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ART SPIEGELMAN'S *MAUS* AS A HETEROGLOSSIC TEXT

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DANE H. MINICH

ABSTRACT

According to philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin, the modernist novel is the best literary form to exploit heteroglossia, or the coexistence of two or more voices within a text. It incorporates the speeches of the author, narrators, and characters, as well as languages that are indicative of social status, employment, epochs, and so on.

In this essay, heteroglossia is applied to Art Spiegelman's graphic novel Maus to demonstrate that the comics medium is also a prime candidate for heteroglossic exploitation. Voice and dialect are examined in the first portion of the essay, including generational differences between the characters' language, the presence and depictions of foreign languages, and authorial voice. The second portion of the essay applies heteroglossia to the text's visual aspects to explore its illustrative polyphony.

This essay established that Maus, as well as the comics medium as a whole, is capable of exploiting heteroglossia.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In Mikhail Bakhtin's essay "Discourse in the Novel," he describes heteroglossia as the coexistence of two or more voices within a text. The modernist novel, he concludes, is the best literary form to exploit heteroglossia. The novel shirks the traditional stylistics and univocality associated with poetry in favor of multivocality, incorporating "[a]uthorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, [and] the speech of characters...each of them [permitting] a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships..." (Bakhtin 263). A novel also features languages "...that are socio-ideological: languages of social groups, 'professional' and 'generic' languages, languages of generations, and so forth" (Bakhtin 272), which, in other words, is more indicative of common, every day conversation.

All languages offer a unique worldview, and each language is identified by its meaning and values. So, if language is rife with meaning, values, intentions, and accents, Bakhtin argues that there are no impartial words, that each statement, no matter how colloquial on a surface level, possesses characteristics that are distinct to a profession, a party, a generation, a region, or an epoch. The linguistic power of the novel comes from the conflicts that arise from the presence of so many voices, which may include the

speech of the characters, the speech of the narrator or narrators, and even the speech of the author.

Art Spiegelman's Maus is a combination of different writings – biography, autobiography, oral history – told through the comics medium. “It’s worth noting that what comics are closest to, in the way we physically experience them, are prose books. We watch a movie, we look at a photograph (or a single, wordless drawn image), but we *read* comics. That’s the process: holding them in our hands, turning their pages, getting stories from them as we burrow from one end to the other” (Emphasis in original) (Wolk 25). The apparent observation, however, is that Bakhtin assigned his ideas to the novel, not the graphic novel. The comics medium is largely thought to be used as an entertainment form, but “...the underground comix [sic], in the seventies...really began doing what... [is] considered literature” (Brownstein 191). Maus, then, displays the characteristics of a modernist novel that best exploit heteroglossia, which are the aforementioned authorial voice, narratorial speech, and the speech of the characters. In addition to examining voice and dialect in the written dialogue, this essay will explore the text’s illustrative polyphony in terms of its visual communication and design. To accomplish these tasks, this essay will first examine the text’s stylistics in Bakhtinian terms. It will then examine the visual vocabularies of the comics medium as established in the critical conversations of Spiegelman, Will Eisner, and Scott McCloud.

CHAPTER II

WRITTEN DIALOGUE

Berel Lang discusses the relation between morality and representation in the context of Holocaust discussion in his essay “Is it Possible to Misrepresent the Holocaust?” He asks, are there any particular limitations or requirements that may be considered, at best, taboo or, at worst, offensive in Holocaust representation? He argues that “the Holocaust can be described as one event or many, and as soon as narrative connectives are imposed on individual items of chronicle, alternate paths open up for alternate narratives” (History and Theory 89). This means that as different art forms are used to portray the Holocaust, the historical narrative is no longer dealing in facts, but in representations or stories. This could be particularly damning considering that Rodolphe Töpffer, considered the first modern comics author, “...adopted towards [comics] a casually deprecatory, throwaway stance...[and] apologized...for the frivolity and the ‘vulgar’ hybridization of his graphic novels – a hybridity that initiated a new, universal language mixing verbal and visual, correct and incorrect” (Kunzle 183). Comics have also been “...looked down upon by intelligentsia...If you [are] educated, you [do not] want to have anything to do with [comics]” (Campanelli, E9). While Maus as Holocaust literature is context-dependent and, therefore, subject to scrutiny based upon its medium,

a text that states only the facts of the Holocaust without incorporating any of the personal history is parallel to poetry in its univocality, which makes it impossible to exploit heteroglossia; however, particular artistic decisions discussed later in this essay demand further consideration under Lang's discourse on Holocaust representation.

2.1 Dialect

There is a strong presence of orality throughout Maus that creates a heteroglossic text rich with linguistic energy. (It should be noted that in this essay any mention of "Art" refers to the mouse character and any reference to "Spiegelman" refers to the human author.) One of the most prevalent examples involves the eastern European dialect of Vladek, Art's father. Dialect is the variety of language that is distinguished from proper speech by pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, in addition to its use by a group of geographically or socially distinct speakers, especially when it is considered improper or substandard. The story alternates between contemporary conversations between Art and Vladek as Vladek shares major moments of his life before and during World War II. Vladek's dialect, highlighted by his fractured and awkwardly worded English, is featured prominently throughout the two volumes of Maus. The inclusion of Vladek's dialect is important, as it highlights Spiegelman's commitment to linguistic and historical authenticity throughout the graphic novel. Spiegelman researched Holocaust texts, films, pamphlets, and art and went on research trips to Poland in order to visually depict every World War II-era scene as accurately as possible. Vladek's dialectical voice

therefore serves as a kind of witnessing that is equally as important to the other polyphonic features of the text.

During one of Vladek's reflections, Spiegelman breaks up the story by cutting to a present-day panel, where Art is listening intently to Vladek and taking notes. In the midst of a sentence, Vladek knocks a prescription bottle off of the table, scattering its contents all over the floor. As he bends down to pick up the pills, Vladek exclaims, "So – *twice* I spilled my drugstore! It's my eyes. Ever since I got in my left eye the hemorrhaging and the glaucoma, it had to be taken out from me. And now I don't see so well. And now I have a *cataract* inside my one good eye. You see how I have to suffer?" (Emphasis in original) (Maus, 41). Within this example are sentences that may be fundamentally and grammatically correct; however, the overall phrasing suggests that Vladek is not completely fluent in English, or at least does not speak English as his native language, which is true. These linguistic "hiccups," or inaccuracies, never halt the conversations between Art and Vladek. The utterances may not be perfect, but the intent is never muddled or lost, and conversations between the English-as-a-native-language Art and Vladek continue as normal.

