

An analysis of maus, a graphical story by art spiegelman



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Maus is a graphical story derived from the visits Art Spiegelman made to New York to visit his father Vladek. Vladek was a Polish Jew and a survivor of the world war 11 holocaust. This survival and the visits Art made brought to life Maus which is a reflection of what exactly happened. In the comic all the characters are given animal names where there are frogs, mice, cats and so on. The cats prey on the mice which explains why Art chose to illustrate how the Jews, who were the mice were massacred by the cats. (Miller, 2011)

Arts style of writing Maus involves going back and forth to the past and present which was one way for him to bring out the originality of his work and for the reader to understand the growth of the story. Moreover, Vladek way of narrating the story of his life to his son does not follow any pattern and he is also limited by his poor English language. And this is part of how a reader is able to differentiate between the past and present that is the past Vladeks English is very broken and the present it is improved. (Boin, 1997)

The way the author chose to tell this story is also a clear strategy he has employed throughout the comic which follows a pattern relating to the same things he did to tell the story. He visited his father in order to get content for his story then they would have lunch and take a walk which portrayed a daily thing, there was also no spontaneousness when Art hang out with vladek there was order like he had his own seat. lastly the last part was linking the sequence with this estranged father son relationship. And following such routine Art was able to follow a sequence which gave the story some life.

Vladek reveals some traumatic characteristics due to the holocaust which in turn reflects in his relationships. He started from the bottom once and ended

up marrying from a wealthy family to his first wife Anja. Then, he was compassionate and he was filled with attention for his family up until the German invasion. He lost everything after that including his first son Richiue when he was poisoned by his aunt to protect him from the massacre. All these affected his behavior hence him withdrawing from his son Art and the lack of affection with Mala his second wife. to some extent vladek is depicted as stingy with everything he had after the second world war.

Art tries to draw a clear picture of his rather an unattached relationship with his father. at one point he wished he was born at an earlier time. Vladek criticized everything Art did and he would constantly pick on him over small issues. He was a handy man and his son chose something his father couldn't which was been an artist. Contrary to this, Art loved his mother he mentions that if the rain that poured on the roof was gas and he was to choose between which parent he had to save then he would save his mom. (Miller2011).

These two relationships clearly show that Art's childhood was a troubled one and as such, for a reader to be able to understand this, the past and present had to be interconnected as one.

Part of why Art chose to engage the past and present in this narrative was to try and comprehend how the genocide and the holocaust through his father's experience and to in turn paint a clearer picture of these events to the reader. Combining the events before the holocaust and after it which was the genocide is part of philosophy known as postmodernism. This form of philosophy and the structure of Maus basically explains the relationship

between how the time in the narrative is processed and remembered.

[Steingold 2015]. with this in mind therefore one can comprehend the use of post memory to intertwine Arts style of writing and his father's story of survival. (Shoomp, 2008)

Vladek's survival at the Auschwitz camp and the horrors he went through after losing everything took a turn on Art later directly and indirectly as a result of the trauma. His parenthood skills were totally drawn from his survival tactics during and after the war. [Steingold 2015]. representing such as a story minding the difficulties that come with it such as distortion of memory and or biasness, Art kept in mind that Maus was a mere representation of history. The holocaust cannot truly be represented in all aspects and he knew this. (Powell, 1998) Spiegelman use of telling a story within a story in writing on the Holocaust is him telling of his version of the event. This was him self-consciously representing the holocaust from how he captured it from what he heard. He really wanted his readers to empathize with him; he talks to his wife about how inadequate he felt about recounting the events of the holocaust. (powell, 1998)

The use of juxtaposition and framing contradictory thoughts together for the truth to be sensible was attained by putting together Art's present conversations with Vladek's past thus opposing two time ranges put together side by side. Initially this juxtaposition was formed from Vladek's disorderly manner of telling his story and in order for Art to create his comic narrative it had to follow a certain order. The use of this style helped the author maintain the originality of the narrative.

Lastly, the visual style of Maus serves to distance Spiegelman from his own past. Additionally, the visual style is used to add humor in the work while simultaneously employing some metaphor. The illustration of Jews as mice and the Nazis as cats is self-explanatory, and Spiegelman is skillfully using the comic format to convey a grave issue. Spiegelman uses postmodern style of adult comics to add a historical recorded racism and anti-Semitism in the form of metaphor.

The metaphor descriptions are meant to arouse this type of response. As per the author description, " It's crazy to divide things down to nationalistic or racial or religious lines, and that's the whole point" (Spielgman, The Complete Maus). This quotation, and the cartoon metaphor in general, is an allusion to Nazi's belief that " Jews are undoubtedly a race, but they are not human." Spiegelman is thus coining the twisted concept of racial theory. The use of the metaphor is stated yet again when Art visits his therapist. In the beginning of Maus, when Art is prompted by a journalist asking if how he would depict Israeli Jews as animals, he responds by saying, " I have no idea...porcupines?" (Spielgman). In this scene and the subsequent one, all of the characters are in masks, one of the only occasions where this occurs in the novel. (Steingold, 2015)