escape into the woods. This image brings to Vladek's mind the moment when a neighbour killed his dog. Both panels (the prisoner and the dog agonizing) appear close to each other, so the comparison between both images and the afterthoughts they carry are clear to the reader: prisoners have turned into useless pets (figure 25). The connection between prisoners and animals are also described in other instances. For example, when prisoners suffer from typhus, they are not allowed to take soup, so prisoners fight against each other for a bowl of soup: "Like wild animals they would fight until there was blood…. You can't know what it

is, to be hungry" (*Maus* 251). The comparison between the characters depicted as mice, and animals as such reflects also an uncanny feeling, subverting the animal imagery, as stated above.

To finish with, negotiation, organization (German *organiseren*) and bribery were crucial to survive, inside and outside the ghetto and at the concentration camp. Deals were between prisoners, officials and citizens. Organization depends on hierarchical relations among prisoners. Hierarchies are established according to the degree one is capable of taking advantage of things and other people, at the same time they are "generous" to their officials. For instance, Haskel, a prisoner who helped Vladek, was considered a *kombinator*, that is, "a guy what makes *kombinacya*, a schemer – a crook" (*Maus* 118). Haskel gives "presents" to officials and in return, they make him some favours. Haskell saves Vladek, so, in return, after the war, Vladek sends him packages as a "gift" (*Maus* 120).

Negotiation, most of the times, means the weakening of moral values. For instance, in order to go back to Sosnowiec, Vladek disguises as a Pole (wearing a pig mask) and bribes a Pole official to take the train (*Maus* 66). He also bribes the supervisor of a tin shop to gain some money, because, at this time, he, as Jew, was not allowed to run his own factory (*Maus* 80). Organization also implied treachery among Jews in order to survive. The months prior to the massive entrance of Jews into the concentration camps, betrayal between Jews were encouraged by most Nazi officials as an efficient way of creating a sense of instability and mistrust between the Jews, so that they ended breaking bonds between neighbours and family members, in accordance with the military maxim "*Divide et vinces*". Thus, Vladek comments on how some Jews betray their neighbours as a desperate measure for surviving: "some Jews thought in this way: if they gave to the Germans a few Jews, they could save the rest. And at least they could save themselves" (*Maus* 89).

Nevertheless, organization was unavoidable at the *lager*, because it was crucial to survive. Prisoners enter the *lager* without anything, not even their names. They must get the necessary utensils for eating, sleeping or walking. Vladek takes advantage of the options organization offers. He makes favours, he gives "gifts" and helps others (his knowledge of languages saves him in many occasions, as shown in page 191), and, in return, he receives food, clothes or leather shoes. He keeps some items for later use, which proves to be very effective. That is one of the reasons Vladek maintains this behaviour after the war. He has shown to be a master in organization, and that is his most appreciated skill, he was born to survive, and survive means to organize. Organization also reflects the capitalist economy.

In short, this section has shown that the process of annihilation against the Jews during the Nazi regime did not end with the war. Nazi regime enhanced the feeling of antisemitism that has characterised Western civilization since Medieval times, but did not create it, it was still in the structures of values and beliefs of the European citizens, regardless gender or social class. This is illustrated by the fact that many Jews who returned to their homes after the war found their houses occupied by other families, who had not the intention to leave, killing even the returned Jews, as illustrated in *Maus*: "For *this* he survived" (*Maus* 292). For them, Jews were not citizens at all. This process of annihilation takes on several steps, starting from a physical separation of the Jews from the rest of citizens, enclosing them in ghettos. Since the number of inhabitants of these ghettos increased month by month due to imposed interment of those Jews who belong to annexed territories during the war, the final solution becomes unavoidable. This means to take Jews away from society (far from cities, villages and towns), to these *ur*-places, and, lastly, to the gas chambers. The *lager* was the space specifically created for erasing the prisoners' identity as humans: Jews were taken their clothes off, and their few possessions and their human attributes (the hear, social bonds, ethical codes) were tore apart. Then, they were marked with a tattooed number, like cattle. At this moment, they were no longer human. In this sense, Spiegelman, by using the animal masks, dehumanises his characters in *Maus* from the beginning (as this process starts in the streets, as commented above), at the same time he reverses the effect these masks produce, so that they "secretly" keep the Jews' inherent humanity until the end.

In the next section, the recreation of spaces in *Maus* as symbolic places that forge trauma are described. These spaces, in turn, carry with them a sense of the uncanny, an unfamiliar and frightening feeling of what once considered home.

4.3. The Reconstruction of Space as memory sites

Space is a key element in *Maus*, since, rather than being depicted as real places, these spaces are represented symbolically, working as "testimonial archives" (Chute *Disaster Drawn* 174). The main spaces that are recreated in *Maus* are the ghetto, the concentration camp and the train. Rego Park, Florida or Artie's drawing studio are also spaces that function as symbolic settings for the present time, while the ghetto and the concentration camp serve as backgrounds for past memories.

Space is closely related to Freud's notion "the uncanny". Indeed, these *ur*-places are located inside bigger places that help construct this estrangement. Accordingly, once the war is over and the prisoners return to "normal" life, this entrance generates a weird sensation; everything that once was familiar to the prisoners seems strange now. For instance, Vladek and other prisoners, in their journey to Hungary, pass through many villages. Vladek is unsettled because "and I saw, it's not everywhere, *my Hell*. It's still life things going on." (*Maus* 265). Vladek and another prisoner, after many months wearing the striped pyjamas, get dressed in casual clothes, feeling "strangely" human again (*Maus* 271), making the act of dressing as something bizarre and marvellous.

