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**Bakalářská práce**

**Art Spiegelman – “Of Mice and Men”**

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Prohlašuji, že jsem práci zpracoval(a) samostatně a použil(a) jen uvedených pramenů a literatury.

*Plzeň, duben 2014*

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## 1 Introduction

The Bachelor thesis - Art Spiegelman – “Of Mice and Men” deals with the American cartoonist, writer and editor Art Spiegelman and with his autobiographical two-volume graphic novel and chronicle of Holocaust called *Maus*. The main objective of the thesis is to introduce this American author and his best-known work *Maus* from different points of view. It is also supposed to remind Spiegelman as the representative of a comics and a graphic novel genre.

Art Spiegelman attracted attention with the book *Maus* not only of people interested in the comics and graphic novel genres but he interested and influenced the whole literary society and became a significant personality for all Jews and Holocaust survivors. Already for almost twenty years he has played an important role in contemporary culture world.

This thesis should therefore prove the importance of Art Spiegelman and his autobiographical graphic novel *Maus*.

The Bachelor thesis is divided into practical and theoretical parts. The objective of the theoretical part is focused on Art Spiegelman’s introduction, especially on his life and career. Afterwards this part is supposed to be concerned with general information about *Maus*, with its contents and motives leading to its creation. The last objective of the theoretical part is to introduce the graphic novel as one of the most popular literary genres in general, to give a definition of the term “graphic novel” and to mention main differences and similarities between a comics and a graphic novel. The autobiographical graphic novel *Maus* itself is expected to be examined in the practical part of the thesis. There the book will be also analysed and commented on, including analysis of the main characters and main themes in *Maus*. Subsequently the information from the book is supposed to be compared with reality. The practical part of the Bachelor thesis will be completed with created genealogical trees of Art Spiegelman’s family and with an English-Czech glossary of the most important comics terms which will be possible to see in Appendices.

The topic was chosen due to the author’s personal interest in the American literature and the World War II.

## 2 Art Spiegelman

Art Spiegelman is an American Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist, writer and editor. He is known especially for his extraordinary graphic novel *Maus*, which was published in two volumes. “Spiegelman is perhaps the world’s best-known living comic artist and writer after Robert Crumb.” [1]

### 2.1 Early life

Art Spiegelman (see Appendix 1) was born on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1948 in Stockholm in Sweden, while his family was waiting for their immigration visas to the USA. In 1951, when he was a three-year-old boy, they immigrated to the USA and moved to Queens in New York. His father was Vladek Spiegelman (see Appendix 2) and mother Anja Zylberberg, later Anja Spiegelman (see Appendix 3). His parents were both Polish Jews and they both survived detention in Polish ghettos and in concentration camps, particularly in Auschwitz. Unfortunately, they did not survive without consequences. Living in terror and permanent fear, separated from family and friends, with subsequent loss of almost all family members, it was something they remembered for their whole life. Spiegelman’s mother Anja suffered from incessant depressions and Vladek, his father, was so frugal that it was very difficult, even impossible, to deal with him. [2] [3]

Art Spiegelman said once about his father: “[He] was always so tight with the bucks that it has left me quite confused about money, and even now I constantly find myself in wild oscillations at the supermarket. Do I buy the 89 cent popcorn? Twenty minutes later paralysed with indecision I’ll grab the designer brand for \$3, buy four packets and throw one away on the way home.” [4]

Art Spiegelman was not the only child; the Spiegelmans used to have one more son, whose name was Richieu and who was Spiegelman’s elder brother (see Appendix 4). However, the brothers had never met, because Richieu had died before Spiegelman was born, at about the age of five or six. During the World War II, when it started to be too dangerous for the Jews, including the Spiegelmans, Richieu was sent to live with his aunt. Her name was Tosha and she was an older sister of his mother Anja. Regrettably,

this decision did not save him either. Tosha killed herself, Richieu and two other family members in order to avoid being taken to the concentration camp. [5] [6]

The relationship between the father and his son, which means between Vladek and Art, was problematic. As it was already mentioned, Vladek was very frugal. Sometimes, he was nearly a thoroughly obnoxious old man and it was very strenuous to get on well with him. Spiegelman could not stand his exorbitant skimping, his obduracy and self-pity. All of this made their relationship very complicated. On the contrary, Spiegelman had a really nice relationship with his mother Anja. They were very close, especially until his puberty. He himself said that they were something like confidants. They both loved books, they often played games together and she was the first person who drew with him. [7] [8] His words are proof of that: “If I was bored, she would take out a piece of paper and make a scribble and say: ‘Turn it into something.’ She was the first person to show me the magic of lines on paper.” [9]

Spiegelman’s mother died in 1968, when he was 20 years old. She committed suicide, leaving no note and her death was one of the most painful experiences of his life. His father died fourteen years later, in 1982. All these facts are described in Spiegelman’s work. [10] [11]

He himself commented on his childhood in the following way: “For me, childhood was a feeling of invulnerability and immortality, being willing to plunge into anything a discover the consequences later. That survived even after my mother’s death.” [12]

## **2.2 Education**

Spiegelman’s father wanted him to become a doctor or a dentist. The reason for his wish was that he believed that in case of a war, doctors had a higher chance to survive in a concentration camp. But Spiegelman wanted to be a cartoonist, so it was necessary to split the difference. In 1963, he started to attend the High School for Art and Design in Manhattan in New York, from which he graduated two years later. From 1965, he studied art and philosophy at Harpur College in Binghamton in New York (nowadays, it is called the State University of New York) and in 1968, he quit his university studies, because he had psychological problems and he got into the Binghamton State Mental Hospital with a nervous breakdown. There were lots of

reasons which led to his collapse. He suffered from sleep deprivation and had bad eating habits; he knew only life in a stressful environment and suddenly he got somewhere, where he could do whatever he wanted. He was shocked, but also excited about it since it was something new for him. And so he discovered psychedelic drugs, especially LSD and that all were reasons why he broke down. He had to spend about a month in the mental hospital and shortly after he came back home, his mother killed herself. [13] [14] [15]

### **2.3 Beginning of his writing career**

Art Spiegelman thinks that he might have been nine-year-old boy, when he started to realize he was good at drawing and that being a cartoonist could be a good choice for him, that it could be his life's ambition and so he began to embark on collecting old comic books. [16]

“Looking back on his own comics history, he said that he discovered Kafka when he was 11 (and living in Queens): ‘That’s when my childhood ended. Oh, a story about a guy who turns into a cockroach.’ That is also when he knew he wanted to be a cartoonist.” [17]

Spiegelman started his own art activity with imitating famous graphic artists, for instance the cartoonists for *Mad Magazine*. He considered this magazine to be something forbidden and that is what he liked, what attracted him. [18] In the 1960s he produced the Mad-alike fanzine, which was titled *Blasé*, and he was contributing to Junior School newspaper, too. At the age of 14, he was selling his artwork to the *Long Island Press* and it was earning him some money. He attended the High School of Art and Design in Manhattan in New York, when a scout from United Features Syndicate offered him a chance to make a syndicated comic strip. However, Art Spiegelman refused this offer, because he thought this work would be a grind, just a boring work. In addition, he was loyal to the idea of art as expression and he considered this comic strip too commercial. In 1963, he met Woody Gelman, the art director of Topps Chewing Gum Company in Brooklyn, who recommended him to apply for a job in this company after he graduated from the high school. [19] [20] This offer engaged his attention and

so in 1966 he started to work as a creative consultant, designer, artist, writer and editor for the Topps Chewing Gum corporation. He worked for this company until 1988 and the freelance art job provided him with an earned income for the next twenty years. In 1966, he started to sell a self-published underground comic and in the same year his comic strips were published in underground publications, e.g. *The East Village Other*. One year later, in 1967, he started to design the Wacky Packages<sup>1</sup> series and then also other novelty items for the Topps Chewing Gum corporation. [21] [22]

When his mother died, in 1968, he dealt with this adversity by getting down to work and became a wandering cartoonist who was living in a van. He spent the rest of his twenties in the company of underground comic authors in California. [23] [24]

In the 1970s, Spiegelman established himself and became very important personality in the underground comic movement. [25] In 1971, he moved to San Francisco and produced some comics there, e.g. *The Compleat Mr. Infinity (1970)*, *The Viper Vicar of Vice, Villainy and Vickedness (1972)*. [26]

“Beginning in 1972, he submitted comics under the pseudonyms Skeeter Grant, Al Flooglebuckle, and Joe Cutrate to publications like Real Pulp and Bizarre Sex. He also edited for Douglas Comix and published some graphic novels, among them *Ace Hole, Midget Detective (1974)* and *Two-Fisted Painters Action Adventure (1980)*.” [27]

During this time he also designed some cartoons for men’s magazines such as *The Dude, Gent or Cavalier*. [29]

In 1972 Justin Green asked Spiegelman to create a comic strip. He agreed and so he designed a three-page strip for the first issue, which was called *Funny Aminals*. Initially, Spiegelman wanted to make a strip about racism, in this case he focused on African-Americans, who were chased by Ku Klux Klan. He knew from his university studies that African-Americans used to be depicted as mice in animation from past and so he applied this idea to his own collection. But instead of racism, he eventually depicted the topic of Holocaust. Spiegelman drew a comic strip that featured the Jewish people as mice and the Nazis as cats. The mice were persecuted by the cats and taken to

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<sup>1</sup> Wacky Packages are a series of collectible trading cards, usually in a form of stickers, which parody American well-known brand products. These cards are produced up to now. [28]

a concentration camp called “Mauschwitz”. When Spiegelman finished this work, he visited his father to show him what he created. The comic strip was in fact partly based on the stories about Auschwitz he heard from his father. [30] [31] “[He] gave him further background on the story, which piqued Spiegelman’s interest to learn more.” [32] Art Spiegelman admitted that in this collection, in this topic, he had found his “voice”. [33]

In 1973, he made a strip for *Short Order Comix* called *Prisoner on the Hell Planet* which was about his mother’s death and showed his complex relationship with the depressed mother. [34] (see Appendix 5)

From 1974 to 1975, he worked as an instructor at the San Francisco Academy of Art and in 1975 he got an offer to be a contributing editor for *Arcade: The Comics Revue*. “[He] co-edited the anthology *Arcade* with Bill Griffith, from spring 1975 until fall 1976.” [35]

In 1975, Spiegelman moved back from San Francisco to New York, where he started to teach at the New York School of Visual Arts three years later, and stayed there till the year 1987. In New York, he met Françoise Mouly, French student of architecture who loved sophisticated work of French comic artists. Spiegelman helped her to find a work as a colourist for *Marvel Comics* and later, she became his wife.

By 1978, Spiegelman began to interview his father to learn more about the Holocaust experiences that his parents had. His intention was to make a long comic book which would be based on these experiences. However, it was not the only reason. He had also the personal one for it – he wanted to get closer to his father. During their interviews, Spiegelman created more than 30 hours of sound recording. After that, he decided, as a part of his research, to travel to Poland to see his parents’ house in Sosnowiec, and to Auschwitz and Birkenau, so that he would be able to see it all and to create a realistic work. [36]

Then, he began to work with Mouly and founded *Raw*, a comic anthology that they edited and published from 1980 to 1991. “It was a showcase for international graphic art talent.” [37] *Raw* paid attention especially to unknown artists and avant-garde cartoonists such as Charles Burns, Gary Panter or Lynda Barry. The first issue was titled *The Graphix Magazine of Postponed Suicides* and in the second one, issued in December 1980, Spiegelman started to release volumes of *Funny Aminals*, which were called *Maus*. *Maus* was a story about the things which his father experienced in

concentration camps during the World War II. By 1985, Spiegelman had lots of materials to make a book, but it was quite complicated to find a publisher and his idea to bring out this story as a book was rejected several times.

