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## MASTER DISSERTATION

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### Graphic Novels:

### The Depiction of Female Characters in Art Spiegelman's *Maus*

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## Declaration

I declare that “*Graphic Novels: The Depiction of Female Characters in Art Spiegelman's Maus*” is my own work and all sources I have used have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete reference.

\_\_\_\_\_ *Aroua Hicher* \_\_\_\_\_

## **Dedication**

*I dedicate my work to all my family members, to my mother and my father for their support and patience, to my brother and my sisters, to all my friends and to each person by his name for their help.*

*For all those who encouraged me.*

*I dedicate my work to myself for the hard work through the past years waiting for this moment.*

## **Acknowledgement**

First and foremost, all the praise is due to ALLAH for his grace and blessings to complete my dissertation

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I would like to thank my family, for their support, patience, and assistance all over my study years.

## **Abstract**

This dissertation entitled “**Graphic novels: The Depiction of Female Characters in Art Spiegelman’s *Maus***” aimed at shedding the light on how the author depicted his female characters during the Second World War specifically during the Holocaust era and how did they survived the cruel incident. In the process of analyzing the female characters, the study adopted gender theories and feminism to investigate how women were portrayed in the story by the author who also happens to be the male protagonist alongside with his father. The analysis revealed that the female characters suffered from a double burden, the first as being women and the second as being Jewish. They were depicted in a passive and marginalized way. The male protagonists oppressed the female characters that they were not even given the chance or a time span to tell their side of the story in the book. Therefore, they experienced oppression from two sides, the Holocaust and the male protagonists.

**Key words:** Female Characters, Feminism, Gender theories, The Graphic Novel *Maus*, Passive Depiction.

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## **General Introduction**



Historically, women are treated as a property by men. They are targeted by their society with discrimination and stereotypes. In traditional societies, where men most of the time subject women and speak in their behalf. Besides the low status of women, they also gained a submissive role during war time, especially the Second World War, comparing to men. When the Nazi Party ruled Germany with the leadership of Hitler started the racism practises towards the group minorities all over the occupied territories by Germany, For example, Jews, Roma (Gypsy) and even psychiatric patients and the handicapped. One of those territories that suffered from the German Holocaust is Poland especially the Jewish lived there. They both women and men suffered from utter torture and marginalization as an application of the Nazi propaganda that Jews are a race under human beings.

*Maus* as a Holocaust tale by Art Spiegelman tells the story of Vladek, Polish Jew who survived the Holocaust. The author narrates his father's experiences in form of graphic novel, starting from Vladek marriage to Anja till the end of his life. Also, *Maus* is the story of the author himself in relation to his father Vladek. Art Spiegelman in his comic book depicts his relationship with his father. He describes the difficulties in their relation and all the emotional and communicative hardships they face. The most notable aspect of the book is the creativity of the author when he pictured each group of people or characters with animal faces. For instance, Jews as rats, French as frogs, Poles as pigs, Nazis as cats and American as dogs. *Maus* is a serial book, *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History (1986)* and *Maus II: A Survivor's Tale: And Here My Troubles Began*.

The main focus of the research is the depiction of the female characters within the story. We cannot ignore the fact that the story is a reflection and representation of the common way of thinking and people's beliefs of the time that the story events emerged. All of that is to say the male dominant society and its views to women. For *Maus* as a Holocaust experience described the society at that time. Through history women are most of the time

excluded and marginalized from narratives also even in some religious beliefs such as the early Judaism. And how the protagonist treats the female around him and how Art Spiegelman as an author and a character portrayed female characters.

The aim of this study is to explore attitudes toward females during and after the Holocaust. Moreover, the study aims to shed light on how unjust portrayals of females in narrating historical events. The objective of the study is to investigate the author's depiction of females.

Art Spiegelman is an American artist and graphic novelist. He earned a special award "Pulitzer Prize" in 1992 for his best known graphic novel *Maus*, which narrated the holocaust experience of his father and mother. *Maus* gained a large critics and reviews by scholars and researchers in different fields. This comic book is the best seller according to New York Times. Briefly, we will review other scholars research works about the novel specifically works that are related to the topic of the passive and unfair depiction of female characters.