Generally speaking, Spiegelman compares his work *Maus* with a memory site, a concept developed within Trauma Studies, especially by Hartman (1995), who focuses his research on the notion of place and its relation to memory and identity. According to Hartman, a memory place is understood as a mental projection of particular sites and landscapes beyond their spatial and temporal specificity (Whitehead 48). In this respect, Spiegelman uses the term memory site to refer to *Maus* as a whole, which serves as a substitution or extension of memory, as "all written language is a replacement for memory" (*MetaMaus* 76), so *Maus* has somehow substituted Spiegelman's – and also Vladek's – memory. This way, the book provides a release from traumatic memory, "not so much to expunge it, but to give it shape and thereby be able to put it aside" (*MetaMaus* 76). Furthermore, the narrative ends with the illustration of Vladek and Anja's tombstone, a real memory site (that Spiegelman himself has not visited for almost 20 years). Here the author compares *Maus* with a *yahrzeit*, a candle that stands for the memory of those who have disappeared (*MetaMaus* 234). Chute also notes the presence of the Star of David inscribed on this tombstone, recalling that this symbol was used as a "mark of hatred and oppression on the Nazi-enforced badges that are so prevalent in the first volume of *Maus*, reversing the 'mark' to attest to the enduring survival of Judaism and Jews" ("'The Shadow…'" 217). In addition, this last image stresses the fact that *Maus* cannot be read as a morality tale (or as a "happy ever after" story as Vladek insists on), but as a "survivor's tale" that goes beyond death, as its title suggests (Chute "'The Shadow…'" 218). The place of Spiegelman's signature right below his parents' grave reflects the desire of burying Artie's own hereditary trauma (this postmemory) with his parents' story of the past. This way, Artie's life history is irremediably connected to his parents' life history, implying, not a sense of closure, but

an awareness of continuation. This also reflects the transmission of trauma across generations.

Moreover, memory sites like this last panel in *Maus* are also constructed through little things such as photographs or Vladek's recordings. On the contrary, physical places such as the ghetto or the *lager* are reluctant to become these memory sites, as Hartman suggests, since, though camps are clearly fixed in the imagination of survivors, "it is difficult to think of the camps as being such memory places" (qtd. in Whitehead 48). Instead, the concentration camp works as a void in its inhabitants' memory, since it is the place for erasing the prisoners' sole existence, bringing the necessary conditions for the annihilation of the individual to take place successfully.

Hence, the story takes place mainly in Poland, the country Vladek, Anja and their family belong to and live. Sosnowiec is the town where Anja lives with their family. The other places where the action takes place are the *lager* at Auschwitz, Sweden and US – Florida and Rego Park in New York. Nonetheless, the places that forge traumatic memory are *ur*-places, places that are perceived as a "gap", because they remain outside the conventional parameters of what reality should be, as posed by Lanzmann. *Ur*-spaces also reflect the notion of the uncanny; these imposed places are not their homes anymore. Conversely, these places usually reside close to other legitimate, social spaces but, somehow, apart from the rest of the population. These places also help the process of individual annihilation, as they separate physically the Jews from their former neighbours, so that they become strangers. A clear example of an *ur*-place is the ghetto. Ghettos were commonly located in the middle of the town, sometimes in the old town. Ghettos were also surrounded by high bricked walls, so people from outside could not see the whereabouts of the inside. This physical distance enhances indifference among non-Jews towards the ghetto inhabitants. Later on, these ghettos were dismantled and people taken to the concentration camps, a series of wooden barracks, similar to cowsheds, hidden in the woods, whose only possible entrance was by train. These *lagers* are, in fact, outside civilization because they were constructed far away from cities and towns.

All in all, there are three main *ur*-places portrayed in *Maus* that contribute to the annihilation of the Jews. These are the ghetto, the train and the concentration camp. The ghetto, as well as the *lager*, as *ur*-place, is the space within the space, the void surrounded by civilization, both symbolically and literally. Inside it, there are multiple hiding places that Jews used to avoid being deported to the *lager*. These hiding places (unfamiliar, frightening

places) were inside their houses, above ceilings and roofs, and behind the walls. In *Maus*, Spiegelman depicts these hiding places with sketches, as panels inside panels. Thus, the sketch of the first bunker Vladek built at the ghetto takes the form of a notebook (*Maus* 112). The same sketch of the entire house is depicted as different panels, each panel representing a different room of the house, as seen in page 113 (figure 26).

These sketches can be encountered in other instances. Most historical places are depicted through maps, which are more illustrative and informative, and a few words are enough to be explained. For instance, The map of Poland in page 62 is more visual and "objective" than any explanation. It also serves the reader to understand the political background (differences between the Protectorate and the Reich). However, Spiegelman does not go further into political and military details, as the narrative focuses on personal experiences. Another illustrative map can be found at the beginning of Part II, a map that reflects the Auschwitz-Birkenau *lager* and its main buildings. In an annexed panel, it appears the road map of New York, where Vladek lived after the war, juxtaposing two different and at the same time interrelated moments in (his)story. These diagrams, as Chute calls them, inspired by those drawings made by survivors such as Kantor, convey testimony through "bodies moving over time in space" (*Disaster Drawn* 183), so diagrams conceptualise time in terms of space. Furthermore, although diagrams are simple and somehow infantile sketches, these drawings still transmit the idea of impossible spaces that torn its inhabitants apart.