During the year 1985, he was creating a popular card series called *Garbage Pail Kids* again for the Topps Chewing Gum Company.

In the same year he found out Steven Spielberg was creating a new animated film, which was about Jewish mice escaping persecution in Eastern Europe. [38] [39]

“Spiegelman was sure the film, 1986’s *An American Tail*, was inspired by *Maus*. He became eager to have his unfinished book come out before the movie in order to avoid comparisons.” [40]

Eventually, in 1986, Pantheon assented to publish the book and the first instalment of it was named *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale I: My father Bleeds History*. Unfortunately, Spiegelman’s father died four years before the release of the book, in 1982, so he never saw what his son achieved. When the book was released, it immediately won recognition and Spiegelman became both an intellectual and cultural personality and a famous speaker for Jewish groups. [41]

In 1987, Spiegelman and Mouly published *Read Yourself Raw*, a collection of their comics. In addition, Spiegelman was still creating strips for the *Maus* and was publishing them in *Raw*. He planned to write the second instalment of *Maus* and so he always made one chapter of it and published the parts in one issue of *Raw*.

*Maus: A Survivor’s Tale II: And Here My Troubles Began* was the second volume of *Maus*, which was brought out in 1991 and it continued the story of the first volume. In the same year, Spiegelman had a showcase of his work on two-volume *Maus* in New York in the Museum of Modern Art and one year later at the Galerie St. Etienne.

Both volumes of *Maus*, *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale I: My Father Bleeds History* and *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale II: And Here My Troubles Began*, won a special Pulitzer Prize in 1992, particularly for their cultural contribution. [42] It was the first time ever, when a graphic novel won this respectable prize. [43]

In 1990s Art Spiegelman and his wife Françoise started working for *The New Yorker*. She became an art director and he worked as a contributing artist for this magazine from 1991 to 2003. Spiegelman often illustrated controversial covers. He drew his first cover on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1993 on a Valentine’s Day and there was a black

West Indian woman kissing a Hasidic man on the cover. The cover caused a huge turmoil in the magazine because it was reckoned as controversial. Some of Spiegelman's covers were denied because they were too shocking. Despite this fact, Art Spiegelman designed twenty-two covers for *The New Yorker*, which were published. [44] [45]

By 1994, he made a decision to create a CD-ROM version of *Maus* called *The Complete Maus*, where we can find also other materials and complementary information about the book and its story (see Appendix 6).

Two years later, he wrote his first book for children, which was released by Harpers Collins and its title was *Open Me . . . I'm a Dog!*. [46]

On 11<sup>th</sup> September 2003, Spiegelman quit his job as an illustrator in *The New Yorker*. The reason was clear. He did not feel to be in conformity with a political agenda of this magazine, especially not after the experiences of 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001. The day of 11<sup>th</sup> September and the politics of the USA, especially of the President George Bush, were an impulse to make his next work which was called *In The Shadow of No Towers*. It was a large-format graphic novel of 32 pages, dealing with the terroristic attacks on World Trade Centre in New York on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001. This book was based on his memories from this day and presented some sort of his reaction to the terrorist attacks. However, at first, the Americans disapproved of this novel, so it was published only in the German newspaper *Die Zeit*. Eventually, Pantheon made a decision to release it as a book in the USA on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2004 and it was printed as a board book. Art Spiegelman admitted that this graphic novel helped him to save his mental health, because he suffered from the post-traumatic stress disorder after the terroristic attacks. [47]

In 2011, Art Spiegelman issued something new. To mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of releasing of *Maus*, he published a book titled *MetaMaus* which can be described as a complement to *Maus*. In this book, we can find records of his interviews with his father or with other Jewish Poles, who survived the inhumanities of concentration camps. The book contains also an interview with the author himself and short interviews with his wife Françoise, and with his two children, Nadja and Dashiell. There are lots of photographs, sketches and an interactive of *Maus*, too. [48]

## 2.4 Personal and contemporary life

As it was already said, Art Spiegelman comes from a family of Holocaust survivors who immigrated to the USA in the middle of the 20th century. He was born after the World War II in Stockholm in Sweden and nearly the whole life, except for a few years he spent in San Francisco in California, he has lived in New York. He did not have an easy life, but he was able to deal with all difficulties that life brought him and to extract just the best from them. He found inspiration in all of it and it helped him to create something unique.

It is unquestionable, that he is very talented, but it is not the only characteristic needed to achieve something remarkable. Even as a child he was very ambitious and he was drawing his own illustrations, though his parents wished a different future for him. He was resolved to be a cartoonist, so he often emulated works of famous illustrators and was trying to get better at it. Spiegelman is definitely very hard-working person. [49]

In the middle of the 1970s in New York he met Françoise Mouly, a student of architecture, and they got married on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1977. A year later they have moved to Soho in New York, where they live to this day. Nowadays Françoise Mouly works as an artist, designer, and editor.

Their first child was a girl called Nadja Rachel, born in 1987. The year 1992 was a good one for Spiegelman, because he won a special Pulitzer Prize for his first instalment of *Maus* and his second child, son Dashiell Alan, was born. (see Appendix 7)

Spiegelman is not a practising Jew and he thinks that Israel is “a sad and failed idea”. He is also a consistent opponent of George Bush’s politics, particularly after the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001. In that time, he lived near the World Trade Centre, which is called “Ground Zero” today. [50]

“On September 11, 2001, he was in his home in Lower Manhattan, a few blocks away from the Twin Towers. He and Françoise ran to collect their son, Dashiell, and their daughter, Nadja, who had just started the fall semester at Stuyvesant High School near Ground Zero. He saw the towers’ unearthly glow just moments before they disintegrated. He describes these experiences in his new book, *In the Shadow of No Towers*.” [51]

## 2.5 Interesting facts

Since Art Spiegelman is a well-known literary person, it is possible to find several interesting facts about his life. We can often find references to his graphic novel or himself in popular TV programmes. For example, viewers can come across Art Spiegelman in one of the most popular cartoons around the world - The Simpsons, where he had his own cartoon character. It was in the 2007 episode called "Husband and Knives". [52]

Further, Time magazine ranked Art Spiegelman among the "Top 100 Most Influential People" in 2005.

Art Spiegelman looks exactly how he drew himself in *Maus*. He still wears a waistcoat and he is a chain-smoker, so every time you can see him, he has a lit cigarette and smokes and he is able to do nearly anything for his vice. [53]

"At the Carpenter Lecture at Harvard, Spiegelman took his defence of the comics genre to a sold-out crowd of about 225. On the way into the hall, bold signs warned lecture-goers that 'Art Spiegelman Will Be Smoking During the Lecture.' Spiegelman makes permission to smoke a condition of his appearances." [54]

Finally, Spiegelman has been awarded for his work several times. The most significant award is certainly the special Pulitzer Prize which he got in 1992 for *Maus*. But he received also other important awards which he can be proud of, e.g. in 1982 he was awarded by Playboy Editorial Award for the best comic strip, in 1987 he received an Inkpot Award and in 1999 he won Eisner Award, also for *Maus*, and he was inducted into the Hall of Fame. [55]

### 3 Maus

*Maus* is a graphic novel created by Art Spiegelman, one of the most acclaimed cartoonists all over the world, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It consists of two volumes. The first volume is called *Maus: A Survivor's Tale I: My Father Bleeds History* and the second one is titled *Maus: A Survivor's Tale II: And Here My Troubles Began*. Both volumes of *Maus* deal with the Holocaust and with experiences of Spiegelman's parents, especially with his father's experiences, who survived being taken to concentration camps during the World War II. [56]

"It joined the Diary of Anne Frank and Elie Wisel's Night in the canon of Holocaust literature, and opened up a publishing world to graphic novels like Joe Sacco's Palestine, Craig Thompson's Blankets, and Marjane Satrapi's Persepolis." [57]

There are two special characteristics which are typical for *Maus* and which make the book unique. The first characteristic is that in this graphic novel people are not depicted as people, the book depicts different races and nationalities of people as different kinds of animals, so the Jews are portrayed as mice, the Germans as cats, the Poles as pigs and the French as frogs. The second one is that *Maus* is composed of two primary stories of equal relevance and the narrative of *Maus* keeps digressing from one to another. One story line takes place in Poland in the pre-war period and during the World War II, and it is directed by Vladek Spiegelman, Spiegelman's father, who tells a narration about his life in this difficult time to his son Art. The second story line is playing out in New York from 1978 to 1987. During this period of time, Art Spiegelman is making interviews with his father about the World War II, Holocaust and Auschwitz. The interviewing ended shortly before death of Vladek Spiegelman in 1982 and after his death, Art is writing and drawing the book according to recordings which he have made.

This work is probably the most famous and recognized work by this American author. Lots of directors wanted to make *Maus* into a film, but Spiegelman rejected all of the offers.

It is difficult to specify exactly as which genre *Maus* should be classified. It is possible to classify this graphic novel as a biographical or autobiographical book as well as a book of fiction or a book of history. We can also conclude that *Maus* is a mix of various genres. But *Maus* is definitely an extraordinary work. [58]

### 3.1 Publication history of *Maus*

In 1972, Art Spiegelman got an offer to make a comic strip. He accepted the offer and created a comic strip titled *Funny Aminals*. It was a work inspired by real stories of Spiegelman's father about Holocaust. About six years later, when Spiegelman was a thirty-year-old man, he decided to write and illustrate an autobiographical comic strip, which should have proceeded from *Funny Aminals*. He again started speaking with his father about the World War II and Holocaust and he recorded all these interviews. In 1979, he even visited Poland to make some researches. One year later, he, together with his wife, established *Raw*, which was a comic anthology and in its second issue, in December 1980, they published the first chapter of *Maus*. Then, every new chapter of *Maus*, except the last one, was released in next issue of *Raw*. Spiegelman could publish the whole book already in 1985, but he could not find a publishing house which would be willing to bring it out. Fortunately, in 1986, Pantheon took a risk and made a decision to publish it. [59] [60]

### 3.2 *Maus: A Survivor's Tale I: My Father Bleeds History*

*A Survivor's Tale I, My Father Bleeds History* is the first instalment of *Maus*, which was released after several refusals in 1986 by the publishing house Pantheon. When the first instalment was published, it immediately won both critical and commercial recognition. [61] The book is composed of six chapters and is dedicated to Art Spiegelman's dead mother Anja. The story is introduced with a quotation by Adolf Hitler: "The Jews are undoubtedly a race, but they are not a human." [62] (see Appendix 8)

#### 3.2.1 Synopsis

The story is opened with a prologue which is set in Rego Park, New York, in 1958. Artie Spiegelman is a small boy roller-skating with his friends - Howie and Steve. They race, but Artie's roller-skates break and his friends make fun of him and skate away leaving him there alone. Artie starts crying and he runs to his father, Vladek, to

tell him what his friends had done. But his father replies that if he locks them together in a room with no food for a week, then he could see what being a friend is.