Based on Spiegelman's *Maus* some critics as Helena Duffy, she focused more on analysing the main female characters Anja (Anna) Spiegelman which is Artie's mother and Vladek's first wife. She studied the representation of the Jewish mothers during the Holocaust. For most of the scholars Anja was depicted as the loose of memory and the silent voice in the story. Harvey Pekar argued that the subsidiary character of Anja suffered from mental breakdowns led her to suicide and questioned the lack of sufficient evidence about her life and death.

Lucia Greenberg is also a character in *Maus* that Sadie Dossett analysed her alone in his paper titled by Lucia Greenberg: In-Depth Analysis, where he compared between Lucia the lover and Anja the wife. He shows how the author depicts Lucia as just one of the many girlfriends that Vladek used to go out with. The researcher said also that we can come up with different interpretation about Lucia. His main concern about this study is to give courage to

criticize the portrayals of female characters.

The research supposed to answer the following research questions:

- How does the graphic novel *Maus* I & II portray women?
- What are the author's attitudes toward his female characters? And in what way he depicted them?
- What are the characteristics of the main female characters of *Maus*?

The theoretical approach of this study is predominantly the feminist approach and gender approach which are approaches that deal with female issues and calls for gender equality. In the process of conducting this research, E-libraries are used to collect primary and secondary sources, collecting important texts and articles which contain critical information. The study will research about the influence of traditional religious communities that adapted patriarchal practices about female characters. Furthermore, it is about investigating the influence of wars as well on females (the Holocaust).

The nature of this paper is qualitative starting by a close reading for the primary source Art Spiegelman's *Maus* I & II. Also, the biography of the author is important to set in mind his living conditions when he wrote his graphic novel. For more understanding of feminism and feminist theory and the way to apply it in this study, the researcher should go through historical materials. In addition to that, we should support the research by reading the available and reliable sources as books, dissertation, essays, and articles.

The first chapter comprises the introduction to the study and literature review of the topic. Also, it contains the overview of the graphic novel and the author then the description of the female characters in the novel. In the second chapter we will explore the theoretical framework mainly the literary theory concepts like gender. The third chapter will focus on the depiction of female characters and how they are depicted as victims of their society and the double oppression on them.

**Chapter One: A General Overview of Art**  
**Spiegelman and *Maus***

**Introduction:**

Art Spiegelman is one of the most important American cartoonists and famous comic artists for his debatable topics that he tackles in his comic books. *Maus*, Holocaust survivor's tale, is a milestone in the history of comics. The book is, according to a multitude of critiques and reviews, his best graphic novel and this is owing to the topics it deals with. The present chapter gives an overview of this novel, starting from the historical context of the novel then the plot summary. Also, it deals with the biography of the author Art Spiegelman, which helps for more understanding the writer's life circumstances and influences. Lastly, the characters description part deals with describing the three main female characters as they are the main concern of this research.

## 1. The Historical Context of the Novel:

In *Maus*, Art Spiegelman helps readers to understand more the Holocaust and oppression committed by Nazis upon Jews in both Poland and Germany during the Second World War. And how Jewish minority all over Europe were used and treated by German Nazis. The novel is about putting in words and images the story of Jewish family in the Holocaust and their misery inside the concentration camps. It is a Holocaust narratives that narrates facts and experiences happened in the past. Spiegelman makes the past story of his father visible for readers by using the graphic novel. He challenges himself doing the task of writing a comic book about a horror that people experienced in Holocaust.

The representation of memory in *MAUS* depends upon the testimonial of Vladek. In this case, the harsh events of the past have transformed the voice of Vladek into a testimonial. The relation between memory and history has been so dramatic that neither can remain simply in the annals of history or the tradition of communal memory: “In the Jewish tradition, whose history is its memory, to be Jewish is to remember being Jewish’ (Nora, 11)” (Merino, 7)

As a cartoonist and illustrator, Spiegelman sets his memoir book in critical period of the Jewish history, which is the Holocaust. He devoted his literary career to narrate Jewish experience under the Holocaust. He succeeded in doing that through techniques used them in drawing his novel. Also, the way he depicts characters, things and events as his father narrates to him. Art Spiegelman is exposing the life of his family before, during and after the war. He is telling the effects of the Holocaust and the racism against Jewish people.