Thus, Vladek talks about a place inside the ghetto where Jews have to wait until being deported to the *lager*. He describes this place as "a building in a part of Srodula separated by wires – a ghetto inside the ghetto – and there we had to sit and to wait" (*Maus* 115). These different levels of space symbolise also the disintegration of the self: the deeper someone goes, the more unfamiliar the place becomes, and the more disintegrated someone becomes. This was the final place where families were torn apart: "at that time it wasn't any more families. It was everybody to take care for himself" (*Maus* 116). From this moment on, survivors must sacrifice even their own family if they want to survive. Besides, the ghetto, and later on the *lager*, is the place where social, economic, gender, ethnic and linguistic differences vanish, turning people into a homogenous, undistinguished mass. For instance, although Anja's family is wealthy and fits the capitalist spirit (they own a business), Anja's parents are finally deported: "he was a millionaire, but even this didn't save him his life" (*Maus* 117).

Once Anja and Vladek leave the emptied ghetto (most inhabitants had been deported to Auschwitz, while some remained hidden, as Vladek and Anja), they have nowhere to go, as the Nazi regime and its ideology has spread, feeding antisemitism and fear of helping the Jews. Spiegelman depicts the definite settlement of Nazism with a crossroad that looks like a swastika. This image also transmits the sense that there is no place where the Jews can hide from their fate, and also it functions as an anticipation of what is going to happen (figure 27). This is one example of how Spiegelman uses space symbolically. However, he warns that "that kind of metaphoric use of space couldn't be allowed to overwhelm the literal use of space, because then you wouldn't believe in the space anymore" (*MetaMaus* 185), so symbolic uses of space are reduced to the sketches, as mentioned before.

Motonowa's house is another place crucial in the narrative, but this one looks different from the rest. Motonowa, a Polish woman who helps Jews, although she is afraid of being discovered (that meant death), she decides to risk her life and help Vladek and Anja by hiding them in her house. They are not hidden in a secret room apart (only when there was someone at home), but they live like a family together with Motonowa and her child (*Maus* 144).

As said before, ghettos were finally dismantled and their inhabitants taken to the concentration camps, away from any inhabited village or town. The journey from the ghetto to the *lager* was by train. In fact, the train was the commonest means of transport in Europe in the 1930s, so Artie draws many instances of trains, both trains for carrying animals (stock cars) and trains for passengers. The first time a train appears in *Maus* is when Vladek and Anja go to an expensive and famous sanatorium in Czechoslovakia (*Maus* 31). What is supposed to be a revitalising journey, turns into the first signs of political change in Europe. The passengers look through the window at a huge Nazi flag. Vladek comments that "here was the first time I saw with my own eyes the swastika" (*Maus* 31). Although most of the images that depict the entrance of prisoners to Auschwitz are by train, Vladek and Anja were deported by lorry (*Maus* 159). So, the first time Vladek travels by stock cars (trains used for cattle) is when prisoners from Auschwitz are transferred to another *lager* in Germany due to the proximity of Russian soldiers. Vladek tells that this train stopped for several days in the middle of nowhere, overcrowded and without food. Nazi officials just waited for prisoners to die from exhaustion or starvation inside these wagons, opening the doors only to throw the corpses away. Again, Vladek's wit saves him from starvation and from being crushed by other prisoners. He jumps to the upper part of the train, so he can catch the snow from the

roof of the train and eat it (*Maus* 246). The last train Vladek takes is a passengers' train: "here was a train not for cows and horses, but a real train to take passengers – a train for people" (*Maus* 257). Once the war is over, taking a passengers' train means for prisoners recovering their identity as citizens. As can be appreciated, the train also plays a crucial role in the circularity of history: the train takes Jews to their extermination, at the same time that it takes back those who have survived.

The third space essential in the process of annihilation, and also, the one that remains in the collective memory, is the concentration camp. The first time Vladek mentions Auschwitz (figure 28), he describes it as "the other place" or the *ur*-space, the non-space within the space (Poland, Vladek's home that turns his prison): "Even from there - from that *other world* – people came back and told us. But we didn't believe" (*Maus* 159). This statement also reinforces the idea that disbelief was part of these *ur*-places, which distort reality in such a way that it was no longer recognisable by the ones who did not enter it. Hence, Auschwitz appears illustrated for the first time at the end of Part I, when Vladek and Anja are betrayed by smugglers and taken by lorry to the *lager* (figure 29). The illustration shows the famous gate with the motto 'Arbeit macht frei' (*Work Sets You Free*). The entrance to Birkenau, the so-called Death Gate, is also illustrated (figure 30), as one of the most recognisable signs of Auschwitz, and, as such, it functions as a representative of the whole Holocaust experience, along with the over-crowded trains entering this gate to take prisoners to the gas chambers.

As commented before, Spiegelman draws with "clinical precision" the buildings that compose the crematories (*Maus* 230). In this respect, the author explains that he chose to draw the building empty of human bodies, focusing only on its architecture, in contrast to the heart-moving illustration in the next page, where mice appear with wide open mouths shouting and surrounded by flames (*Maus* 59). The idea of drawing the *lager* as objectively precise as possible (along with the differences in Auschwitz I and Birkenau regarding the barracks and toilets or latrines) was a way to "force myself and others to look at it" (*Maus* 60).