The book starts in 1978 when Artie Spiegelman arrives in Rego Park to have dinner with his father and his second wife Mala. It is immediately obvious that Artie and his father Vladek are not too close. Vladek's first wife Anja, Artie's mother, committed suicide in 1968. Artie's parents were both Holocaust survivors and they knew Mala already from Poland before the World War II. After Anja's suicide, Vladek had two heart attacks and he remarried to Mala. But the couple does not get on well. Vladek permanently accuses Mala of wanting only his money and Mala is very unhappy in this marriage. After dinner, Artie says to his father that he would like to create a comic book about his life in Poland and during the war. And so Vladek begins to tell Artie his story, which took place from the mid-1930s to winter 1944.

In 1936, Vladek lives in Czestochowa in Poland. He is a young and handsome man who works in a textile business. He has dated Lucia Greenberg for three or four years but he does not want to marry her because her family is too poor to give her a dowry. Vladek's parents live in Sosnowiec and he visits them every holiday. In December 1935, he travels there again and his cousin introduces him a girl named Anja Zylberberg, a clever girl from a rich family. Vladek starts to date Anja and he splits up with Lucia. At the end of 1936, Anja and Vladek are engaged and on 12 February 1937 they get married. Anja's father gives Vladek money to establish some business and so Vladek starts a factory in Bielsko and he goes home every weekend. By October 1937, their first son, Richieu, is born. However happiness does not last forever. Shortly after birth of Richieu, at the beginning of 1938, Anja starts to suffer from depressions and Vladek has to take her to Sanatorium in Czechoslovakia for the next three months. During this time, Anja's health is getting better but Vladek's factory in Bielsko is robbed and after return he has to start from beginning. At the end of summer 1939, briefly before the beginning of the World War I, Vladek is recruited into the Polish army to the frontier against Germany and on 1<sup>st</sup> 1939, when the war begins, Vladek is one of the first on the front. As The Germans advance, Vladek kills one German soldier, then he is captured and he becomes a prisoner of war. One night, he has a dream about his grandfather who tells him that he will come out of this place free on the day of Parshas Truma. Three months later, during Parshas Truma, Vladek is truly free to go and he thinks it had to be a miracle. After some difficulties, he finally returns to

Sosnowiec and finds out that family business is taken by the Germans and the whole family, twelve people, has to live in one house. In this time, it is necessary Vladek begins a dangerous business of black market with his old customer Mr. Ilzecki. On 1<sup>st</sup> January 1942, the Jews have to relocate into the Stara Sosnowiec quarter and their whole family gets two and half rooms for living. Soon after it, all people over 70 years, Anja's grandparents, too, shall be transferred to Theresienstadt. The family conceals the grandparents, but eventually they have to turn them in and they are sent immediately into a gas chamber in Auschwitz. Shortly afterwards, all remaining Jews have to go at the stadium to claim a registration. There, old people, families with lots of kids and people without work cards have to go to the left and the rest to the right. Unfortunately, Vladek's sister Fela, who has four children, is sent to the left, and when her father finds it out, he sneaks on to the bad side to be with her. But the left side is sent to Auschwitz.

Meanwhile, one day, Mala calls Artie very early to tell him, his father climbed on the roof to fix a leaky drain and then he felt dizzy. But Art wants to sleep, so he rejects to go there and help, and his father has to ask for a help his neighbour. A week after it, Art visits him feeling guilty, but Vladek is angry because he found a comics titled *Prisoner on the Hell Planet: A Case History*, which Art created after Anja's suicide. Art is very surprised his father read it and after they speak about it, Vladek continues his telling.

Back in 1943, comes an order: all Jews in Sosnowiec must go to live in an old village Srodula. After they remove, they have a visit. It is their relative Persis, the Head of the Jewish Council in Zawiercie, and he has an offer for them - take some members of the family with him. They all agree and so they are sent, including Richieu and Anja's sister Tosha, to Zawiercie. Regrettably, the Zawiercie ghetto is eliminated soon after the removing. Rather than being transported to the Auschwitz, Tosha poisons herself and three children Richieu, Lonia and Bibi.

In Srodula, it is necessary to build places to hide, because the Germans grab out anybody. However, the rest of the family is finally captured and sent to a prison, where they shall wait for a transport to Auschwitz. Vladek bribes his cousin Haskel, who gets them out, but without Anja's parents who are sent to Auschwitz. Haskel has two brothers, Miloch and Pesach, and they build a bunker behind a pile of shoes. In this hiding place, Vladek and Anja are hidden starving for a few days and then they come back to Sosnowiec. There they are hidden by Mrs. Kawka and later by Mrs. Motonowa.

Mrs. Kawka says to them about smugglers who can take the Spiegelmans to Hungary, where it is safer. When Vladek can see a letter from Abraham, who travelled there first, in which he writes in Yiddish that everything is all right, he decides to go, despite Anja is afraid of it. But it is a trap, and Vladek and Anja are arrested by the Gestapo and sent to the concentration camp Auschwitz. It is the year 1944.

Back in present, Vladek admits to his son Art that he burned Anja's diaries soon after her suicide. It was a way how to deal with her death for him, the diaries brought him too many painful memories. It makes Art angry, he starts to shout on his father and finally he calls him a murderer. There ends the first volume of *Maus*. [63]

### 3.3 **Maus: A Survivor's Tale II: And Here My Troubles Began**

*Maus: A Survivor's Tale II: And Here My Troubles Began* is the second volume of the phenomenal comic book. Art Spiegelman published it in 1991, again through the publishing house Pantheon. More than 150 thousand copies of the first edition were sold. [64] Art Spiegelman dedicated this book to his dead brother Richieu and to his children, Nadja and Dashiell. The book contains five chapters and as the first volume was introduced with a quotation by A. Hitler, the second volume is introduced with a newspaper article from the mid-1930s in Pomerania in Germany.

“Mickey Mouse is the most miserable ideal ever revealed. ... Healthy emotions tell every independent young man and every honorable youth that the dirty and filth-covered vermin, the greatest bacteria carrier in the animal kingdom, cannot be the ideal type of animal. ... Away with Jewish brutalization of the people! Down with Mickey Mouse! Wear the Swastika Cross!” [65]

#### 3.3.1 Synopsis

The story starts with a chapter called *Mauschwitz*. Art and Françoise are staying with friends on vacation in Vermont, speaking about Françoise's depiction in *Maus*. Art do not know how to draw her because originally she is French but she converted to Judaism before they got married. Finally, they reach an agreement to depict her as a mouse since now she is a Jew. After that, Art gets a message that his father had a heart

attack. He immediately rushes back to house to call him and subsequently he learns something unexpected. Vladek had no heart attack, he is totally healthy, just hysterical because Mala left him and took money out of their account. He made the heart attack up for being sure that Art would call him back. And so Art and Françoise have no other choice but to visit him. They go to Catskills, where Vladek is staying, and during the travel, Art says to his wife about his feelings to his father and to the Holocaust. He feels guilty because he had an easier life than the rest of his family.

They arrive at the Catskills bungalow late at night. Vladek is awake and even very happy they are all together and he makes a suggestion that they stay the whole summer. But Art refuses this offer, he and Françoise can stay just one weekend and it is obvious they do not want to stay longer. After it Vladek continues to tell Art his uncompleted Holocaust story.

In Auschwitz, everywhere is a smell of burning rubber, meat and fat. Vladek is at that time still with Mandelbaum. The Nazis take them all clothes and treasures, shave their hair and force them to go to freezing showers. Fortunately, these are not the dead gas showers. Afterwards, all the prisoners get clothes, often unfitting clothes, so they have to try to interchange them. Then they run across Abraham. He tells them the Poles, who arranged their escape to Hungary, understood Yiddish so they knew that Vladek and Mandelbaum were waiting for a message if it is safe. But Abraham was also deceived and forced to write a letter, while the Gestapo held a pistol up to his head. So he had no other choice. After this meeting, Vladek does not see Abraham anymore.

In a barrack, where Vladek and Mandelbaum sleep, there is a Kapo. He wants to learn English, so he is looking for somebody who can speak English and Polish. The right one for it is Vladek and so he starts to give the Kapo private lessons of English. Thanks to it the Kapo protects Vladek and provides him some extra food and clothes. And because Vladek is a good friend, he takes also shoes, a belt and a spoon to Mandelbaum, which makes him very happy. Regrettably, soon after it, Mandelbaum is chosen by the Germans to be taken away to work and Vladek never sees him again. Two months later, the Kapo cannot keep Vladek in “quarantine block” anymore and so he arranges Vladek to work as a tinsmith.

Again in present, it is 1987 and Art Spiegelman is sitting and thinking about all important dates of his life. On 18 August 1982, five years before, his father died. In May 1987, in 5 months, Art and Françoise are expecting a baby. In September 1986,

after eight years of work, the first part of *Maus* was published. In May 1968 his mother killed herself and left no note. Art feels depressed, he is tired of giving interviews, tired of people who seek a profit. He is just exhausted. He visits his psychiatrist Pavel, a Czech Jew, a survivor of Theresienstadt and Auschwitz with whom he speaks about Art's block to work, about his problems and feelings, especially feelings connected with his dead father and with his surviving. After this session, Art always feels better and so when he comes home, he switches his recorder on and starts to write and illustrate again.

When Art and Anja came to Auschwitz, they were immediately separated during a selection, so Vladek is being in Auschwitz and Anja is held in Birkenau which is called also Auschwitz II. These two camps are about two miles distant but Birkenau is even worse than Auschwitz, it is just a death camp where the Jews only wait for gas. (see Appendix 9) Luckily, Vladek meets Mancie, a Hungarian, who helps him to contact Anja in Birkenau and subsequently takes her letters and some food from him. At that time Vladek is working as a tinsmith and he manages to be sent to work to Birkenau, where he sees and shortly speaks with his beloved wife. It is a summer 1944. Anja is very weak and devastated, has problems with her supervisor and Vladek is very concerned about her. When someone in Auschwitz looks for a shoemaker, Vladek offers his services. He is really skilful and soon he is favoured by officials. One day, also Anja's supervisor uses his service and she is very pleased and since then her behaviour to Anja has been better. Shortly after that Vladek learns some prisoners from Birkenau will be sent to Auschwitz to work. He bribes the officers and is one of the workers. At last they are little bit closer. But Vladek loses a job as a shoemaker and he has to do a manual labour, which worsened his condition. He is skinny and weak, he is even forced to avoid examinations and to hide inside the toilets in order not to be sent to death. As the Russians advance to camp, the Germans start to eliminate all evidences of killing Jews and Vladek works on deconstructing of crematoriums and gas chambers. The Russians are now so close that the Nazis have to take all prisoners to Germany. It is February 1945 and they are forced to merge in snow for a few days and then they are closed in trains for horses and cows with no food and water. Lots of prisoners die but Vladek survives thanks to eating snow from up of the roof. Each day the Germans open the train and the prisoners have to throw the dead out. The trains are standing still for a week but eventually they start moving and finally they arrive to a concentration camp

Dachau, where the prisoners are kept in barracks. Vladek is infected with typhus from lice there. He lies close to death for a few days and after his recovery all of them are boarded onto a real train to Switzerland to be exchanged for German prisoners of war.

In this moment, the narrating is interrupted because Vladek, Art and Françoise go to a grocery store, and during a way back, Françoise stops a car for an African-American hitch-hiker and it makes Vladek absolutely furious because he is distrustful of blacks and calls them “shvartser”. Françoise cannot believe it, she is not able to understand how is it possible that Vladek is being racist after all he has come through.