Spiegelman seems to have realized that in order to remain true to both his father’s story and his own experience of it; he would have to remain true to his medium. But, in addition, he has also cultivated the unique capacity in the comic mixture of images and narrative for telling the double-stranded tale of

his father's story and his own recording of it. (Young, 670)

Art Spiegelman tried his best to transmit the story of his father as it is by writing down and drawing all the memories from the past and recreating an artistic work by digging deep in all details and aspects of Vladek's life; when Art tells his father's, as illustrated in *Maus*, "But Pop – It's great material. It makes everything more real – more human. I want to tell your story, the way it really happened" (I. 25)

In describing *Maus*, Frieda Miller argues that the novel is a memoir and it is considered as a personal experience of an eyewitness of the Holocaust, which tells the circumstances that the two main characters Vladek and Anja were living.

One may observe that the Shoah is an extreme instance of traumatic series of events that pose the problem of denial or disavowal, acting-out, and working-through. (LaCapra 1994.187)

### **1.1.Pre-war Jewish life:**

In 1933 or before this year, as a minority in Europe, Jewish families lived in small groups in different European countries. They usually live in small groups. In Poland before the war, where most of the events happened and the origin of the main characters Vladek and his wife, there were 3.35 million Jews. They were only 10% of the Polish population. The Jewish minorities settled in Poland in the 7th century. They were classified into two categories some were religious and others non-religious. Jewish spoke normally the native language of the land they lived in while those who live in small villages they spoke Yiddish language.

Jews are restricted depending on the region or place in where they live. They faced various limitations because they were successful and worked in high positions such as scholars, politicians, artists, scientists and so forth. As in *Maus I*, Vladek said: "the next day we were given shovels and picks...things what we never held in our hands before" (55). Also,

there is another proof from the book that Jews had money and businesses unlike others. It is when the Nazi soldier ask Vladek and the other war prisoners to put all their valuables “he came up to me... I had maybe 300 zlotys. Why so much money, Jew? – many others had only 5 or 6 zlotys” (51)

### **1.2. Things began to change:**

Then, the time after 1933, the life of Jews in Germany and Poland and gradually all Europe started to be more restricted by the limitations on their civil, labour, residential, and other public life rights. Step by step, things began to change and getting worse for Jewish. They lost their rights because of the laws and rules enacted by the Nazis such as the Anti-Jewish Legislation in 1933 and the Nuremberg Laws in 1935. Starting from German civil service to losing everything, as explained in teacher’s guide “*Maus: A Memoir of the Holocaust*” by Frieda Miller and Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre:

Jews were no longer permitted to hold jobs in public schools, the law courts, post offices, railways, fire, and police departments. They were forbidden to practice law or marry non-Jews. Children were forbidden to attend public schools, visit parks and own pets. Jews were forced to wear yellow stars of David in public and their identification papers were stamped with the letter "J" for Jew as part of the process of identifying and isolating them.(7)

All the above events began with the appearance of the anti-Semitic, from his childhood, Adolf Hitler. He was the head of the National Socialist German workers Party (Nazi). The party focuses on two main goals which are to enlarge the German lands and to reduce the Jewish population in that land. Hitler applied this political propaganda in order to dominate the world. For Hitler Jews are a race under humans, he said: “Jews are undoubtedly a race but they are not human”. He considered them as vermin they are harmful and without



drawing any benefits from them. He believed that Jews were enemies of Germany in the process of invading the world. In January, 1933, Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany which helped him to transmit his ideologies all over Europe. In spring of 1933, the party became an official party after Hitler seized the dictatorial power.

Nazis in power mean more suffering and miserable life for German Jews and then in other parts of Europe “Jews were harassed, discriminated against, and chased out of Germany throughout the rest of the 1930s, fleeing to nearby countries for safety” (Course Hour). In the late 1930s, the German army moved into central and eastern Europe for more territories. Simultaneously, the region’s security had decreased when the Nazi regime occupied Austria in 1938. Hitler had also planned to divide Poland into two; Germany acquires the western part of Poland and the rest for the Soviet Union.