Regarding life inside the *lager*, there is a systematic order of things that prisoners must follow, yet in conditions that claim the task impossible to carry on. For instance, food consists mostly of soup even if spoons are not available, so prisoners must organise in order to get a spoon. Prisoners also must be clean and well-shaved, although they are not given any razor or soap to wash themselves. The barracks must also be clean and neat (*Maus* 227),

whereas prisoners have not any blanket for sleeping and barracks are over-crowded and infested with lice.

Vladek summarizes the main characteristics that haunt this place in the collective memory: "we knew that from here we will not come out anywhere. We knew the stories – that they will gas us and throw us in the ovens" (*Maus* 159). As mentioned above, the *lager* is the ultimate place where total annihilation of the individual is accomplished. Prisoners are deprived of their clothes (they wear the same striped uniform), of their names (instead, they are reduced to a tattooed number), of their class difference (there is no distinction between high and low class, the rich and the poor), of their nationality and of gender difference. A way to erase one's own will is by means of a violent use of language, shown in the narrative by means of bubbles with irregular edges that illustrate shouts, and the repetition of commands: "Shut up, Yids! To the bath house. Quick!" (*Maus* 185). The process of annihilation is the same for everyone; to undress, to shave, to bath, to run naked outside in the cold, to dress with the striped pyjamas and wooden shoes, regardless size and to be tattooed the number, like cows. The tattooed number symbolises the definite erasure of the individual, as Vladek testifies: "they took from us our names and here they put me a number" (*Maus* 186). Thus, the only way to escape from that place is through the chimneys (*Maus* 187). Shortly, the *lager* is the ultimate destabilizing place, as Artie's therapist points out. Dwelling at the *lager* was a life in constant fear, with no clear procedures to follow, where prisoners cannot take anything for granted. It is a place outside the system and outside any social organization (figure 31).

These three *ur*-spaces, the ghetto, the train and the *lager*, are constantly juxtaposed visually in *Maus*, as the narration goes back and forth between Poland and Rego Park, Catskills or Florida, showing again, a continuity in traumatic memories that pass on from Vladek to Artie. This can be seen in the back cover of *The Complete Edition of Maus*, and also on page 201, where Artie appears in his drawing studio, while outside the window it can be appreciated a surveillance tower surrounded by wired fences. It is this contrast and constant collision of spaces that creates the uncanny, this feeling of "unfamiliarity", present even in those secured places that are far away from the concentration camp or the ghetto in time and space, suggesting that what happened in the *lager* remains in one's unconsciousness forever as the ultimate "phantomized" memory site.

After the analysis of *Maus* from Trauma Studies perspective, which has focused mainly on the transformation of traumatic memory into narrative memory by means of a

combination of empirical evidence and aesthetic representation throughout the multimodal medium of the comic, some conclusions regarding the objective proposed in the introduction of this academic work will be briefly considered. Furthermore, some afterthoughts will be shared for a future line of investigation following this master's dissertation.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this master's thesis has been to analyse Spiegelman's *Maus* from the perspective of Trauma Studies, focusing on the transformation of traumatic memory into narrative memory through the testimony of Spiegelman's father, Vladek. This testimony is the product of Vladek's own words, which were recorded, and later interpreted and portrayed by Artie. This interpretation has consisted of reducing Vladek's words to the essential information, and recreating visually in comic form Vladek's experience. In this respect, Artie plays a crucial role in *Maus*. First, he is the interviewer of Vladek, so he becomes an active listener of witnessing. Second, Artie carries his own trauma, since he is Vladek and Anja's son. He shows his internal struggle when depicting the process of creating *Maus*, when he impels his father to put memories in a coherent way, or when he confesses to Françoise how the shadow of Richieu and Anja has forged him as a second generation survivor.

Apart from that, *Maus* portrays the shaping of trauma and how it is transmitted and changed across generations. Thus, Vladek and Artie's shared trauma, which means the loss of Anja, intermingles with their particular traumatic memories, Vladek's past experience at Auschwitz, and Artie's own trauma as a second generation survivor and as 'substitute' of Richieu. In fact, *Maus* works in two opposing directions. On one hand, it serves as a catalyst of traumatic memories and their transformation into narrative memories, which includes Vladek and Artie's memories. On the other hand, *Maus* also boosts Artie's trauma by calling his father's traumatic memories out, by imposing silence on the figure of his mother and by earning popularity and money from adapting the Holocaust experience to a commodity, an event that he did not live, but many did, and by exposing his own misery, that is, the relation with their parents and how he always felt as a second-class son to Vladek and Anja.

Furthermore, Freud's notion of "the uncanny" has been proved to be enlightening in the construction of space and its transformation into these *ur*-places, symbolic sites that boost the separation and total annihilation of the individual. Alike, the notion of the *doppelgänger* in the relation between the alive and the dead, between Artie and Richieu, and

between Mala and Anja, and also between the Vladek of the past and the Vladek of the present, has shed some light on the construction of trauma in terms of the symbiosis that is established between the *self* and the *other*. Besides, the imposed silence or the void that these *ur*-spaces create is connected to Lacan's notion of "the real", that is, the impossibility of recovering the lost *objet petit a*: in this case, Anja's forever-lost testimony and Vladek's stolen human integrity. Moreover, the notion of the uncanny is here closely related to postmemory, since trauma acts as a ghost that haunts its carrier.