Instead of reaching the Swiss-German border, the train stops and the prisoners are free. But a German Wehrmacht patrol shows up and takes them to a lake where they should be killed. Fortunately, they all survive the night because of the SS officer’s girlfriend who had persuaded him not to do that. The prisoners are free again. However, on the road there was another patrol, also catching Jews, so they are closed in a barn, again waiting for death. But by morning, the German patrol is gone. On this travel full of hardships, Vladek meets his old friend Shivek and they continue the travel to be free together. They find an empty house where they are living until the Americans arrive. Anja’s liberation lasts shorter time than Vladek’s, she is freed thanks to the Hungarian girl Mancia by the Russian side and she comes back to Sosnowiec before her husband.

The story comes back to present, when Art receives a call from Mala that Vladek had been taken to a hospital for water in lungs but he has left it against the advice of doctors. Mala came back to Vladek although she is not happy with him. Art is worried about his father so he flies to Florida.

After the Americans came, Vladek and Shivek are sent to a displaced person’s camp to wait for their identify papers and place where to stay. Then Vladek goes with Shivek to Hannover. Thereafter, Vladek finds out that Anja is still alive and lives in Sosnowiec. He is so happy about it that he immediately stops everything to go only back to Sosnowiec. The journey takes him about three or four weeks. When they initially meet, it is a moment that everybody around is crying together with them. They both are so happy. In 1946 Vladek and Anja leave Poland because they want to immigrate to the USA where the uncle Herman lives but they have to wait for visas and that is the reason why they fly to Stockholm. In Sweden, Vladek works at first very hard, he lifts and carries heavy boxes but he works his way up to a salesman in a

department store. The last image of *Maus* represents headstones of Vladek and Anja. [66] (see Appendix 10)

### 3.4 Receptions and critical reviews

“Spiegelman’s work as cartoonist and editor had long been known and respected in the comics community, but the media attention after the first volume’s publication in 1986 was unexpected.” [67]

After winning the special Pulitzer Prize in 1992, academics noticed this work and it immediately awakened their interest. *Maus* had both critical and commercial success, and achieved a high placement on the lists of comics and literature. It was taught and used in schools, in subjects like history, psychology, social studies or art. *Maus* was considered as one of the greatest comics works in history all around the world. E.g. *The Comics Journal* ranked *Maus* among the four best comics of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and *Time* placed this book on the fourth place on a list of top graphic novels and on the seventh place of their list of best-non-fiction books between the years 1923 and 2005.

However, there were also some negative critical reviews. In 1999, Ted Rall, a cartoonist, criticized Art Spiegelman for his influence and importance in comics community and he wrote an article which was headed *King Maus: Art Spiegelman Rules the World of Comix With Favors and Fear*. Some critics protested against people being depicted as animals in *Maus* and they said that using of animals instead of people was dehumanizing. Especially the Poles had a problem with pig-depiction their nationals and they took this illustration very personally.

### 3.5 International publication

Up to now, *Maus* was translated into more than thirty world languages. Especially three translations are significant, namely the translations into French, German and Polish languages. The French translation is important because of Spiegelman’s wife’s place of origin. The German translation, because it gave the book *Maus* some background and the Polish one since the story of the book was settled particularly in Poland and Polish was the mother tongue of Spiegelman’s parents. The

response of readers from Germany was very affirmative, the book became a best-seller and it was taught in schools there. Unfortunately, the Polish reaction was not so positive. In 1987, Spiegelman wanted to go to Poland to make some researches for the second instalment of *Maus* and he was notified by the Polish consulate that illustration of the Poles as pigs was a very serious insult of Poland. Bookstores, publishing houses and others did not want to deal with his book because they were afraid of problems or protests.

“In 2001, Piotr Bikont, a journalist for *Gazeta Wyborcza*, set up his own publishing house to publish *Maus* in Polish. Demonstrators protested *Maus*'s publication, and burned the book in front of *Gazeta*'s offices. Bikont's response was to don a pig mask and wave to the protesters from the office windows.” [68]

## 4 Graphic novel

### 4.1 Characteristics of graphic novel

“The term *graphic novel* is currently used in at least four different and mutually exclusive ways. First, it is used simply as a synonym for comic books. ... Second, it is used to classify a format—for example, a bound book of comics either in soft- or hardcover—in contrast to the old-fashioned stapled comic magazine. Third, it means, more specifically, a comic-book narrative that is equivalent in form and dimensions to the prose novel. Finally, others employ it to indicate a form that is more than a comic book in the scope of its ambition—indeed, a new medium altogether. It may be added that most of the important ‘graphic novelists’ refuse to use the term under any conditions.” [69]

It is not possible to specify graphic novel exactly. Sometimes, it can cause a confusion when speaking about a graphic novel and a comic book, or just a comics, because they have lots of similarities, but there are also some differences between them, which is necessary to present. Similar is that both comics and graphic novels combine both using pictures with using words to tell a story, and it can be just as a fiction as well as a non-fiction story.

Graphic novels are books with comics content, which have a leaning towards being longer, more complex and more elaborated, and they are depicted from the beginning till the end to tell the story in its wholeness. Contrary to it, comics or comic books are usually published in countless instalments, printed on magazine-style paper and rather short, about twenty-two pages, with a storyline that does not have to be from the beginning to the end. Sometimes, it happens that a comic book is collected and published as a graphic novel. But one similarity is the most important one, both a graphic novel and a comic book have a common development. [70] [71]

French critics name comics as the “ninth art”. The term is inspired by manifesto *Reflections on the Seventh Art* by Ricciotto Canudo issued in 1923 in which kinds of art are stated. The first six arts are architecture, music, dance, sculpture, painting, and poetry, and the seventh art is film. The eighth art can be photography, television, cuisine, and fireworks. The numerical order of arts is not relevant. But what matters here is that comics is finally counted as a part of art with its number nine. [72]

There exist several magazines which deal with comics. The most famous ones are *Comic Art*, which is rather new, and *The Comics Journal*, which is the longest lasting comics magazine. Also, lots of interesting and significant books about comics have been written. Probably the best known book is *Understanding Comics* by Scott McCloud, or *Comics and Sequential Art* by Will Eisner, which was also the first book concerned with this art. [73]

Scott McCloud gave a definition of comics in his work called *Understanding Comics*. He stated that comics is “juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer.” [74]

## 4.2 History of comics and graphic novel

Comics and graphic novels have a long and refined history. People have been using pictures to tell a story since a long time ago. Origin of a form of this art is possible to find already in cave paintings in the prehistoric times, and also later in the hieroglyphics of the Ancient Egyptians. The explanation of it is simple, in most civilizations in the past, the citizens could not read, they were largely illiterate and so paintings were a good possibility how to express ideas, memories or opinions.

Scott McCloud, stated in his book that the first work counted as a comics was the *Bayeux Tapestry* from the eleventh century, which narrates about the Battle of Hastings. [75]

When people started using machines, which saved them some time, they could look for some entertainment in their free time. It was the first impulse for reading and drawing for pleasure and so periodicals and humour publications started appearing, e.g. a publication printed by Benjamin Franklin in 1732 called *Poor Richard's Almanac*. In this almanac, Franklin used a theme of American Revolution and he created satirical cartoons.

The artist who is most often quoted as “the father of modern comics” is humourist Rodolphe Töpffer, who created *Adventures of Obadiah Oldbuck* by using captioned cartoons and published it in 1842. The first major graphic novel appeared in a humour magazine *Brother Jonathan* and dealt with misfortunes of a young man.

A few years later, in 1895, Richard Outcault made *The Yellow Kid*. The Yellow Kid is a name of a main and subsequently very famous character. The comic strip was so popular that the Hearst Syndicate brought it out in a book form in 1897. This work is considered as the first financially successful graphic novel in the history. From that time, companies began to apply favourite cartoon characters to promote their products and services. [76]

During the World Wars, graphic novels and comics were sought after especially by soldiers. In the USA and Europe in the 1930s, particularly superheroes comics became very popular. The most favourite one was a publication of *Superman*, which was released in 1938. After it, in the 1940s, people truly started love this genre. Millions of copies were sold and fans of graphic novels and comics were of all ages. But in the next decade, the situation changed and the invention of television was to blame. This invention attracted attention of the public, particularly in the USA, and they started to find comics and their superheroes buffoonish and childish. However, e.g. in Japan, the situation of the comic scene was not so bad and Manga comics came into existence. Manga are comics created by Japanese in Japanese language, which includes works in a broad range of genres. [77]

Underground comics, often referred to as *comix*, arose in the 1960s in the USA and it was extremely popular especially at the end of the 1960s and at the beginning of the 1970s. Underground comics is a kind of art that reflects a mood of society. The books usually concerned with social and political issues in that time, such as sex, drugs and peace. Art Spiegelman was active in supporting and creating of underground comics and he found, together with Bill Griffith, *Arcade*, which was an underground magazine featuring works of famous comics artists, e.g. works by Robert Crumb and Justin Green. [78] Later, lots of underground artists started to write and illustrate their own graphic novels.

In 1978, the first mass-market trade paperback graphic novel was published by an American publisher, *Marvel comics*. The authors of this graphic novel, titled *The Silver Surfer*, were Stan Lee and Jack Kirby. But *The Silver Surfer* was not the only released comic book in this time. Will Eisner created *A Contract with God* and Wendy and Richard Pini created *Elfquest*.

However, the most famous and favourite graphic series in the whole world are the series by Walt Disney. His comics have been in a permanent publication and were

not in a comic book form, but usually in a form of a graphic novel. The best-known characters are Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck and Uncle Scrooge.

These days, graphic novels became a rightful part of comic book genre, and bookstores and libraries started to offer a larger and wider range of them. Further, Hollywood films, e.g. *Watchmen*, are based on comics or graphic novel. Such films are usually successful, so the interest about them is still bigger. [79]

### 4.3 Famous representatives of the genre

The comic book and graphic novel genres are very popular so there are a huge number of personalities that could be mentioned. However, two of the representatives are the most important because both of them are often called “fathers”.

#### 4.3.1 Will Eisner

William Erwin Eisner was an American cartoonist, son of Jewish immigrants, born on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1917 in Brooklyn, New York. He is considered as one of the first cartoonists in the United States and as the “father of the Graphic Novel”. In 1978, he coined the term “graphic novel” in his work *A Contract with God*. Will Eisner died on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2005. His career lasted almost seventy years. Eisner Award is named after him, in his honour. To his other famous works belong *The Spirit*, *John Law*, *Uncle Sam* and *Blackhawk*. [80]

#### 4.3.2 Robert Crumb

Robert Dennis Crumb is a controversial American cartoonist born on 30<sup>th</sup> August 1943 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He spent lots of time drawing his own comics together with his older brother Charles.

Crumb raised people’s awareness as an underground author in the 1960s thanks to creating of *Zap Comix*. He is considered as the “father of underground comics” and he is best-known for his cartoon characters *Fritz the Cat*, *Mr. Natural* and *Devil Girl*. For his works, two themes, sex and social satire, are very typical, and he even explored his sexual fantasies through his cartoons.

In 1991, Robert Crumb was inducted into the Will Eisner Comic Book Hall of Fame. Other famous characters created by Crumb, which should be mentioned, are *The Snoid* and *Shuman and Human*. [81]

## 5 Analysis of Maus

### 5.1 Main themes of Maus

*Maus* is a complex work compounded of more story lines and themes. One storyline plays out in Poland before and during the World War II and the main character of this story is Vladek Spiegelman, who tries to survive the Holocaust. The second one takes place in New York from 1978 till 1987, when Spiegelman is making interviews with his father about the Holocaust.

In this work, there are discussed themes such as survival and a function of luck in it, a role of race and class in the Holocaust and follow-up feeling of guilt.