Though the majority of Vladek's contemporary conversations are with Art, it should be observed that Vladek interacts with other English-as-a-native-language characters, including Art's wife, Françoise, and the manager of a grocery store. Though the actual interaction between Vladek and the manager occurs off panel, Art and his wife describe the event as they watch it unfold outside of the store window:

“...Hey! You can see him in the window!” – Françoise

“Jeez. Vladek and the manager are *shouting* at each other...” – Art

“Now the manager is just walking away from him...” – Françoise

“And now Vladek is trailing after him...” – Art

“How embarrassing.” – Françoise

“*Yoo-hoo!* You see? I exchanged *six* dollars worth of new groceries for only *one* dollar!” – Vladek

“Incredible!... We were sure you’d get kicked out of the store!” – Françoise

“What are you talking? The manager is a very fine gentleman... He helped me as soon as I explained to him my health, how Mala left me, and how it was in the camps.” – Vladek (Emphasis in original) (Maus, 249-250).

Whether or not the grocery store manager allowed the grocery exchange to occur because he actually sympathized with Vladek’s plight or because he wanted to be rid of a particularly annoying customer is up to the individual reader’s interpretation, but the reader is able to understand that Vladek could expressly verbalize his thoughts and be understood by an English-as-a-native-language character that is unrelated or not “used to” him.

2.2 Other Languages

One should also note Vladek’s voice within the flashback scenes. Within these panels, there are text boxes that continue Vladek’s present-day voice, as well as word balloons that indicate the speech or thought of a character, which will be discussed later. The flashback scenes are heteroglossically unique for several reasons. As mentioned

above, the text boxes continue Vladek's present-day voice, complete with fractured English, so that it is almost as if Vladek is talking over a picture. Second, the speech and thought balloons in these panels are in fluent English. Third, though the speech and thought bubbles are written in fluent English, the dialogue exchanged between characters is most often Polish, but may also be Yiddish or German depending on with whom Vladek is speaking. No mention of this particular type of heteroglossia is mentioned within "Discourse in the Novel," so for the sake of this essay it will be referred to as representational heterolinguistic fluency – the author represents fluency, or inarticulateness, in another language with English fluency. This unique conglomeration of voices is best exemplified in a scene in which Vladek details what his life was like after returning to his hometown of Sosnowiec, in southern Poland, after having spent time in a P.O.W. camp:

I WENT THE NEXT DAY TO MODRZEJOWSKA STREET. HERE PEOPLE STILL MADE MONEY, FROM SECRET BUSINESSES... NOT SO LEGAL...



THE NOTE TOLD THAT I WORKED WITH HIM. SUCH A PAPER COULD BE USEFUL TO HAVE.

I WENT THEN TO SHOPS WHAT STILL OWED ME MONEY FROM BEFORE THE WAR...



THEN ADVANCE ME A FEW YARDS OF MATERIAL WITHOUT COUPONS.



Fig. 1. Detail from Spiegelman, Art: The Complete Maus. 25th anniversary ed. New York City, New York: Pantheon Books, 2011. Print. Page 79.

The page exhibits two distinct voices for the same character, and, to further illustrate the distinction between the younger, Polish-speaking Vladek and the present-day, English-speaking Vladek, Spiegelman has inserted a visual cue within the text box on the last panel of the page – the present-day Vladek, bespectacled and slouched over the handlebars of his exercise bicycle, his glasses and posture suggesting old age.

Another curious example of English and Polish alternation occurs while Vladek is imprisoned in Auschwitz. A Polish block supervisor demands to know if any of the prisoners speak English in addition to Polish. Some of the prisoners, expecting that fluency in both languages would get them a job in translation and alleviate them of physical labor, approach the block supervisor. Upon overhearing the other prisoners' elementary-level English, Vladek steps forward:



Fig. 2. Detail from Spiegelman, Art: The Complete Maus. 25th anniversary ed. New York City, New York: Pantheon Books, 2011. Print. Page 191.

Prior to these panels, Vladek had been demonstrating the English-as-Polish representational heterolinguistic fluency while speaking with other inmates. He wishes to demonstrate his English competency to the block supervisor, so he speaks to him in English. Vladek's fractured English voice, up until now strictly used by Vladek in the present-day speech balloons or in the flashback text boxes, is now being used in a flashback scene, where before only fluent English was used to represent Vladek's Polish fluency.

Also demonstrated in figures 1 and 2, and dotted throughout the rest of the texts, are instances of Polish, Yiddish, or German vocabulary. Figure 1 mentions "Reichmarks" and "zlotys." Given the context in which both words are used, the reader can deduce that they are forms of currency – Reichmarks served as Germany's currency from the mid-1920s through the late 1940s and zlotys are Polish currency that is still in circulation today. Though Reichmarks and zlotys have no literal English translation and therefore have to be embedded within Spiegelman's representational heterolinguistic fluency, there are other examples where a foreign phrase is introduced, typically as an interjection directed towards an off-panel, non-Polish-speaking character. In Maus I, while the present-day Vladek is recounting a story in which, having been captured by Nazi soldiers while serving for the Polish army, he is forced to help carry wounded Nazi soldiers to ambulances for medical treatment. Vladek points out a body in the distance to one of the Nazis supervising the clean-up. Upon examining the body, the Nazi shouts out, "*Er verblutete!* His blood ran out! Carry him over to the truck with the others" (Emphasis in original) (Maus, 52). Present within this sentence are three languages: the

German sentence “Er verblutete,” which translates to “He bled to death;” the English, which represents the rest of the spoken dialogue; and the Polish in which this conversation would have actually been spoken.