In relation to *Maus* as a comic form and the representation of history through multimodal narrative, this master's dissertation has shown that the graphic narrative allows for a close interaction between space and time, since space, represented through panels and separated by gutters, implies moving in time. In fact, the comic, as a multimodal medium, has proved a good alternative to reflect on how history is aesthetically reconstructed in ways that let both the writer and the reader to experience any historical event far beyond its empirical facts, allowing for a moral assessment, an aspect that corresponds solely to the individual, so that it helps recognising the *self* in the *other*. This identification eludes conflict due to ethnic, religious, gender or class-based differences among individuals, proper of societies, since societies manipulate individual morality in the pursuit of a common ethical goal. Hence, comics spotlight the fact that any discourse of history supposes a reconstruction of it, regardless whether this reconstruction belongs to a history monograph or a novel.

Therefore, *Maus*, in its representation of history through testimony, brings new insights into the Holocaust experience that transcends the borderline between historical accuracy and creative invention. This is what Vladek asserts when he says that "all such things of the war, I tried to put out from my mind once for all… until you rebuild me all this from your questions" (*Maus* 258). In this sense, narrative memory becomes the product of a process that involves active reconstruction from testimony, in aesthetic and empirical terms.

To finish with, this master's dissertation could be enriched by further research on a deeper analysis of traumatic memory from a psychoanalytic perspective, taking into consideration Lacan's more abstract development of this field, such as the distinction between the real, the imaginary and the symbolic levels and how they interact in *Maus*' narratives. Also, it could be interesting to apply this master's dissertation theoretical framework in the analysis of other graphic narratives, such as Keiji Nakazawa's *Ore wa Mita* ("I saw it", 1972) and his serialised manga *Hadashi no Gen* ("Barefoot Gen", 1973-1987), two works that relate the author's experience of Hiroshima's atomic bomb, when he was a

six-year old child; Joe Sacco's *Palestine* (1996) and *Footnotes in Gaza* (2009) regarding the Israeli-Palestinian relations, and *Safe Area Goražde* (2000) and *The Fixer* (2003) on the Bosnian War; Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* (2000-2003) on the author's youth in Iran and Europe; Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* (2006), centered on her relation with his father, who committed suicide; Guy Delisle's graphic narratives about political and war conflict such as *Shenzhen* (2000), *Pyongyang: A Journey in North Korea* (2003), *Burma Chronicles* (2007), and *Jerusalem* (2011); or Glenn Head's *Chartwell Manor* (2021), based on the author's internment at Chartwell during his adolescence, where we was sexually abused. As it can be appreciated, there are a wide number of authors whose graphic works portray autobiographical narratives inscribed in traumatic events.

All in all, this master's dissertation has provided an exhaustive analysis of the representation of traumatic memory in *Maus* and its transmission across generations, so that its incorporation into one's personal history requires a creative reconstruction of memory. This is what *Maus* does through the testimony of Artie, a testimony about Vladek's witness and how this transmission has forged Spiegelman's persona. It is this "so personal", as Mala suggests, which makes *Maus* a unique narration of the Holocaust. Besides, this dissertation invites further research on how other graphic narratives represent trauma in visual terms, as well as how they attempt to transform traumatic memory into narrative memory, highlighting the interaction between history and aesthetics to create multiple layers of understandings, temporalities and spatiality that interweave and change constantly, like in a kaleidoscope.

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ANNEXES

Figure 1: Cover for *The Complete Edition of Maus* (2007)