When Poland became an independent nation, it secured an agreement with Britain and France to protect them from Germany. On September 1, 1939, German forces entered Poland. Hitler was angered by the Polish countermove, which he perceived as a provocation. He then accelerated plans for an attack. By that, the Second World War began when Great Britain and France fought against the Nazi Germans for Poland.

Nazis believed that they are pure-blood German race (Aryan), in which they think that the only way to keep their race pure and noble is by genocide and exterminate Jews and other ethnicities. They hated Jews and started forcing them out of their homes. Furthermore, Nazis legislate establishing concentration camps as the first step to separate Jews from the rest population. Not just Jews treated like that also Gypsies, people with disabilities, as they arrested homosexuals, blacks, political opponents and others.

The first concentration camps outside Germany was the Dachau camp in 1933, then that they established more than 40 thousand camps between 1933 and 1945. In these camps, they force Jews and others to work hard in bad conditions. There was another type of camps

is the extermination camp, where they kill and exterminate people. In 1934, Nazis passed the Act of Malicious Gossip. The act is about punishing Anti-Nazi jokes by fines and imprisonment. Then, they closed several newspapers and journals, and the rest forced to publish what they want.

The Night of the Broken Glass on November 9, 1939, Kristallnacht is a crucial event in the history of the Holocaust. On that night, Nazis destroyed the Jewish shop, stores, houses and places where they pray. The deportation was another strategy used by Nazis to drive people out of their homes to so-called ghettos. Jews change their identities, names and even their religion, to be non-Jew; they do so to pass easily and work to earn money. Separation is applied to separate the members of the family children far from their parents and also grandparents. Children suffered in camps; they suffer separation, sickness and starvation.

In the early forties, Nazis came up with the idea of exterminating Thousands of Jews in one single place as a Final Solution to kill as many as possible to reduce the Jewish population in camps and ghettos. In 1941, they build the first extermination camp in Poland, there were six extermination camps. The largest one was Auschwitz which contains 3 other camps, one is a concentration camp built in 1940, and the second is Birkenau where there are gas chambers built in 1941 and it is an extermination camp. The third one called Buna-Monowitz built-in 1942 as slave labour. Where Jews work till they have no energy to work they send them to extermination after selection (or selektion) Nazis do, then force Jewish people in long marches to death factories.

The liberation process began when the war soldiers fought to liberate Poland from the Nazis. They see the camps and how people suffer there, so soldiers start free the remaining Jewish people. Poland alone lost more than six million Jews. They were 22% per cent of the population.

By the winter and spring of 1945, when Soviet and Allied troops liberated the

country, Poland's once-thriving Jewish population was decimated; by 1950, according to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, there were only about 45,000 Jews left in Poland. The actual number of Jewish survivors was higher, but post-war killings and pogroms convinced many Jews to leave. Scholars suggest that between 40,000 and 60,000 of the Jews who survived were rescued by Poles. (The Holocaust in Poland)

## **2. Art Spiegelman's Life and Achievements:**

Art Spiegelman, a Pulitzer Prize- winning artist, was born on February 15, 1948 in Stockholm, Sweden. His original name is Arthur Isadore, but later on changes it to Art Spiegelman. He was the second child, after his brother Rysio (Richieu), born to Andzi (Anja) and Vladek (Wladek) Spiegelman.

Art's Polish Jewish family, who survived the Holocaust, escaped from war to Sweden. Then, they immigrated to the United States of America in 1951 to settle later on in Rego Park, Queens, New York City, in 1955. His father worked as a textile salesman. He was a successful businessman before the war. Spiegelman's mother, Anja, was a weak daughter of a Jew wealthy family. She survived Auschwitz but later committed suicide. They were both affected by their holocaust experiences. But, they lost the rest of the family members during Holocaust. The small family, Vladek, Anja and Artie, moved to America after three years of Art's birth. Art's childhood's times had been hard because he grew up in a period where things start changing, especially the spread of pop culture. The fact that his parents were survivors affected Art's life in one way or another.