#### 5.1.1 Survival

To survive is the primary motivation of all creatures. This motivation is obvious also in the story of *Maus* during the Holocaust, particularly among Jews who are chased by the Nazis. For the period of the World War II and Holocaust, all Jews just try to survive. *Maus* tells a story mainly about Vladek's and Anja's attempts to stay alive, to stay together and to overcome the hard conditions.

As we can see in *Maus*, at the beginning of the warfare, Jews are helping each other, they are like one big family. However, as the fight for surviving intensifies, they are forced to start to think and to look only after close friends and family members, and finally, even this ties are tested and afterwards, they break as the conditions for Jews are still getting worse and worse, and instinct to stay alive is still stronger, and sometimes the Jews have to lay someone down in order to save more people.

A good example of it is possible to see in the situation when the Nazis started to transfer to camps people over seventy. Anja's grandparents, the Karmios, were also ones of them, they were about ninety. At first family hid them to save them. They made a hiding place, but then they were threatened. If they did not come to a transport in three days, the Anja's parents would be transported. And so, even though they wanted to help each other, they had to hand them over to survive.





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Spiegelman, 2003, p. 89.

But in spite of it, one bond stayed unimpaired for most of the story. It is the bond between the main characters Vladek and Anja. Vladek is supporting Anja anytime he can, although it is very risky. When they are both sent to Auschwitz and then separated, Vladek is trying to find his wife in the neighbouring camp Birkenau-Auschwitz II until he really finds her. From that time, he helps her and gives her some extra food to keep her alive as long as possible, even if it should cost his own life.

### 5.1.2 Luck

After reading this book, it is indisputable that luck played a huge role in an effort to survive. During the persecution and detaining in the camps, it would not be possible to stay alive till the end of war without being lucky.

Vladek definitely had lots of skills and abilities that aided him to stay alive. He could speak lots of foreign languages, he was quite dexterous and shrewd, but it did not matter how capable and intelligent he was, he would not survive if he did not have luck. Unfortunately, not all Jews, even Vladek's family, were not so lucky.

### 5.1.3 Race and class

Race and class are issues which the reader of *Maus* can expect to be discussed most frequently in the story. In the Holocaust-period, a classification of people according to race and class, also known as racism, became the thing that decided who can live and who should die.

As it was already said, *Maus* is an exceptional book with some specific characteristics. In this story, people are not depicted as people, but as particular kinds of animals according to their nationality. And so the Jews are portrayed as mice, the Germans as cats, the Poles as pigs, the Frenchmen as frogs and the Americans as dogs. The connection of the Nazis being cats and the Jews being mice is probably not accidental. The Nazis consider Jews to be something less than human, to be a vermin that should be exterminated and the relationship between cats and mice is similar to nature. Every cat plays with a mouse it caught before the mouse dies, same as the Nazis with the Jews, so the Jews have no other choice than to hide themselves or to be killed. Perhaps, the natural selection is also a motive why the Americans are portrayed as dogs. The Americans are portrayed in the story only at the end of the World War II, when they liberate the Europe under a dominance of the Hitler's Germany. It is possible that Art Spiegelman thinks the dogs are better than cats, and so the Americans are superior to the Germans.

Even in *Maus*, the nationalities are depicted as certain kinds of animals. It does not mean that the author of this book uses the kinds of animals to define who the good is and who the bad. Not all Germans are bad and either not all Jews are good. In the book, there is possible to find some examples of bad behaviour of Jews, who fingered other Jews hoping it would save them, and German who is not so evil but who has to be like that otherwise he would be killed, too.

Other example of racism in *Maus*, the reader can find not in wartime, but in 1979, when Françoise and Art visit Vladek in Catskills and take him to shopping.



Spiegelman, 2003, p. 258.



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Spiegelman, 2003, p. 259.

It is surprising that the main character, the witness and victim of the Holocaust, behaves as a racist, too. But the sequence is a proof that racists are everywhere regardless of time, their race and experiences. The racism just survived in them.

#### 5.1.4 Guilt

In *Maus* Art Spiegelman shows several types of guilt. At first, it is a guilt of Art Spiegelman himself over the death of his mother and over not being a good son and then it is his feeling of guilt for releasing *Maus*. The next guilt which is noticeable in the book is a guilt of people over surviving.

Art Spiegelman feels guilty because of the suicide of his mother Anja. Last time he saw his mother, she asked him if he loved her and he answered very briefly and with annoyance. This situation is displayed in the fifth chapter of *Maus I* in the comic strip *Prisoner on the Hell Planet* which Spiegelman illustrated to deal with loss of his mother. At the end of this short comic strip he says to her:



Spiegelman, 2003, p. 105.

The next kind of guilt is connected again to Art Spiegelman, who is full of remorse of not being a good son to his parents. Already from the beginning of the first volume of *Maus*, it is evident that Art and Vladek are not too close.



Spiegelman, 2003, p. 13.

The next demonstration of this guilt can readers notice in the chapter five of *Maus I* called *Mouse Holes* when Vladek asks Art for help in fixing a drain-pipe. Because it is very early in the morning, Art rejects it and says to his wife he prefers

feeling guilt than going to Queens. But a week later he has a feeling of guilt about it and goes to ask his father if he needs something.

Art Spiegelman also has a twinge of conscience about publishing *Maus* because of depicting his father not too complimentary, sometimes even critical. He calls his book “so presumptuous of him”.

The most extensive type of guilt in *Maus* is the guilt regarding the survival named “survivor’s guilt”. As was already stated many times before, Art Spiegelman was a son of Holocaust survivors and even though he was born in Sweden after the war, the Holocaust affected him and his life, too. It was not easy to live with parents who lost the first son or with father who is unduly saving. The war became a natural part of his life and he was also often thinking about it.



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Spiegelman, 2003, p. 174.

He suffers from the fact that he did not experience the misery of war, too, that he could not share it with them or to understand, identify with it, because he had never lived it. And probably will never live. This all leads to the feeling of guilt.

Also, Spiegelman’s life without brother Richieu, who was something like an example of perfection for the Spiegelmans, was not easy.





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Spiegelman, 2003, p. 176.

## 5.2 Main characters of Maus

The story of *Maus* contains a lot of characters. However, the most important ones are Art, Vladek and Anja Spiegelman. The following part is dedicated to them.

### 5.2.1 Art Spiegelman

Art Spiegelman is the author, main narrator and also one of the important characters of this graphic novel. His parents call him Artie. In present, he is married to Françoise Mouly and works as a cartoonist.

He is the only living child of Anja and Vladek, two Jews who had been detained in the concentration camps Auschwitz and Dachau.

In *Maus*, the only moments where it is possible to see Art, are the scenes where he visits and interviews Vladek, when he speaks with his wife Françoise or when he is working on *Maus*. Once there is also a scene where Art visits his psychiatrist Pavel, also a Holocaust survivor from the Czechoslovakia. The whole story is predominantly about Vladek and Anja and their effort to stay alive. It seems Art is rather mediator of this story than a truly character.

He is portrayed as egocentric intellectual who feels guilty and is full of hatred. His life was not simple. He grew up in the shadow of the Holocaust and concentration camps, in the shadow of their parent's surviving and in the shadow of his dead brother Richieu, whom Art called "ghost brother". He has also a complicated relationship with the father and in the story he admits that he became artist because art was a sphere where he did not have to compete with his father.

The whole life of Art Spiegelman in *Maus* is identical with the real life of Art Spiegelman, the author of *Maus*.

### 5.2.2 Vladek Spiegelman

Vladek Spiegelman is one of the major characters in the story because of a few reasons. The first reason is that thanks to Vladek's memories he is retelling to his son, this work could arise, without them it would not be possible to create the autobiographical graphic novel. Through Vladek's telling, readers can also come to know something about Anja and about the rest of the family that would be forgotten. The third reason is that a relatively big part of the story is devoted to the relationship between Vladek and his son.

As is written in the book, Vladek Spiegelman, Art's father and Polish Jew, was born in pre-war Poland in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, specifically in 1906. He lived in Czestochowa, a small city in Poland near the border of Germany.

Before the war, he was nice and handsome young man who did not have a shortage of female admirers, and who also appropriately enjoyed their interest in him. He was also very clever, intelligent and successful businessman with enough money, a

big and happy family and lots of friends. However, his personality was strongly affected by the experiences from the Holocaust.

Regrettably, the war deprived him of all funds and nearly all family members. He had to move from the role of a businessman to a trader on a black market, when the conditions were too bad for Jews. The moving from wealth to poverty and loss of loved relatives and friends were not easy and finally they changed Vladek's character.

During the war, especially during detaining in the concentration camps, he was highly resourceful and industrious. He learned to be very scrimping and to save everything what could have been needed in order to survive as long as possible in the worst times. He was also able to adapt to nearly anything. When a shoemaker was needed in the camp, Vladek registered, tried to repair shoes, learned it by doing, and became a very favoured shoemaker in the camp.



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Spiegelman, 2003, p. 220.

He settled with anything less and always was able to procure something to eat or to find a place to hide. His big asset was also a capability of bartering. He was still looking for something he could exchange for anything else, more needed. Thanks to it, sometimes he succeeded in improving the living conditions not only to himself, but also to Anja and to some friends. Another advantage for him was his fluency in multiple languages and the ability to thoroughly mull every next step before he undertook something, too. These characteristics helped him, and his wife Anja, too, to survive this long-time misery.

But the suffering in the camps had consequences. Contrary to this strong, courageous, inventive Vladek, the old Vladek is pretty different. After the war and after all the constant fighting for his and Anja's life, he became extremely saving, unpleasant

and demanding old man who saves everything and who drives everyone crazy. Vladek is obsessively tidy and pedantic, everything has to be all right, and there is allowed no mistake. He still counts his pills and controls bills till everything corresponds. His super-perfectionism in all things and his nature frustrates mainly Art and Mala.



Spiegelman, 2003, p. 11.

His physical health is not good, too. He is frail, weak and often tired. During telling and walking, he runs out of breath and need breaks. It seems that the war and follow-up suicide of Anja took majority of his strengths. After her death, he wasted away a lot and he had two heart-attacks. Also his remarriage with Mala did not get his state of health better, rather the contrary.

Vladek Spiegelman is very dominant personality who always has to have the final say. Sometimes, it is very difficult to refuse something he offers. For instance, it is good to mention the situation when he wanted to spend a summer with Art and his wife in a bungalow in Catskills.



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Spiegelman, 2003, p. 237.

Vladek is a hero in particular sense. However, he is not depicted as a hero in *Maus*.

### 5.2.3 Anja Spiegelman

Anja Spiegelman, whose maiden name was Anja Zylberberg, was Art's mother and Vladek's first wife. When Vladek met her, he was immediately very charmed by her. She was very nice, intelligent, well-educated, literate and sensitive girl from a prosperous family and she could even speak many languages fluent. Although she was not as beautiful and attractive as other girls, Vladek fell in love with her in a very short time.

She survived the World War II and all the horrors in the concentration camps, but she did not live too long because she committed suicide in 1968. In the book, it is pictured that she suffered from depressions and the whole life she was very thin. But the depressions were not just consequences of the detaining in the camps. Anja suffered from them already after a birth of her and Vladek's first son Richieu. In that time, she had also only about 35 kilos and was still sad and tormented. Her state was so serious she had to go to sanatorium to recover and to have a rest for three months.

However, her happiness lasted only until the war came. Subsequently, a long-standing hiding, separating from loved people, starving and torturing with finding out that Richieu is dead deteriorated her state.