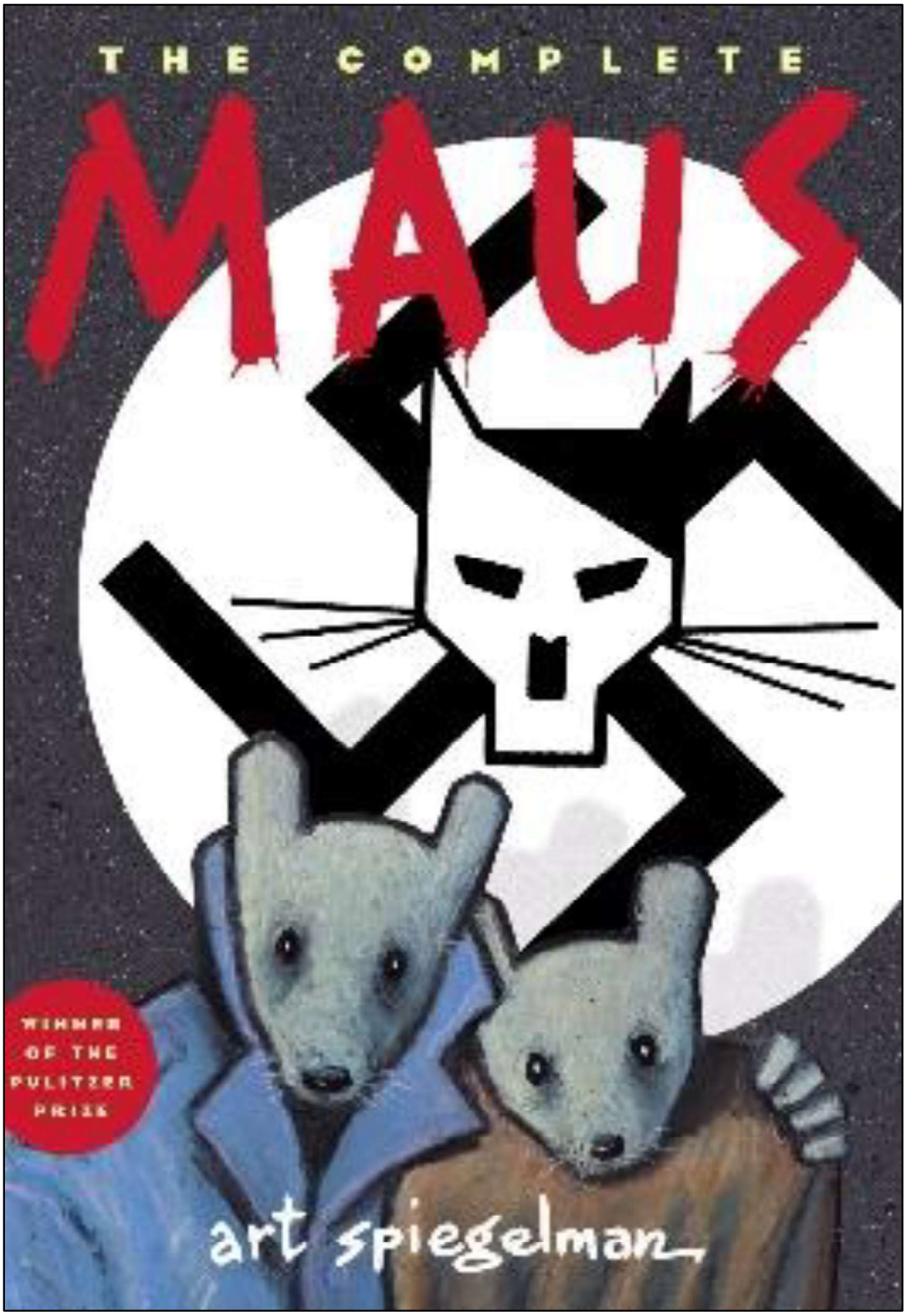


Figure 2: Image on the front flat of the *Complete Edition of Maus*.

Figure 3: Covers for chapter 2 (part I) and chapter 5 (part II) respectively.

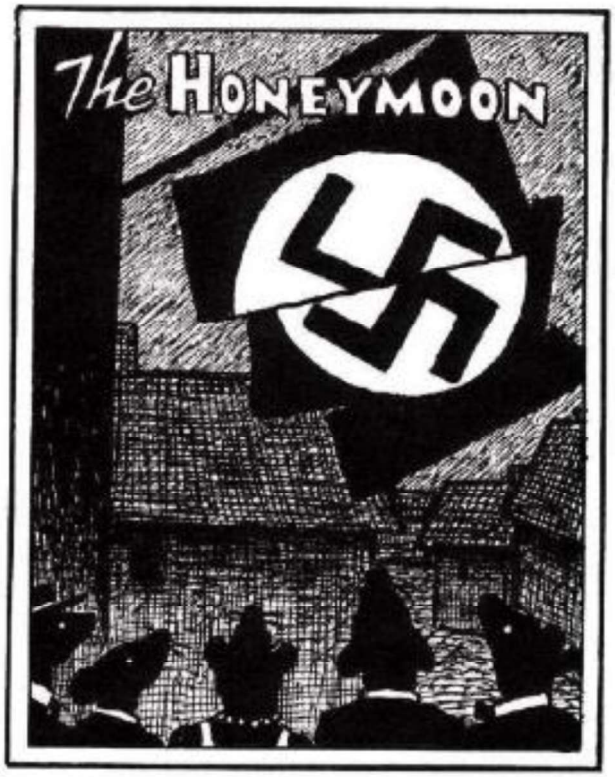


Figure 4: Cover for chapter 2 (part II).

Figure 5: Linen child's Mickey Mouse mask, c. 1935

Figure 6: Juxtaposition of temporalities in one single panel or space (*Maus* 86, 239).

Figure 7: "Count the blows!" (*Maus* 217).

Figure 8: Vladek regrets that decision (*Maus* 83).

Figure 9: Vladek dreams with his grandfather (*Maus* 59).

Figure 10: Vladek's tattooed number has magical powers (*Maus* 188).

Figure 11: Artie confesses his fantasies about Auschwitz (*Maus* 176).

Figure 12: "They didn't need photos of me in their room… I was alive!" (*Maus* 175).

Figure 13: "Prisoner on the Hell Planet: A Case History" (*Maus* 105).

Figure 14: "Prisoner on the Hell Planet: A Case History" (*Maus* 105).

Figure 15: Anja writing into her notebook during her stay at the ghetto (*Maus* 125).

Figure 16: "Reality is too complex for comics…." (*Maus* 176).