Vladek’s eastern European dialect is not the only dialect present within Maus. A contemporary scene takes place in which Vladek, Art, and Françoise are driving. Françoise pulls the car over to pick up a hitchhiker, who happens to be an African American:

“Hiya.” – Hitchhiker

“A hitch-hiker? And – oy – it’s a *colored* guy, a *shvartser*! *Push quick on the gas*” – Vladek (Emphasis in original) (Maus, 258).

The hitchhiker then enters the car and Françoise continues driving:

“Thanks. It’s a hot day fo’ walkin’.” – Hitchhiker

“Moz boze! Co sie stalo jego zonie? Czy ona zglupiacza?*” – Vladek

“Mah cousin’s place is jus’ up th’road.” – Hitchhiker

“Psia krew! Cholera! To nie mozliwe. A *shvartzer* siedzi tu ze mna*” – Vladek (Emphasis in original) (Maus, 259).

In the final panel, as Françoise is pulling away, the hitchhiker waves goodbye and says, “Y’all take care now, an’ be good” (Maus, 259). In this scene’s dialogic discourse, the hitchhiker’s southern American dialect is presented alongside Vladek’s eastern European dialect. Additionally, within this scene Spiegelman breaks the traditional representational

heterolinguistic fluency by allowing complete sentences to be uttered in a foreign language, instead of the occasional interjections that are uttered earlier in the texts. Also, because this is a contemporary scene, the text boxes are no longer used as a vehicle for the present-day Vladek's voice. Instead, they are used for English translations: "Moz boze! Co sie stalo jego zonie? Czy ona zglupiac?" translates to "Oh my God! What's happened to his wife? She's lost her head!" "**Psia krew! Cholera!** To nie mozliwe. A *shvartzer* siedzi tu ze mna!" translates to "Dog's blood! Shit! I just can't believe it! There's a *shvartser* sitting in here" (Italicized emphasis in original, bolded emphasis my own) (Maus, 259). The bolded words and phrases stratify Vladek's language into a voice of a generation/age group and a tendential voice. "Psia krew," literally translated, means dog's blood and is a mild, particularly dated profanity. "Cholera" is a much heavier profanity, equivalent to saying "shit" or even "fuck" in English. "Shvartser" is used as a derogatory term directed towards blacks. By uttering "shvartser," especially coupled with the heavier obscenity "cholera," Vladek prominently displays his bias against blacks. "Psia krew/dog's blood" also suggests that Vladek literally considers the hitchhiker a dog, or subhuman. Ironical, too, given that Spiegelman chose to represent Americans as dogs within his texts.

2.3 Authorial Voice

Art's authorial voice also seeps into his text, and it is featured prominently within the second volume of Maus. Eric Berlatsky notes, "Maus is not merely the story of Vladek's survival, it is also the story of Artie's telling of that survival (and includes...a

third narrative of how Artie survives the telling)” (Berlatsky 128). Indeed, there are moments within the texts where Art acknowledges it as a work of nonfiction as well as art. In Maus I, Spiegelman details an early conversation he had with Vladek where he gently reminds him that he would like to begin the project that would eventually become Maus:

“...But tell me, how is it by you? How is going the comics business?” – Vladek

“I still want to draw that book about you...The one I used to talk to you about...About your life in Poland and the war...I want to hear it. Start with Mom...Tell me how you met” – Art (Maus, 14).

It would have been much easier for Spiegelman to just retell Vladek’s story as it was described to him, but he recognized that his voice was just as important because it conveyed his tense relationship with his father and the difficulties that arose out of that in trying to complete the project. In the first volume of Maus, Art confesses to his step-mother, Mala, that he thinks that something may be wrong with Vladek:

“It could be that comic strip you once made – the one about your mother...Vladek saw it for the first time a couple of days ago.” – Mala

“How do *you* know about ‘Prisoner on the Hell Planet?’” – Art

“My friend, Ruthie, has a son in college. He reads *all* the comics. He showed it to her, and she gave me a copy...I knew it would upset your father, so I kept it hidden. But, somehow he found it.” – Mala

“I drew this story years ago. It appeared in an obscure underground comic book, I *never* thought Vladek would see it” – Art (Emphasis in original) (Maus, 101).

From there, Spiegelman inserts the aforementioned “Prisoner on the Hell Planet” comic book into Maus, which details his mother’s suicide and the fallout that resulted from her death. By doing so, Spiegelman injects Maus with a third and fourth voice for himself – there is Art the mouse in Maus, Spiegelman the author of Maus, the voice of the 20 year old Spiegelman as a character in “Prisoner on the Hell Planet,” and, finally, the 20 year old Spiegelman, months removed from his mother’s suicide, as the author of “Prisoner on the Hell Planet.” “Prisoner on the Hell Planet” encompasses four pages of Maus before Spiegelman’s two “new” voices are removed and the perspective shifts back over to Art the mouse. This inclusion of “Prisoner on the Hell Planet” is polyphonic; Spiegelman does not target a single stylistic vision, instead inserting a drastically different visual style to describe the situation.

A proto-Maus comic gives insight into Spiegelman’s process and the development of his stylistic and linguistic choices. In 1971, Spiegelman was invited to contribute to an animal-themed comic book, an underground release titled “Funny Aminals” [sic], published in 1972.¹ Spiegelman’s submission evolved from focusing on the black experience in America using the cat/mouse metaphor into incorporating his own personal history. The original three-page comic features scenes that were later depicted in the full-length Maus comics. Page two of the proto-Maus comic largely covers events that take place in Chapter 5 of the first volume Maus, including the scene in which the family is hiding out in the attic bunker and the scene in which Vladek (identified as “Poppa”) buried the man who had betrayed their hideout to the Nazis. Several changes differentiate the scenes, most notably the overall artistic styles and the panel layout used to convey the

story. Stylistically, the proto-Maus comic parodies “Steamboat Willie” era Mickey Mouse, in that the mice have large, rounded ears, elongated nasal bones which may droop to convey certain emotions, and exaggerated circular noses. The Mickey Mouse parody is further strengthened by the second panel of the story, where Spiegelman identifies his childhood self by the name “Mickey” rather than Art. The reader experiences the proto-Maus comic and Maus via the same visual vocabulary (that is, the mice are Jews and the cats are Nazis), but the stylistic differences highlight the text as visually heteroglot. In Maus, Spiegelman doubles the number of panels used in the proto-Maus comic to tell the story of the informer:

To set that up visually presented a problem in panel progression for me. If I had hoped to retain the cut-away of the family huddled in the attic, it had to be on the right-hand side of the page. I just couldn’t put it on the left and still keep the horizontal at the bottom of the page showing the Gestapo marching the family off without either losing crucial panels that came before or adding a lot of unnecessary ones. Since we read from left to right, I was stuck with the problem of stacking two panels to the left of the vertical panel and arranging them so the reader would read them in the right order...I invented a device, the balloon – “He’s lying!” – that literally bridges to a further close-up of Lolek talking. You’re yanked down before you’re allowed to go to the right, and then see that the division between the two boxes is no longer a division into two separate panels – but the cut-away view with another balloon now traversing the two floors and literally holding it together (MetaMaus, 187).