It is interesting that her death was partially caused by Vladek's and Art's separation and relation's problems, but partially it is also something that connects them, something they shared together. They both loved her so much that the moment when she left was for both the worst moment of their lives. Each of them had to overcome it in his own way.

Vladek and Art have both so dissimilar ideas of Anja. Vladek believes Anja to be a perfect woman and wife and he compares Anja with every other woman in his life, mainly with his second wife Mala. Art, although he really loved her, thinks his mother was devastated, drained woman with incessant need of feeling love and he is right. Anja still felt unloved and lonely. After losing almost all family members she became very dependent on Vladek's and Art's love and it was damaging especially Art.



After her death, Art illustrated a comics about her suicide called *Prisoner on the Hell Planet*, where he described all information and his feelings about her death. This comic strip is a part of the book *Maus I* and we can see a little bit from Anja's personality about twenty years after the end of War there.

An interesting and uncommon thing is that Anja speaks in *Maus I* and *II* only through memories of Vladek and Art. In the book, Art looks for a long time for her diaries she had written during the war, but then he discovered Vladek had burnt them because he was not able to have so big memorial of his wife.

### **5.3 Language and style in Maus**

In *Maus*, Art Spiegelman used a drawing style that is simple but the more effective. All pictures are only black-and-white in high contrast, except for the dust jackets, which are in *Maus I* and also *Maus II* coloured and they attract everyone's attention fast. (see Appendices 8, 9, 10) The story is lined up usually in grating of few panels on each page.

The characters are not drawn in details, but rather in minimalist way, their faces have just points for eyes and lines for their mouth and eyebrows. Although the illustrations are not elaborated and detailed, the reader is not deprived. The simplicity of the book just emphasizes the content.

Also, the language in both volumes of *Maus* is very specific sometimes, especially in Vladek's case. He speaks "broken English" with some mistakes. Although Vladek is very fluent, his English is not perfect and his son Art wrote the text of the book exactly according to the records of Vladek's telling to do it more realistic and also cruder.

### **5.4 Comparison of Maus with reality**

*Maus* is strongly autobiographical work, so majority of all information which is possible to find in this book is based on reality. This autobiographical novel helped with defining important crucial moments in the Holocaust history.

In the present day, already the second generation of Holocaust survivors is living and Art Spiegelman is one of them, as the son of survived Jews. There were written lots of books and directed lots of movies about this topic, *Maus* is a good example of it.

To determine how much the graphic novel *Maus* is authentic it was necessary to use other available resources, which helped to compare this book with reality. The primary source for the comparison was a book written by Shlomo Venezia called *V pekle plynových komor*. This book is an interview with Shlomo Venezia, a member of "sonderkommando" in Auschwitz, the only one who witnessed what really happened in gas chambers. Thanks to his evidence it is feasible to carry the comparison out.

It was ascertained that *Maus* is trustworthy source of information and as a proof of it, we can mention several examples. In *Maus*, the narrator presents that when the transport arrived into the camp, prisoners were at first tattooed with identifying numbers and then they had to undress and got a new clothes, more precisely worn out after dead prisoners, irrespective of size. Afterwards, they were all separated mainly according to gender and age. Those who were not approved through the selection were subsequently taken away, killed in gas chambers and burnt in a crematorium. A gas used in gas chambers was Zyklon B. All information stated through Vladek's memories is confirmed in book by S. Venezia.

Vladek Spiegelman concurs via *Maus* with Shlomo Venezia also in other things about Auschwitz. Both of them said that in the camp they smelled an acrid sweetish odor of burnt meat and fat. Further, one of the most important things needed to survive was a spoon, because without it nobody was able to eat, which led to gas chamber and crematorium.

The descriptions of Auschwitz both by Vladek Spiegelman and Venezia are very similar, so it is possible to say that *Maus* is based primarily on memories and experiences and if some part of the book is fictitious, it is not a part connected with affairs in the concentration camp Auschwitz. [82] [83]

## 6 Conclusion

The Bachelor thesis deals with the American cartoonist, writer and editor Art Spiegelman and with his best-known autobiographical graphic novel and chronicle of Holocaust *Maus*.

The thesis is divided into the theoretical and the practical part. The main objective of the thesis was to introduce Art Spiegelman and his graphic novel, so the first chapter of the theoretical part is concerned with the author himself which means with his personal and professional life, with his works and with interesting facts about him. The next chapter, chapter number two, is dedicated to the graphic novel *Maus* itself, especially to general information about the book and its content. In this chapter there are also mentioned motives leading to creation this book because the motives are connected with Art Spiegelman's relationship to his father. The third chapter is focused on a genre of a graphic novel so it was necessary to give a definition of the term "graphic novel" itself and to introduce some famous representatives, such as Will Eisner and Robert Crumb. Because sometimes the terms "graphic novel" and "comics" can cause a confusion, it was indispensable to state their features and some similarities and differences between both of them. By this chapter ends the theoretical part.

The most important part of the Bachelor thesis is the chapter number four devoted to analysis of the graphic novel *Maus*. The novel was in this chapter examined, analysed and commented on from different points of view and subsequently almost all discovered facts were supported by extracts from the book. So in this part it is possible to find an analysis of the main characters, Art, Vladek and Anja Spiegelman, and analyses of the main themes, such as guilt, luck and survival.

*Maus* is definitely an extraordinary work because it was created on the basis of Spiegelman's father memories. Since the book is strongly autobiographical and the author is a son of Holocaust survivors, he ranks among the second generation of Holocaust survivors and his character and opinions are projected in *Maus*. The influence of the Holocaust and the World War II is obvious in this novel on all family members.

Several times was mentioned that the graphic novel is based on memories of Vladek Spiegelman, so one of the aims of my Bachelor thesis was to prove an authenticity of the facts presented in the book. It is possible to say that according my researches the book is really authentic and it is similar to reality in all important facts.

At the end of the Bachelor thesis there are attached some appendices, such as genealogical trees of the central family, an English-Czech glossary of important comics terms and some photos of Art Spiegelman, his wife, children, Vladek, Anja and Richieu Spiegelman, and other interesting pictures connected with the book, with its story or with Art Spiegelman himself.

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## **Appendix 10**

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## **Appendix 11**

The Genealogical Trees – created by the program MyHeritage Family Tree Builder

## Appendix 12

The Glossary – created with assistance of:

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## 9 Abstract

The Bachelor thesis - Art Spiegelman – “Of Mice and Men” is focused on the American cartoonist Art Spiegelman and on his two-volume autobiographical graphic novel *Maus*.

The theoretical part deals with life and works of this author. Afterwards, there is summarized information about *Maus*, including a content of the book and motives leading to its creation. Since the book is a graphic novel, a part of the Bachelor thesis is also concerned with the graphic novel as a genre, giving a definition of the term “graphic novel” itself and mentioning significant representatives as for example Will Eisner and Robert Crumb.

The novel *Maus* is examined in more detail, analysed and subsequently commented on in the practical part of the thesis. The information from the book is further compared with reality. The practical part is completed with genealogical trees of the central family and a glossary of the important comics terms in Appendices.

## 10 Resumé

Bakalářská práce - Art Spiegelman – “O myších a lidech” je zaměřena na amerického autora komiksů Arta Spiegelmana a na jeho dvoudílnou životopisnou grafickou novelu *Maus*.

Teoretická část práce se zabývá životem a dalšími díly tohoto autora. Dále jsou zde shrnuty všechny dostupné informace o *Maus*, včetně obsahu knihy a motivů, vedoucích k jejímu vytvoření. Jelikož je kniha grafická novela, část bakalářské práce pojednává také o grafické novele jako žánru, definuje samotný pojem “grafická novella” a zmiňuje další významné představitele, jako například Willa Eisnera a Roberta Crumba.

Knihy *Maus* je detailněji rozebrána, analyzována a následně okomentována v praktické části práce, v níž jsou také následně informace z knihy srovnány s realitou.

K praktické části rovněž patří i rodokmeny ústřední rodiny vytvořené pomocí počítačového programu a glosář důležitých komiksových pojmů, umístěné v přílohách bakalářské práce.

## 11 Appendices

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Appendix 8: Quotation by Adolf Hitler

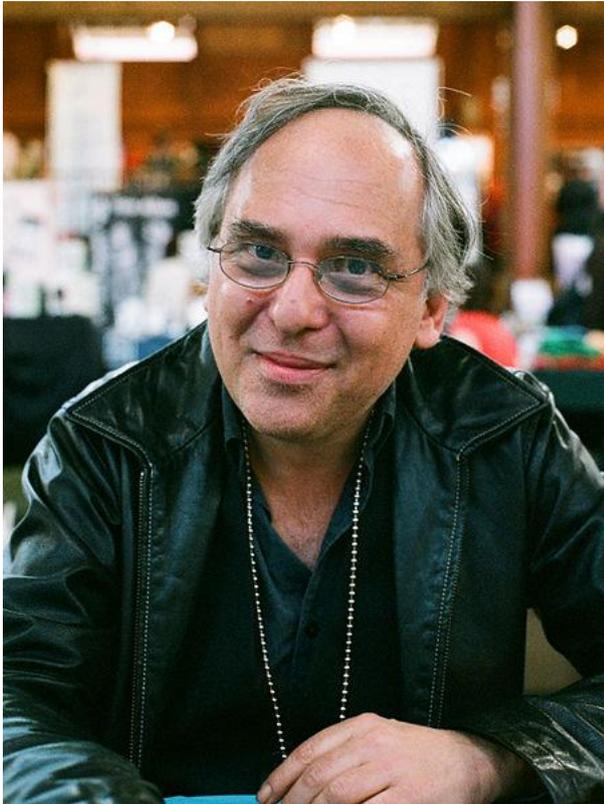
Appendix 9: Auschwitz and Birkenau

Appendix 10: The End of the graphic novel *Maus*

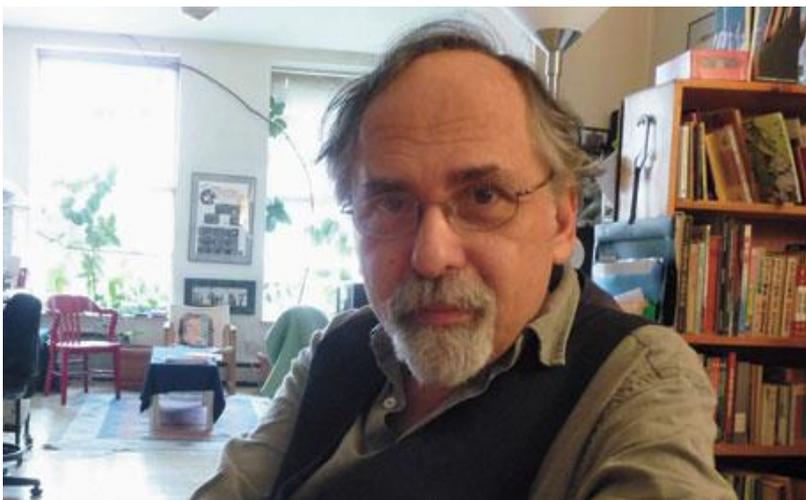
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**Appendix 1**