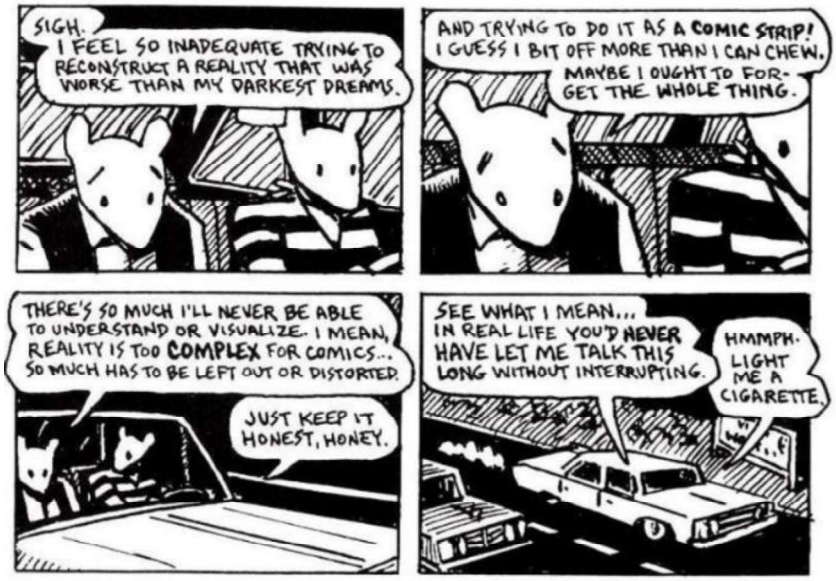


Figure 17: Art Spiegelman sitting at his drawing desk (*Maus* 201).

Figure 18: Anja suffers from post-partum depression (*Maus* 33).

Figure 19: The last panel of *Maus* Part I (*Maus* 161).

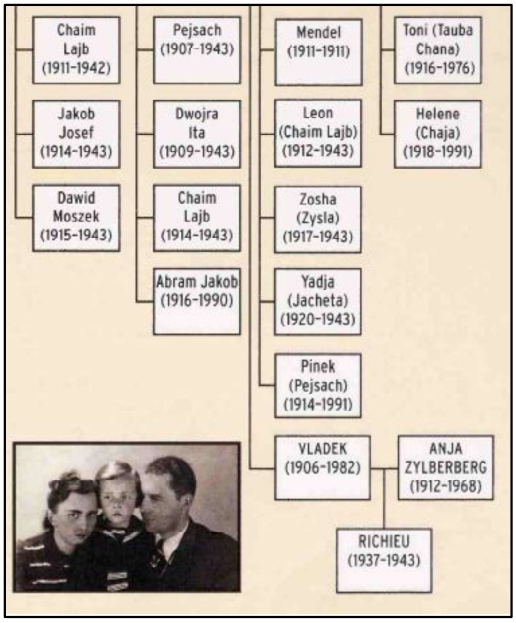
Figure 20: A fortune-teller gives hope to Anja (*Maus* 293).

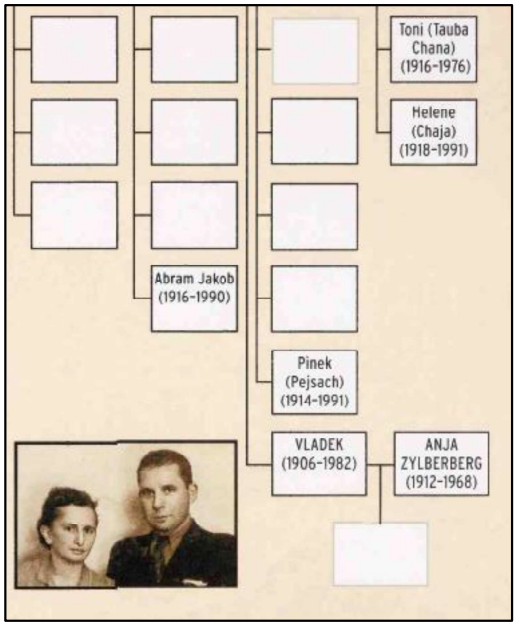
Figure 21: Vladek relates the myths people told about Jews (*Maus* 151).

Figure 22: "Enough!" (*Maus* 231).

Figure 23: What remains of Anja's family: their photos (*Maus* 275).

Figure 24[6]: Detail of Spiegelman family tree, before and after the war (*MetaMaus* 229, 231).





[6] The size of these two family trees have been reduced due to space matters.

Figure 25: The agonising prisoner resembles the agonising dog (*Maus* 242).

Figure 26: Sketch of the bunker (*Maus* 112-113).