In the proto-Maus comic, Spiegelman follows the panel depicting the family huddled in the attic with a cut-away to the present, where Poppa briefly summarizes the events that happened to his family shortly after their capture. The perspectives in the overlapping panels between the proto-Maus comic and Maus remain largely unchanged, though obviously stylistically different. This makes the proto-Maus comic unique in its

contribution to Maus' multivocality – it was *the* original Maus and served as a catalyst for Spiegelman to augment the story; in hindsight, it is more of a published character sketch or study in style rather than a complete story, but served as a stepping-off point for the final project.

Where the first volume of Maus became self-referential with the addition of “Prisoner on the Hell Planet,” the second volume of Maus is less subtle about breaking the fourth wall. In its opening pages, Art is sitting underneath a tree, sketchbook in hand, brainstorming on the best way to represent Françoise in Maus:

“What kind of *animal* should I make you?” – Art

“Huh? A *mouse* of course!” – Françoise

“But you’re French!” – Art

“Well...how about the bunny rabbit?” – Françoise

“Nah, too sweet and gentle.” – Art

“Hmmpf.” – Françoise

“I mean the French in *general*. Let’s not forget about the centuries of anti-Semitism...I mean, how about the Dreyfuss Affair? The Nazi collaborators? The –” – Art

“*Okay!* But if you’re a mouse, I ought to be a mouse too. I *converted*, didn’t I?” – Françoise (Emphasis in original) (Maus, 171).

Berlatsky notes that “[Art] (both the character and the author) controls the ways in which we perceive Françoise (and other historical figures in Maus)...” (Berlatsky 128).

Spiegelman’s voice dictates what the reader sees and perceives.

Berlatsky also points out other metafictional references within Maus: “Another example occurs when [Art] goes to see his ‘shrink’ Pavel. ‘His place is overrun with stray dogs and cats. Can I mention this or does it completely louse up my metaphor?’ (Maus, 203). Spiegelman acknowledges the possibility of the metaphor getting beyond his control and freely admits its limits. [He]...highlights the metaphorical fictionality of his representations” (Berlatsky 130). Though Berlatsky argues that these scenes are fictional because they have likely been constructed from memory, the point remains that Spiegelman has pared down a few more layers of voices within these self-referential scenes.

CHAPTER III

COMICS LANGUAGE AND HYBRIDIZATION

Though much of this essay's focus has been on the actual verbal language used within Maus, it is important to observe that Maus is primarily a visual text, which opens it up to a greater depth of heteroglossic interpretation. Will Eisner notes that "Comics communicate in a 'language' that relies on a visual experience common to both creator and audience...Comics can be 'read' in a wider sense than that term is commonly applied...In its most economical state, comics employ a series of repetitive images and recognizable symbols. When these are used again and again to convey similar ideas, they become a distinct language – a literary form, if you will" (Eisner 1).

3.1 Panels

One of the most fundamental examples of the comic book language is the panel, a singular frame that contains a drawing. In traditional western comic books, the panels are placed in an order from left to right, top to bottom; the same way in which one reads a novel, magazine, newspaper, and so on. In regards to Maus, Spiegelman notes, "I worked with the metaphor that each panel was analogous to a word, and each row of panels was a

sentence, and each page was a paragraph” (MetaMaus 175). With that metaphor in mind, Spiegelman is able to use panel borders in such a way as to convey different basic sentence and phrase configurations. An interesting example of this occurs towards the end of the first volume of Maus 1, shortly before Vladek is sent to Auschwitz:



Fig. 3. Detail from Spiegelman, Art: The Complete Maus. 25th anniversary ed. New York City, New York: Pantheon Books, 2011. Print. Page 157.

To this point in the text, panel borders have been designated with straight lines that meet at a 90-degree angle in the corners. These classify the panels as visually declarative statements in the comic book language. In the third “line” of the “paragraph” on page 157, Spiegelman begins with a familiar straight-lined panel. About two-thirds of the way through the line, he inserts a heretofore unseen jagged-bordered panel. The panel changes the line’s classification from a declarative statement to an exclamatory statement, which is confirmed by the panel’s verbal narrative and the characters’ expressions – the Nazi cat exclaims “Here they are!” while Vladek has a look of shock on his face as his mask is pulled away and Anja buries her head in her hands in despair. Curiously, the jagged panel also acts as an interjection. When one “reads” the first panel’s border from left to right, the horizontal lines are interrupted by the jagged panel; there is no vertical line to indicate a completed thought, therefore rendering the right hand side of the panel as a visual ellipsis. This interjection is further highlighted by the angle in which the jagged panel is laid out on the page and the white “bleeding” effect that its left-hand side and bottom have on their respective neighboring panels.