At age five or six, Art started being passionate about reading comics and want to know everything about it. Unlike his parents, they want him to focus on his studies to be a doctor or dentist in the future. He was obsessed with Mad Magazines and Batman comic books then that he started imitating those comic books creating his own. That's why he

chooses his future career earlier when he studied cartooning at New York's High School of Art and Design.

When he was fourteen years old, Spiegelman submitted his own comic strips and drawings to Fanzines (Fan Magazine) and others. Then by the time, he created a magazine called "Blasé". During his years in high school, he gains experience in selling and creating comic strips; While that, Art met Mr. Woody Gelman, the art director of Topps Chewing Gum. He promises to have a job in the magazine after his graduation. In 1965, he graduated from high school and pursued his studies in Art and Philosophy at Harpur College in Binghamton, New York City, just for two years; meanwhile, working for Topps and other Magazines. Spiegelman dropped out of his studies in 1968 after suffering from a nervous breakdown. Then his mother committed suicide.

One can say here that Art Spiegelman started his career earlier as an artist in 1966. One of his drawings, when he was working in Topps, is "Bazooka Joe". After 20 years of working in Topps, he argued over the ownership of his drawings and comics caused him to quit his job in this Magazine. During his time in Topps, Spiegelman was publishing some of his artwork in underground comic magazines such as Real Pulp and Bizarre Sex. As he says in one of his interviews that the underground comic movement improved in the 1960s, while he was a teenager: "I met some people who later became, like myself, that first generation of underground cartoonists – like Jay Lynch, Skip Williamson. We were all working for the same little magazines. They were amateur self-produced magazines." (Dreifus, 36)

In 1977, Art married Françoise Mouly, designer, editor and publisher. They founded RAW (Real Art Works) magazine of non-traditional comics and graphics in 1980. The three pages strip of *Maus* (volume I) were published in serial form in RAW the avant-garde between 1980 and 1985. In 1986, *Maus* I published as a book after gaining success and critics. Then, Spiegelman published the second volume *Maus* II in 1991 and in 1992. The

book won the Pulitzer Prize. Art Spiegelman's *Maus* received many other prizes and awards, for instance, the Guggenheim fellowship and Eisner Award for Best Graphic Album. In 2005, Spiegelman was within the 100 lists of the most influential people in time Magazine.

Art Spiegelman and his wife live in New York City with their daughter Nadja and son Dashiell. Recently, he published other artworks as "Little Lit", a collection of comics for children. Also, "In the Shadow of No Towers" is a comic recording the tragic event of the September 11 attacks. Spiegelman worked for several Magazines like the New York Times, Playboy, the Village Voice, and the New Yorker. He has gotten a privileged doctorate from Binghamton College.

### **3. Plot Summary:**

In *Maus*, the two stories are different but in the same time interlaced: the first one (My Father Bleeds History) is about the Holocaust survivor Vladek Spiegelman's experience during the Second World War and the second story (And Here My Troubles Began / From Mauschwitz to the Catskills and Beyond) about the relationship between the father Vladek and his son Artie. Artie writes his graphic novel through interviewing his father about his holocaust experiences. Where the events narrated by Artie are in the present about (1978-1987) while the events narrated by Vladek are in the past, mostly during and after the Holocaust.

The stories are told in the light of the breakable relationship between father and son. The main character of the story is Vladek Spiegelman. He is a Jew man who lived in Poland and survived as a soldier in the war and later the Holocaust. The events are recorded through interviews and historical research done by his son who is the author of the comic as well. The two volumes of *Maus* are summarized as follows:

#### **3.1. *Maus* I: My Father Bleeds History:**

Artie Spiegelman as an author and son in the story of *Maus* always wanted to draw the

Holocaust experiences of his father during World War II. Because of the horror and the tragic events in the story, Vladek is not sure if there is anyone who wants to read such stories. But, Spiegelman insisted on his father telling him, and Vladek agrees with the hope to spend more time with his son to get along. So, Spiegelman started interviewing Vladek, and those interviews were fruitful, but most of the time end up ruined by misunderstanding and upset feelings. In his childhood, Artie was not close to his father, and then the suicide of his mother resulted in widening the chasm between them. Artie still finds that Vladek is oppressive and demanding as he is an adult. He cannot help himself to cope with all his problems. Vladek suffered from sicknesses, various prescriptions and an inability to manage his own home. Artie does his best to avoid all the misunderstanding with his father and faced all the challenges to keep the interviews going.