Picture 1: Art Spiegelman in 2007



Picture 2: Art Spiegelman in 2011

**Appendix 2**

Picture 1: Vladék Spiegelman

**Appendix 3**



Picture 1: Anja Spiegelman



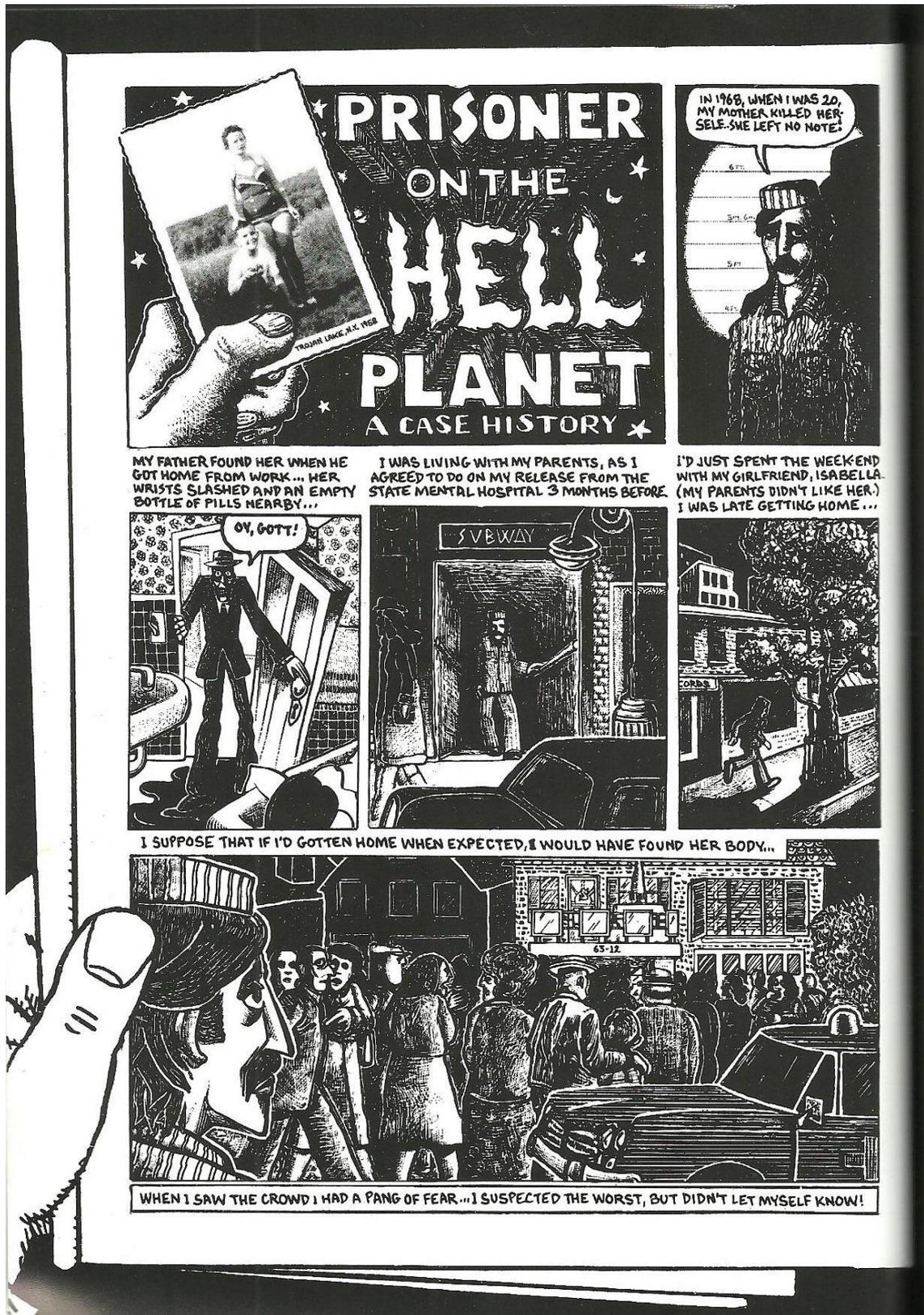
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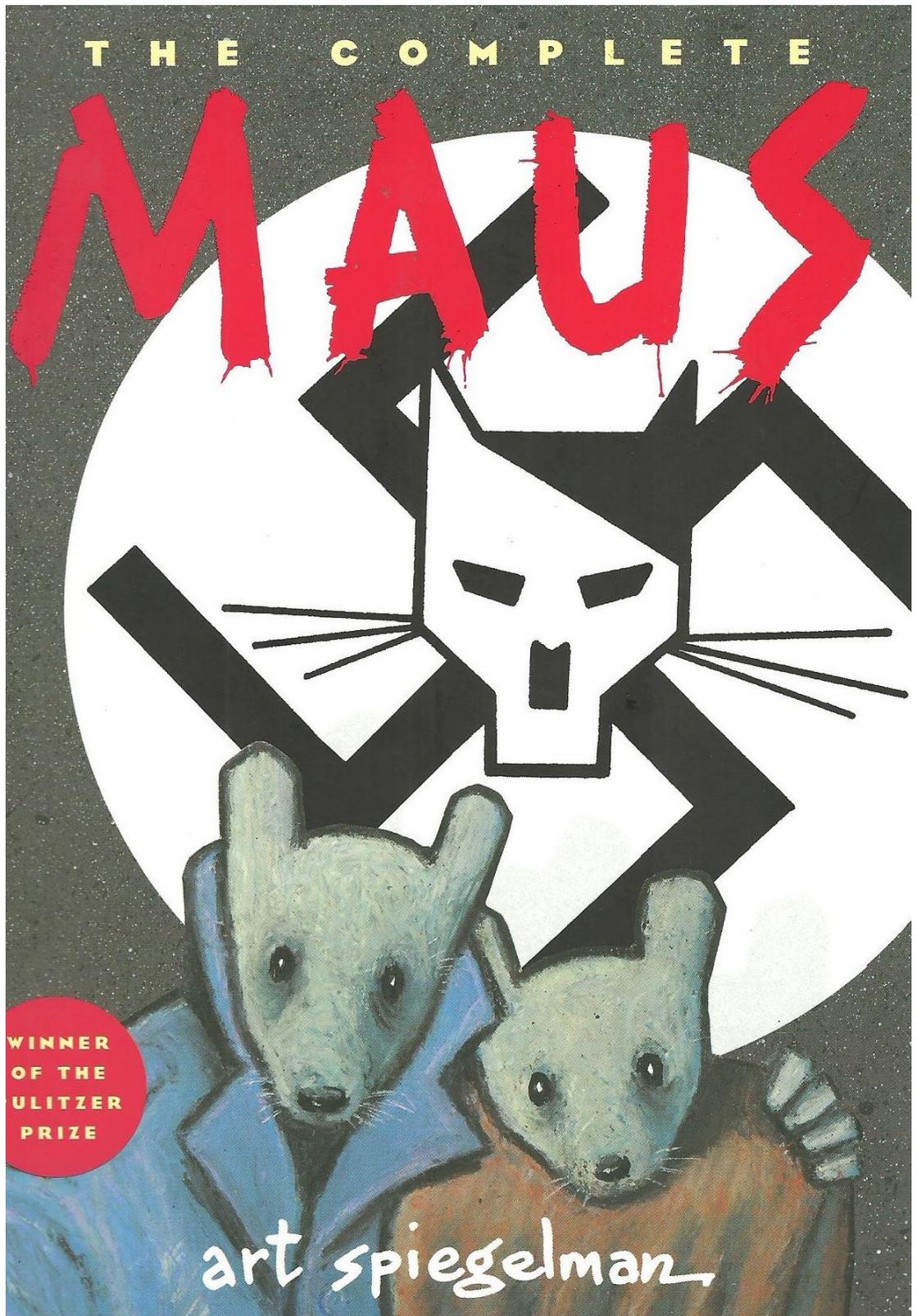
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Appendix 5