Spiegelman also uses a panel’s shape to indicate tense. Near the end of Maus II, after Vladek was freed from Auschwitz, he traveled to a displaced persons camp in Germany in hopes of reconvening with Anja. Upon arriving, he happened upon two women that he was acquainted with from his hometown². As they are exchanging news and information, one of the women explains why it is dangerous for Jews to return to

Sosnowiec, Poland. As she relays the story of another home town acquaintance, the panel borders change in shape. Instead of the previously analyzed straight or jagged lines, the panel borders are wavy. The wavy lines indicate that the artistic depictions in these panels are in the past tense. This is reinforced by the woman's narration over the panels: "One of the sons *survived* and came back home... He *spent* the night in the shed behind his house... The Poles *went* in. They *beat* him and *hanged* him... For this he *survived*" (Emphasis my own) (Maus 292). The inclusion of these wavy panels poses an interesting question: if, in the established comic book language, their wavy shape is meant to indicate the past tense, why is it that Vladek's reflections on his World War II experiences throughout the previous 291 pages do not feature any instances of wavy lines? The simple answer is that the decision was made for aesthetic purposes. Because so much of Maus takes place in the past, wavy panels would dominate most of the page layouts, thus limiting Spiegelman's ability to use other panel shapes to effectively tell the story. The more likely reason is Maus' biographical nature. In the entirety of the text, wavy, past tense panels are only used twice – in the abovementioned interaction between Vladek and the two women from his hometown, and on the final page of "Prisoner on the Hell Planet." These scenes represent perspective shifts between characters, where secondary characters' stories are visually conveyed instead of Vladek's. Stylistically, the character perspective shift in "Prisoner on the Hell Planet" is pronounced; Spiegelman uses intentionally expressionistic lines to convey his feelings of anger, frustration, and despair, so there should be no confusion in the perspective shift. When the perspective shifts to the two women, it remains in the text's familiar minimalist drawing style. Thus,

the wavy panels are used to express the past tense and the character shift, further highlighted by the quotation marks used in the caption boxes in each individual panel.

Scott McCloud notes that “The panel acts as a sort of general indicator that time or space is being divided. The durations of that time and the dimensions of that space are defined more by the contents of the panel than the panel itself. Panel shapes vary considerably though, and while differences of shape don’t affect the specific ‘meanings’ of those panels vis-à-vis time, they can affect the reading experience” (McCloud 99).

Take the following example:



Fig. 4. Detail from Spiegelman, Art: The Complete Maus. 25th anniversary ed. New York City, New York: Pantheon Books, 2011. Print. Page 23.

The right-hand edge of the first panel and the left-hand edge of the second panel are fractured. This affects the reading experience in two ways. First, it indicates to the reader that the conversation is taking place over an electronic device, in this case a telephone. Second, at this point in the text Vladek senses that Anja is distancing herself emotionally.

Spiegelman uses the fractured panel border to literalize the disconnect between the two characters; although they are many miles away, their sight lines match up so that it appears that Anja is scowling directly at Vladek, who responds with a look of surprise.

3.2 Speech Balloons

Another fundamental example of the comic book language is the speech balloon. The shape of the speech balloon differentiates between speech and thought within the panel. In the comics medium, a speech balloon is generally elliptical in shape, with a tail pointing towards the speaker. A thought balloon is also generally elliptical, but the lines are humped to give the balloon a cloud-like appearance. The tail is also a series of tiny, individual bubbles pointing towards the speaker, instead of the conical tail of the speech balloon. Similar to panels, speech balloons may also change in shape to convey additional information. Like the jagged-bordered panel, a jagged-bordered speech balloon may be used to convey shouting or screaming.

A caption box works alongside the speech balloon as a narrative device, typically used to deliver information that cannot be conveyed by a speech balloon or by the artwork itself. In an issue of the comic anthology Raw, Spiegelman compares and contrasts caption boxes and speech balloons, noting that “...captions have a *coolness*, a *distance*, the authority of real prose” (Emphasis in original) (Comix, Essays, Graphics, and Scraps 36). In Maus, Spiegelman assigns caption boxes to only three characters – Vladek, two women from his hometown (as one entity), and himself. Spiegelman

distinguishes between these different voices within the caption boxes via visual cues. Throughout the vast majority of the text, the caption boxes are used to specifically indicate that the present-day Vladek is narrating the events depicted in the panels. In the previously discussed scene where the two women from Vladek's hometown tell him what had happened to Gelber in Poland, Spiegelman uses quotation marks to indicate that the speaker is not Vladek. In both of these previous examples, the lettering is the same; however, when Spiegelman inserts his own voice into caption boxes, the lettering changes. Instead of the standard all caps lettering, Spiegelman's narration follows traditional written English, where capital letters are only featured at the beginning of sentences and to indicate proper nouns. Additionally, Spiegelman uses a stylized initial in his caption boxes, like the one on page 28³, if they start a chapter or after long absences in his narration. Though subtle, these visual cues are heteroglossic examples that are unique to comics language.

3.3 Hybridization

Beyond exploring the depth of comics vocabulary, Spiegelman enriches and elevates the language of Maus through literary devices such as hybridization. Wendell Harris explains, "Hybridization is the name Bakhtin gives to a particular form of double voicing, the incorporation of two distinctive voices in the same syntactical unit. That is, within a grammatical structure that must be attributed to one person's voice can be heard the ideology and/or speech patterns of another. Hybridization, in other words, is 'an encounter, within the arena of a single utterance, between two different linguistic

consciousnesses”” (Harris 453). Therefore, this essay argues that Vladek’s ideology and/or speech patterns are not only limited to Spiegelman’s voice by a strict grammatical structure, but also by comics as a communicative medium. It is well documented, and even referenced several times throughout the text, that Spiegelman came to know Vladek’s story through a series of long, emotional interviews that he had tape recorded. This means that, aside from his own extensive independent research, much of Maus’ visual story contains a hybridization of Vladek’s voice as he tells the story and Spiegelman’s voice as an interpreter and illustrator.