In 1935, Vladek's story begins when he meets Anja Zylberberg and married her in 1937. They live in Sosnowiec, Poland where Anja and her family live all together. In the same year, they have their first child "Richieu". With time passing, Spiegelman family grows and the Nazi propaganda and anti-Semitism in Poland's neighbouring Germany. In August 1939, Vladek is drafted into the Polish army reserves and the World War II begins the following month. Vladek gets captured as a prisoner of war after a short time fighting in the front lines.

Spiegelman depicts the story characters as anthropomorphic animals mean each identity or ethnicity portrayed as an animal. He depicts Jews as mice, Germans as cats, Poles as pigs, French as frogs, and Americans as dogs. Except For Artie sometimes depicted as human wearing a mouse mask. Because he was trying to make connection with his origins (roots) as Jew to feel how they experienced Holocaust. But, for Vladek is a surviving strategy to hide his identity as a Jewish to non-Jew. Hirsch gives his opinion about wearing masks in *Maus* , when he says, "Spiegelman would like to make it clear throughout his books that this

representational choices are just that choices-and-that identities are assumed rather than given"(p.28).

In 1978, starting with the visit of Artie to his father in New York City, Vladek was ill and suffer after two heart attacks. Also, the suicide of Anja keeps haunting him even after a decade from her death. Vladek married Mala after Anja's death. Which they experiences Holocaust, she always argues with him about money. Here Artie asked his father that he want to create a comic book about his Holocaust story in the World War II.

With the continuation of the war, Nazis begin collecting Jewish people in Sosnowiec and by trains they send them far way. They hardly get food because it was scare. Vladek tried many ways to make money to bring food for his family. So he worked in trading products in the black market. Many of Vladek's friends were arrest for trading goods in the black market and kill them. Later, Nazis start verifying the Jewish people papers in the local stadium for deportation the Jews. For Vladek and his family there were a cousin of work there so he helped them to secure Vladek's release and Anja and her parents. Here in this time there were no news about Vladek's sister Fela and her four children and Vladek's father.

One day like any visits of Artie for his father to interview him ,Artie finds out that father read an old comic he draw it years ago. The comic "Prisoner on the Hell Planet ": A case history is included in Maus. It is about the feelings of Artie towards the suicide of his mother and how he suffered from mental and emotional pain in 1968.

As the story continues, Vladek tells that they leave the stadium to another new ghetto in Srodula. After that, Vladek and Anja think that their little kid Richieu will be safe if they send him to Anja's sister Tosha in Zawiercie. But fortunately, Tosha discover that the Nazis are about to send all the Jews in Zawiercie to Auschwitz. So, she poisoned Richieu and her two children and herself at the end. In here opinion dying that way is much better and easy than the camps. When Vladek and Anja realize that the Germans are planning to send

everybody in ghetto to concentration camps. They go in to stowing away to capture. When the ghetto is empty Vladek and Anja start walking back to Sosnowiec. Along the way, they secure entry to Hungary with a few bootleggers, but they deceive them and hand them to the Nazis. Vladek is sent to Auschwitz and Anja is taken to Birkenau.

Vladek tells his son that his mother wrote diaries for him about her life and her experiences in the Holocaust. But in moment of anger and depression after she suicide Vladek burned and destroyed the diaries. This act make Artie upset and he yelled at his father calling him murder because the diaries are a good source of information can help Artie in his book.

### **3.2. *Maus II: And Here My Troubles Began:***

In book II and here my troubles began, the story starts when Vladek called Artie when he was on vacation in Vermont with his wife and friends, telling him that Mala took some of his money and left him. Artie hates taking care of his father even when he was young, but he visits him in New York. With this visit, Vladek continues the story and describes how miserable it to live in Auschwitz.

As a surviving strategy, Vladek uses all the trade skills he learns to live in better conditions to avoid death. While Anja was in Birkenau, Vladek knows about that, so he tried to do some repairs to see her. He bribes the Nazis guards with his savings; to bring his wife to the same camp to work in the munitions shop.