Picture 1: Prisoner on the Hell Planet: A Case History

Appendix 6



Picture 1: *The Complete Maus*

**Appendix 7**

Picture 1: Art Spiegelman and his family

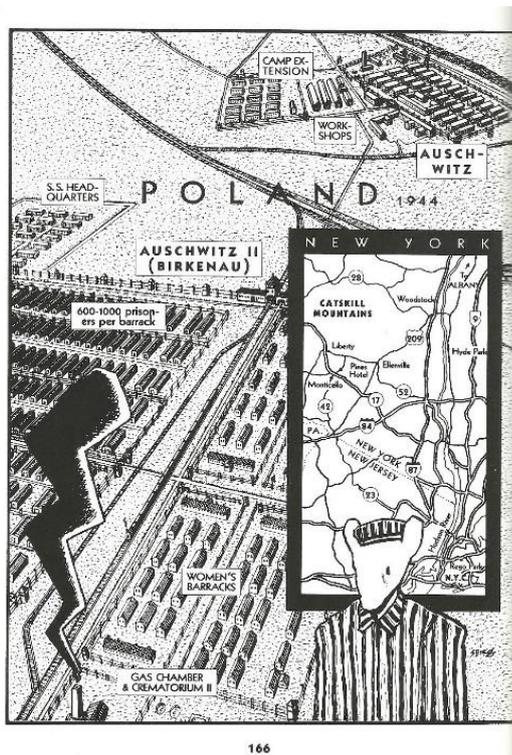
**Appendix 8**

**"The Jews are undoubtedly a race,  
but they are not human."**

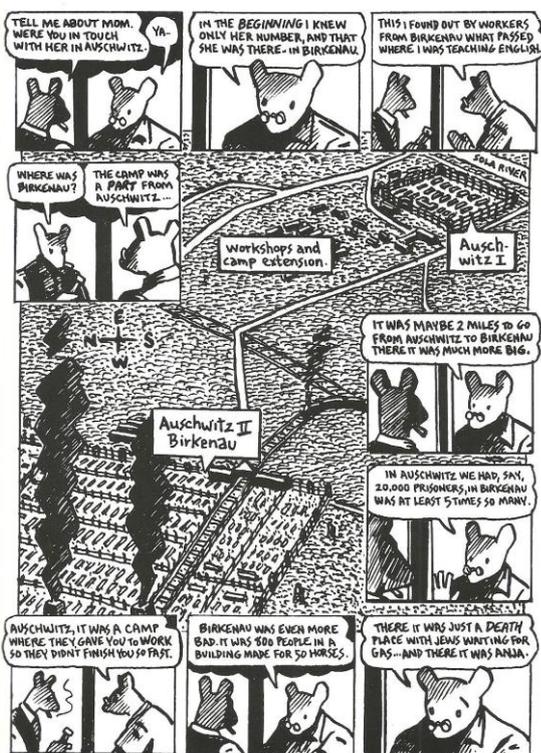
**Adolf Hitler**

Picture 1: Quotation by Adolf Hitler in the first volume of *Maus*

Appendix 9



Picture 1: Auschwitz and Birkenau drawn by Art Spiegelman in *Maus*



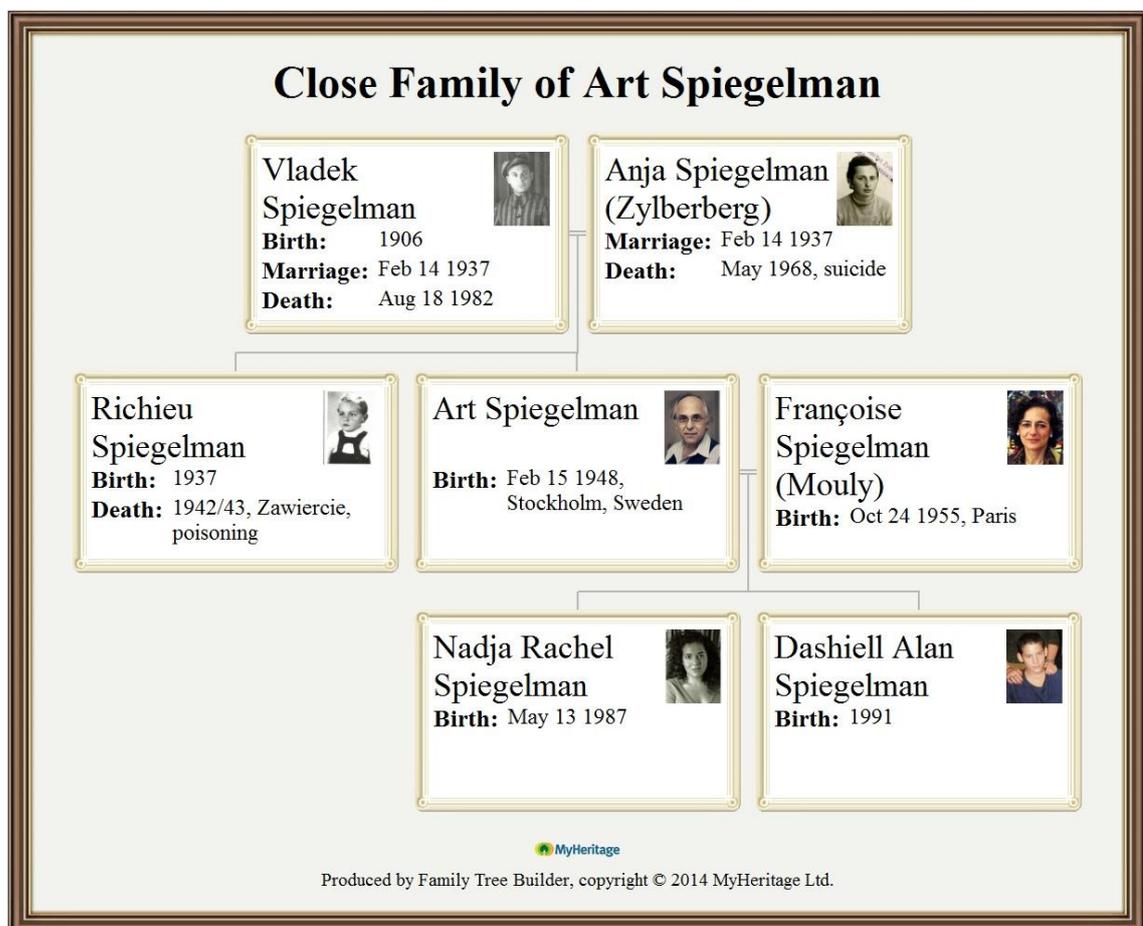
Picture 2: Auschwitz and Birkenau drawn by Art Spiegelman in *Maus*

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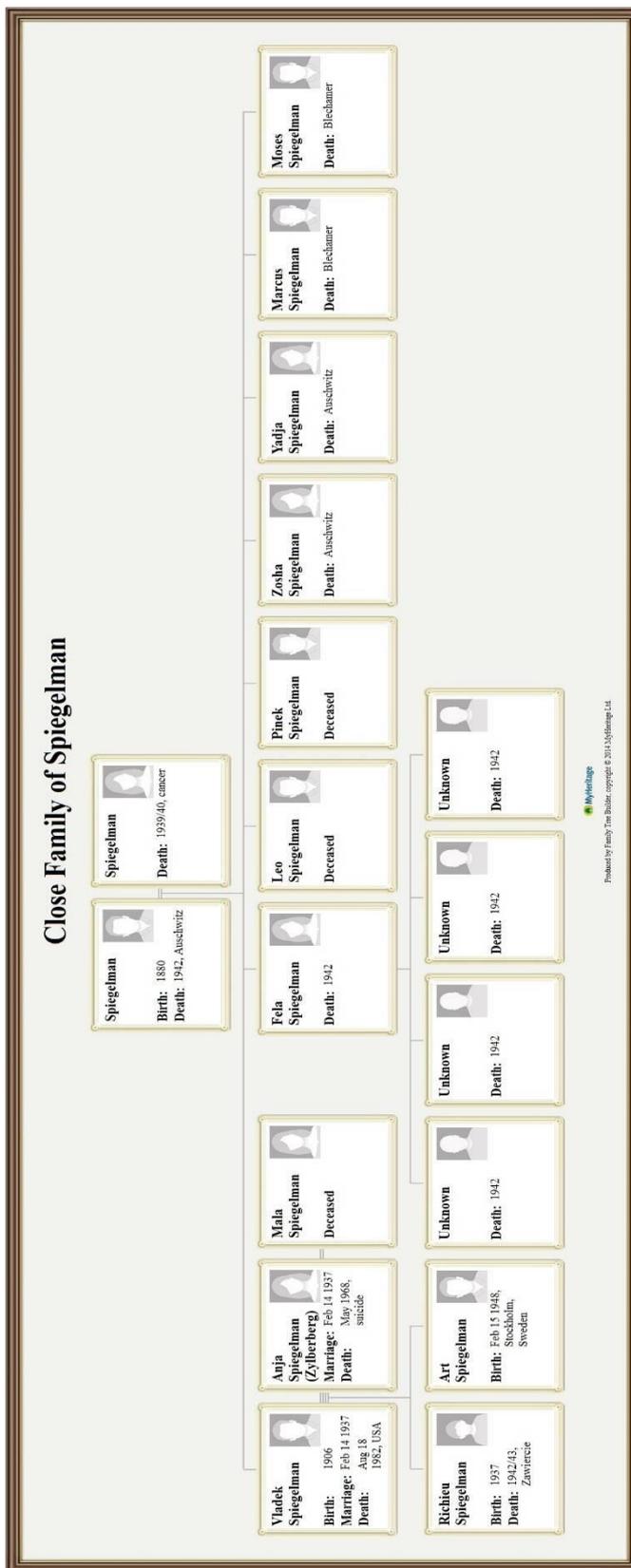


Picture 1: The End of the graphic novel *Maus*, headstones of Vladek and Anja Spiegelman

## Appendix 11

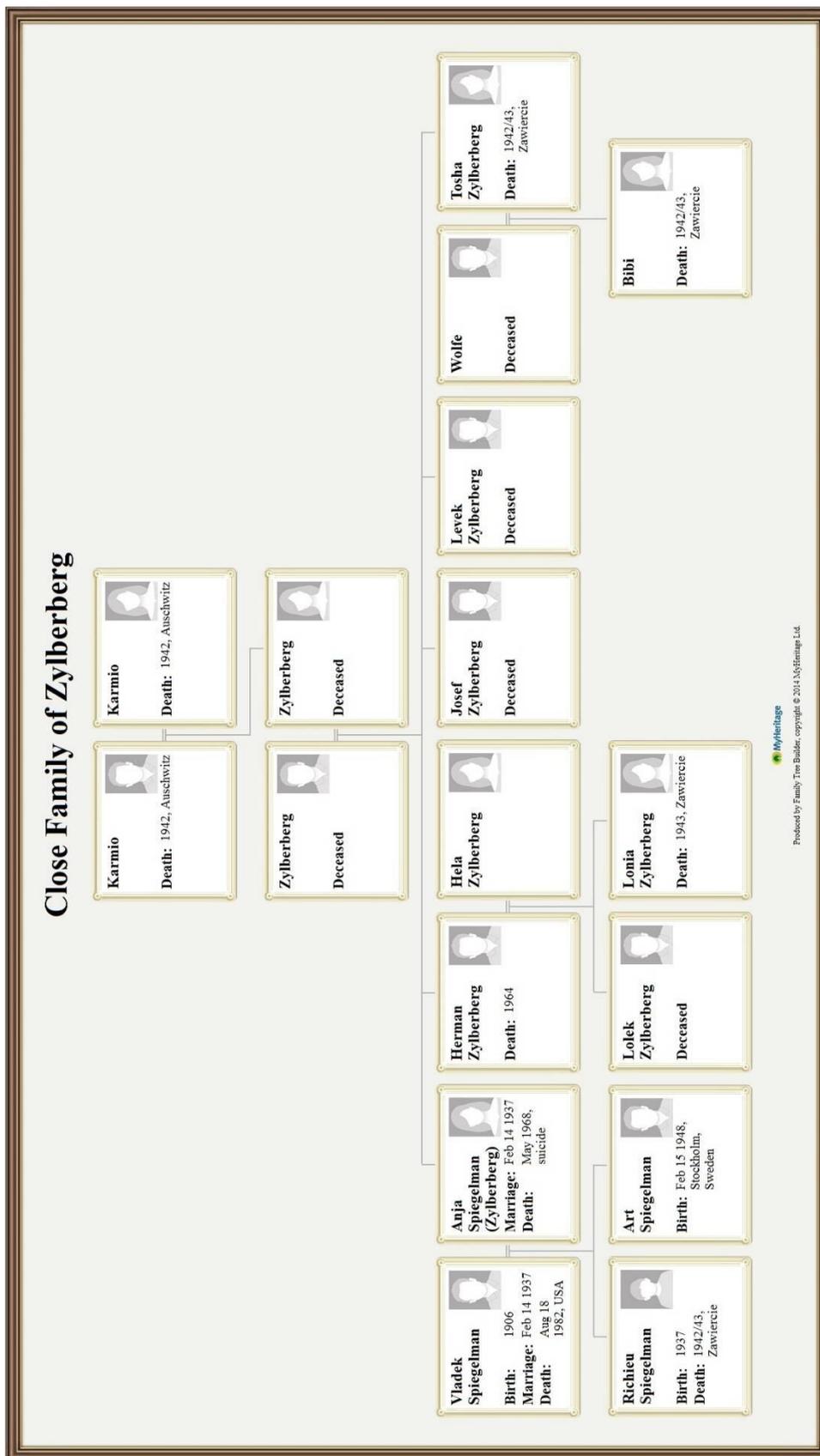


Picture 1: Genealogical Tree – Close Family of Art Spiegelman



Picture 2: Genealogical Tree – The Spiegelman’s family 1





Picture 4: Genealogical Tree – The Zylberberg’s family

## Appendix 12

English term	Czech term
Caption	Popisek
Border, outline	Lem, okraj, obrys panelu
Comic book, comic, floppy	Komiksová kniha, komiks
Comic strip	Kreslený miniseriál (obvykle v časopise)
Comics	Komiks (vznikl ze slov comic + strip)
Comix	Undergroundový komiks (komix)
Full bleed	Ilustrace je rozprostřená po celé stránce
Graphic novel	Grafická novela, román (formát komiksové knihy s větší hodnotou a delším příběhem)
Gutter	Mezera, meziikonický prostor, mezipolí, meziobrazí
Letterer	Letrážista (zpracovává texty takomponované do obrazu)
Lettering	Lettrage (zápis písma dialogů či textů dovnitř kresby)
Motion lines, speed lines	Linie znázorňující pohyb
Panel, frame, box	Panel, rámeček (obrázek zachycující jeden okamžik)
Pointer, tail	Ocásek bubliny (míří k postavě, která hovoří)
Sequential art	Komiks (synonymum)
Speech balloon, word balloon, speech bubble	Bublina k zobrazení myšlenek nebo dialogů (hladké bubliny označují přímou řeč, tvar obláčku vyjadřuje většinou myšlenky postav)
Splash, splash page	Velká ilustrace po celé stránce, která otevírá příběh
Spread	Ilustrace, která pokrývá více jak jednu stránku

Table 1: English-Czech Glossary of specific comics terms