An example of this hybridization occurs as Spiegelman is pressing Vladek for details during one of his interviews:

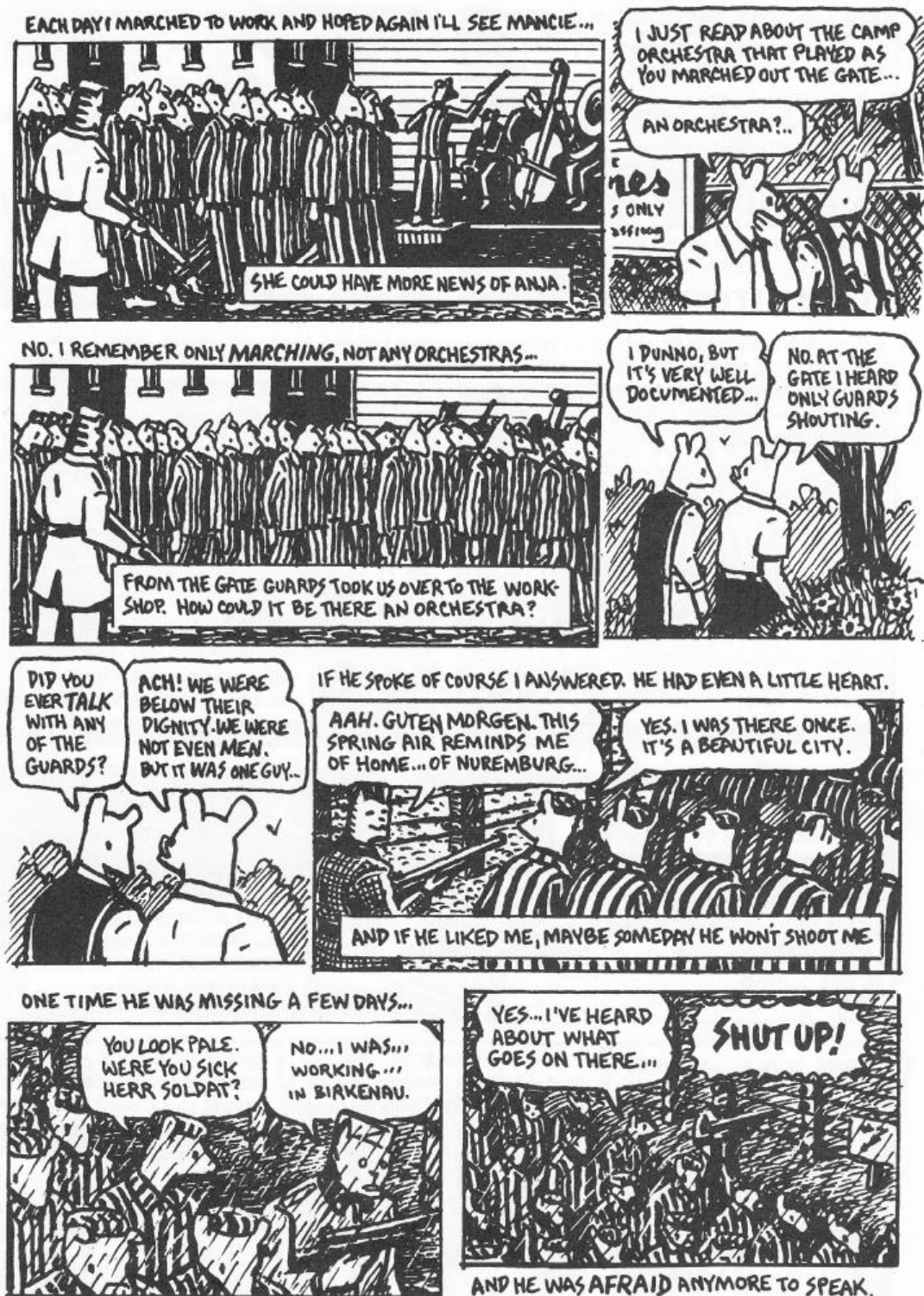


Fig. 5. Detail from Spiegelman, Art: The Complete Maus. 25th anniversary ed. New York City, New York: Pantheon Books, 2011. Print. Page 214.

Spiegelman realizes that Vladek's memories do not always correspond with well-documented history. This does not mean that Vladek is wrong or is misremembering, but Spiegelman acknowledges that there is an omission in his story that needs to be addressed. He asks: "[D]o I just correct errors based on other people's authority? Or do I ignore other people's authority and go strictly with Vladek's memory as if it was an objective correlative that could be drawn?" (MetaMaus 30). The hybridization occurs when Spiegelman illustrates the orchestra performing as the prisoners are marching towards their work detail in the first panel and then reproduces its general content in the third panel, albeit with the orchestra edited out by additional prisoners. Spiegelman notes:

I get to "win" this argument since I set it up – I show the little bits of the cello and the silhouettes of the musicians behind the marching figures to insist that they were there. And to top off this exchange, because of my compulsive need to make formal things that nobody will notice, the bit of wall that's covered up by the marching prisoners becomes a musical staff with notes on it (MetaMaus 31).

Other examples of this "compulsive" hybridization include the variety of swastikas hidden throughout the text, some more obvious, like the crossroads that Vladek and Anja have reached that contorts into a swastika:



Fig. 6. Detail from Spiegelman, Art: The Complete Maus. 25th anniversary ed. New York City, New York: Pantheon Books, 2011. Print. Page 127.

And others far more subtle:

Time flies...



Fig. 7. Detail from Spiegelman, Art: The Complete Maus. 25th anniversary ed. New York City, New York: Pantheon Books, 2011. Print. Page 201.

Where the black negative space created by the spotlight flows between the panels to create a partial swastika rising above a mound of dead Jews. Even Spiegelman's lettering contains instances of hybridization, where he will sometimes stylize the letter "S" to represent the Armanen "sig" rune adopted by the Schutzstaffel as their insignia:



Fig. 8. Detail from Spiegelman, Art: The Complete Maus. 25th anniversary ed. New York City, New York: Pantheon Books, 2011. Print. Page 45.

Spiegelman exploits devices native to both the comics medium as well as the modern novel to engage the reader on a number of linguistic levels simultaneously. It is this simultaneous engagement that is heteroglossic.

These particular artistic representations bear further consideration under Lang's discourse on Holocaust representation, namely *how* the Holocaust is represented and how it *should* be represented, especially artistically, because of historical and ethical limits ascribed by the event. Lang notes, "...a condition of Holocaust representation is the

possibility of Holocaust *misrepresentation* – as a condition of Holocaust images is the possibility of their defacement... These representations would, in my account, be at the center, the point-zero, of Holocaust images, constituting in effect a nonrepresentational representation” (Emphasis in original) (Holocaust Representation 11-12). These overtly symbolic panels are consistent with the other elements of visual language that Spiegelman uses throughout the text, including, of course, his use of animal masks, but also circular motifs that can be used both to reference the swastika design and focus the reader’s attention as a compositional element, literally highlighting the action. In figures 6 and 7, the metaphorical representations are akin to editorial cartooning rather than strictly comics. Editorial cartoons generally incorporate hyperbole and satire in order to question authority or publicize social problems in a singular panel, which deviate from McCloud’s definitions of comics as, “Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in *deliberate sequence*, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer” (Emphasis my own) (McCloud 9). In other words, comics involves creating individual images that amount to a greater meaning beyond just the individual moments, whereas an editorial cartoon is meant to represent many moments in one image.