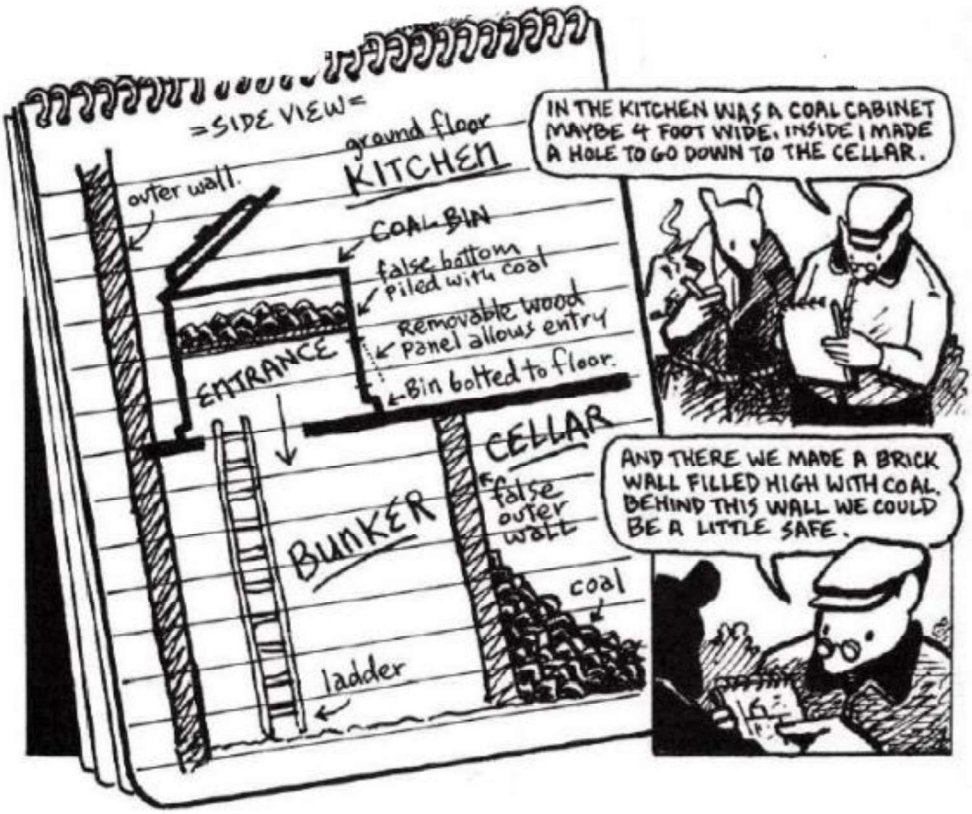


Figure 27: A crossroad with the form of a swastika (*Maus* 127).

Figure 28: The first time Vladek mentions Auschwitz (*Maus* 90).

Figure 29: The entrance to Auschwitz (*Maus* 159).

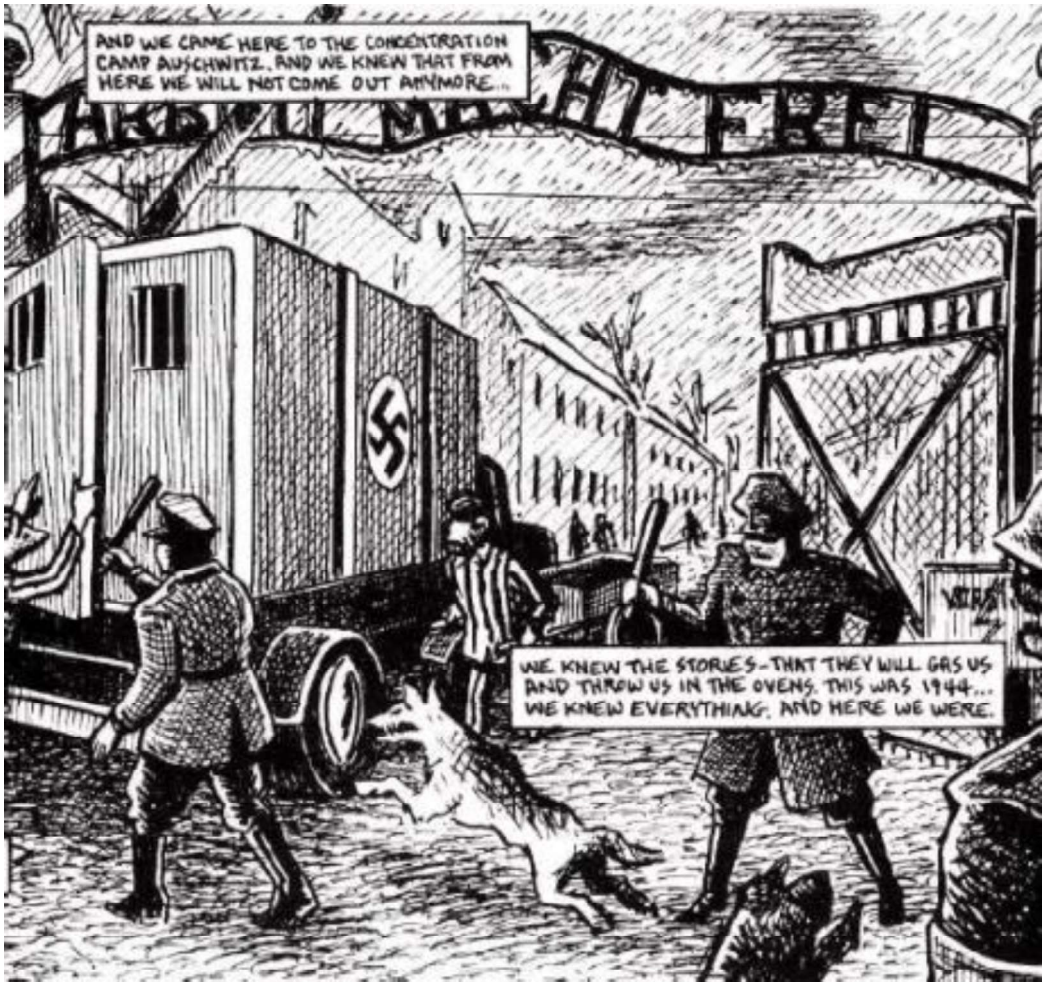


Figure 30: The entrance to Birkenau (*Maus* 215).

Figure 31: "What Auschwitz felt like? Boo!" (*Maus* 206).