Lang continues:

I propose...to claim...that the Holocaust is speakable, that it has been, will be..., and, most of all, ought to be... Indeed, silence arguably remains a criterion for all discourse (Holocaust or not), a constant if phantom presence that stipulates that whatever is written ought to be justifiable as more probative, more incisive, more *revealing*, than its absence or, more cruelly, its erasure” (Emphasis in original) (Holocaust Representation 18-19).

In what ways, then, are the artistic representations in figures 6 and 7 more “probative,” “incisive,” and “revealing”? In Figure 6, Vladek and Anja are seen approaching a crossroads in a decisive swastika-path. They have options ahead of them, but each option ultimately leaves them firmly entrenched within the swastika, or subjected to Nazi persecution. This particular visual hyperbole is effective as a style of editorial cartooning in expressing the constant danger to Jews in Nazi-occupied states; however, in Figure 7, the reader is rewarded, in a manner of speaking, for his or her thorough structural reading of the page. The subtle depiction of the swastika in the background reveals just how deeply the Holocaust has affected Spiegelman as he recounts major facets in his life, Vladek’s life, and the daunting critical and commercial success of Maus I. The absence or erasure of these representations would trivialize Spiegelman’s restructuring of Vladek’s narrative.

CHAPTER IV

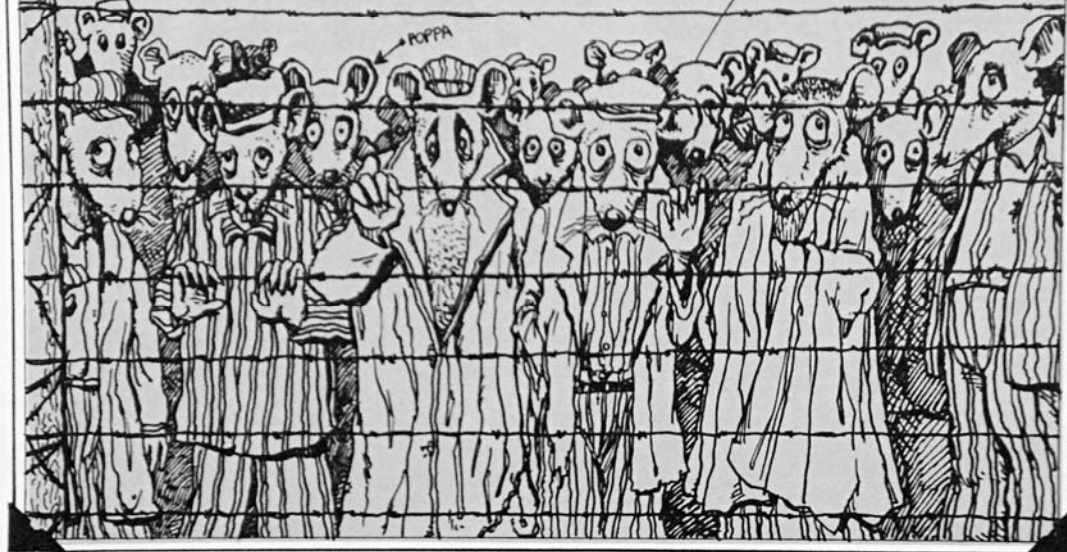
CONCLUDING REMARKS

McCloud states that “[comics] offers range and versatility with all the potential imagery of film and painting plus the intimacy of the written word” (McCloud 212). As this essay shows, the comics medium in general and Maus, in particular, are capable of being embraced by Bakhtinian literary theory by displaying the characteristics of a modernist novel and transcending the misconceptions of their limitations and uneducated nature to exploit heteroglossic language and engage the reader; however, this essay is limited by its focus on Bakhtin’s essay “Discourse in the Novel.” Maus and its medium surely lend themselves to further examination concerning Bakhtin’s concepts of time and space as detailed in his essay “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel.”

NOTES

1. Details from Spiegelman, Art: Breakdowns: Portrait of the Artist as a Young %@&*!. First revised ed. New York City, New York: Pantheon Books, 2008. Print.

MAUS



WHEN I WAS A YOUNG MOUSE IN REGO PARK, NEW YORK, MY POPPA USED TO TELL ME BEDTIME STORIES ABOUT LIFE IN THE OLD COUNTRY DURING THE WAR



"IT WAS FENCES PUT UP ALL AROUND! NO MOUSE COULD GO OUT FROM THE GHETTO, NO FOOD AND NO MEDICINES COULD GO IN! THEY TREATED US LIKE WE WERE INSECTS... WORSE! I CAN'T EVEN DESCRIBE! ..."

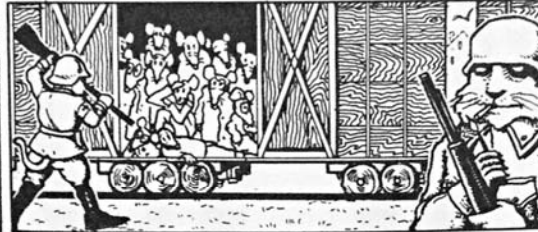


"CHILDREN LIKE YOU STILL PLAYED IN THE STREETS SOMETIMES. THEY PLAYED FUNERALS AND THEY PLAYED GRAVEDIGGER!"

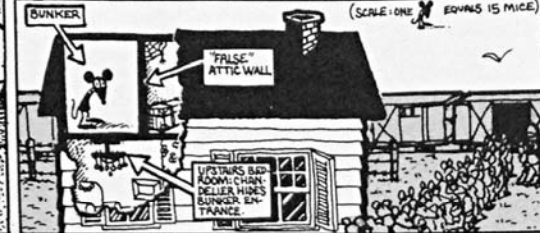


NEXT TIME I WANT TO PLAY THE CAT!

"SOON IT WAS DECIDED TO CLEAN OUT THE GHETTO. ONLY WAS LEFT A KITTY LITTER FACTORY AND ITS WORKERS. MOST MICE WERE TAKEN TO THE PRISON CAMPS..."



"...WE HEARD HOW TERRIBLE IT WAS, THE CAMPS! 15 OF US HID IN A SMALL BUNKER THAT I MADE IN AN ATTIC..."



(SCALE: ONE EDWINS IS MICE)

ONE COULDN'T LIVE THERE!...IT WASN'T WHAT TO EAT!



YOU SEE? IF YOU CHEW THE WOOD, IT FEELS A LITTLE LIKE EATING FOOD.

"AT NIGHT A FEW FROM US WOULD SNEAK OUTSIDE TO SEARCH FOR SCRAPS."



"ONE NIGHT IT WAS A STRANGER SITTING IN THE DOWNSTAIRS OF THE HOUSE. WE WERE AFRAID HE COULD BE AN INFORMER..."



...SOME MICE MADE AN AGREEMENT WITH DIE KATZEN, THEY TURNED IN OTHERS SO THEY WOULD NOT BE SENT TO THE CAMPS THEMSELVES!

"WE DRAGGED HIM INTO OUR BUNKER..."



I WAS ONLY LOOKING FOR FOOD FOR MY SICK WIFE AND BABY. I DIDN'T KNOW IT WAS ANYBODY HERE. SO I STOPPED TO REST A MOMENT! OY! MY POOR BABY!!!

HE IS LYING! THE SAFEST THING IT WOULD BE THAT WE KILL HIM!!!

"...AFTER A FEW DAYS WE TOOK PITY AND LEFT HIM GO. DIE KATZEN TOOK US THAT SAME AFTERNOON!"



MOST WERE SENT AWAY OR KILLED. I HAD A COUSIN ON THE MAUS POLICE AND I HAD A LITTLE MONEY STILL HIDDEN. I BRIBED A JOB FOR MOMMA AND MYSELF AT THE KITTY LITTER FACTORY!



BUT, POPPA - WHAT HAPPENED TO THE RAT THAT SNITCHED ON YOU?

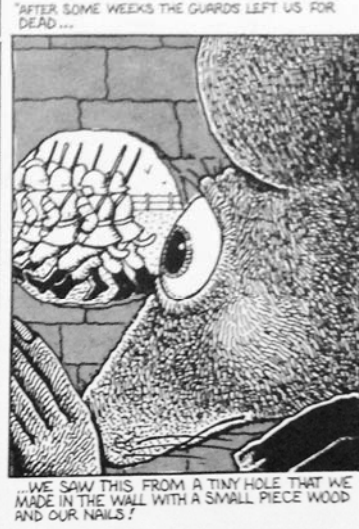
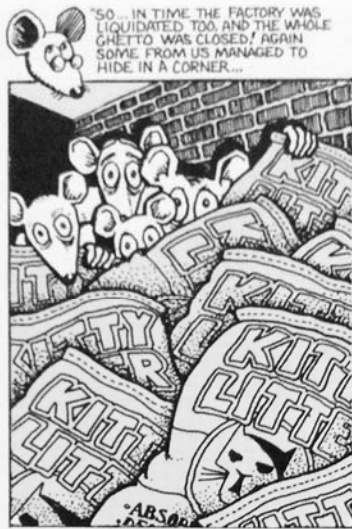
"YOU KNOW, I BURIED HIM! I ... BURIED ... HIM..."

IF HE IS DEAD, WHY IS IT THAT HIS EYES ARE STILL WIDE OPEN?



HE WAS STRUGGLING TO SURVIVE!!

"MY COUSIN ARRANGED FOR HIM TO BE KILLED! IT HAPPENED THAT I WAS ON THE WORK DETAIL AND I BURIED HIM!"



"THERE WAS NO FOOD AT ALL! WE LEFT THE BUNKER, BUT WHERE TO GO? WHERE TO GO?..."



"YOUR MOMMA AND I SNEAKED TO HER OLD HOME TOWN... LOCAL CATS SHE KNEW BEFORE THE WAR WERE AFRAID TO HIDE US!"



"WITH MY LAST MONEY I MADE A DEAL WITH ONE CAT TO SNEAK US OUT FROM THE COUNTRY..."



"THE NEXT MORNING WAS ONLY WAITING DIE KATZEN!..."



"... MAUSCHWITZ ..."



...AND SO IT WAS... I CAN TELL YOU NO MORE NOW...



...I CAN TELL YOU NO MORE... IT'S TIME TO GO TO SLEEP, MICKEY!



2. Details from Spiegelman, Art: The Complete Maus. 25th anniversary ed. Book, CD-ROM. New York City, New York: Pantheon Books, 2011. Print. Page 292.



REMEMBER THE GELBERS?
THEY OWNED THE BIG
BAKERY IN SOSNOWIEC...



"ONE OF THE SONS SURVIVED AND CAME BACK HOME..."
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
THIS IS MY FAMILY'S HOUSE.
I'M GELBER!



WE THOUGHT HITLER
FINISHED YOU OFF!



GO AWAY, JEW! THIS
IS OUR BAKERY NOW!



"HE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.
HE SPENT THE NIGHT IN THE
SHED BEHIND HIS HOUSE..."



"THE POLES WENT IN. THEY BEAT HIM AND HANGED HIM."

"...FOR THIS
HE SURVIVED."



HIS BROTHER CAME FROM
THE CAMPS A DAY LATER,
AND ONLY STAYED LONG
ENOUGH TO BURY HIM...

STOP IT!...I
DON'T WANT
TO HEAR
ANY MORE!



JUST TELL ME.
DID YOU HEAR
ANYTHING
ABOUT ANJA?

I SAW HER! SHE DIDN'T
TRY TO GET HER PROP-
ERTY BACK. THE POLES
LEAVE HER ALONE.

3. Detail from Spiegelman, Art: The Complete Maus. 25th anniversary ed. Book, CD-ROM. New York City, New York: Pantheon Books, 2011. Print. Page 28.

For the next few months I went back to visit my father quite regularly, to hear his story.

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