Vladek precedes his story, portraying the different ways that he utilized his aptitudes and cleverness to assist him, and Anja survives at Auschwitz. As the Russian armed force closes in on Auschwitz, Vladek entrusted with disassembling the gas chambers. All of the detainees are inevitably emptied and migrated to Dachau, a camp in Germany. Vladek contracts typhus from the lice at Dachau and gets exceptionally wiped out. He sent to Switzerland to prepare him to exchange as a detainee of war. He is, in the long run, protected



by American troopers. After travelling back through Germany to Poland, he rejoined with Anja.

Vladek tells his son that his mother wrote diaries for him about her life and her experiences in the Holocaust. But in a moment of anger and depression after her suicide, Vladek burned and destroyed the diaries. This act makes Artie upset; he yelled at his father called him murder because the diaries are a good source of information that can help Artie in his book.

And here is Art Spiegelman's explanation and description of his artistic style development in *Maus*:

*Maus* ... I was doing with the understanding that it would be seen in one way or another. But nevertheless it was something born out of trying to meet two needs at once. One, tell a story. It finally dawned on me after being a cartoonist for a good twenty years or more that what people wanted out of comics was a story, so I had to find a story worth telling, because the kind of comics I'd been working on up to the moment I started *Maus* were involved in kind of taking narratives apart and messing with them, rather than telling them. So it was fulfilling that need. On the other hand, it also filled the more central need for me of trying to make sense of my own personal past and of history as I intersected with it. (Witek 2007)

#### **4. Characters Descriptions:**

*Maus* as an autobiographical story focuses on Vladek's holocaust experience and the nature of his relationship with his son Artie. It is a novel from male perspective, that's why we perceive the domination of men in the story. Here one can say that Spiegelman reflects his personal life and experiences, also his father's memories through the graphic novel. In *Maus*, women are oppressed for multiple reasons. The brutality of the Holocaust and the

concentration camps which stole their womanhood, also being especially a Jewish woman is a clear reason for oppression in Jews community, although women experienced mental breakdowns and depression.

In *Maus*, we have different female characters that play different roles in the novel. Anja, Mala and Françoise are the three main female characters. They are Jewish women who suffered a lot and experienced several difficult moments in their lives. It is necessary to describe them for more understanding of the way they are shaped in various roles and personalities, and to see if they have important or less important roles.

#### **4.1. Anja Spiegelman:**

Anja Zylberberg was born in Poland in 1912 to a wealthy Jewish family. Anja is a main female character who played many roles in the story as a wife, mother and a victim. She is Vladek's wife and Artie's mother who survived the Holocaust with her husband and committed suicide in 1968 because she is sensitive woman and anxious. She suffered from severe depression after giving birth (post partum depression) to her first child Richieu; Also, experiencing the horror of the Holocaust. Anja born to a wealthy family, her father was a successful manufacturer. She is highly educated because she was intelligent women. She mastered multiple languages. Anja was a beautiful young lady married Vladek, a handsome man from Czestochowa, Poland, in February 14, 1937. She was favoured by Vladek because she was tolerant, neat, intelligent and wealthy woman. Deeply, Anja needed love from Artie after losing Richieu.

The story of Anja in the book is presented through the eyes of her husband only (Vladek). Because of emotionally fragile character, Anja was dependent and hated loneliness. She kept depending on Vladek and worry about staying alone in the camp far from her family. Anja's death keeps haunting Artie and his father. Artie's mother died 10 years before he begin drawing *Maus*.

#### 4.2.Mala Spiegelman:

Mala is Vladek's second wife, long-suffering character. She is a Holocaust survivor. Anja and Vladek knew her before the war. Her relationship with her husband is not stable because of Vladek's behaviours. Profoundly, she was anxious about her future and money. Mala believes Vladek holds up Anja as an incomprehensible perfect woman. Mala offers Art's dissatisfaction with Vladek's anxieties. Artie never think about recording her Holocaust experiences. She is warm and respectful with Artie, and gets along with him indeed whereas fighting with Vladek.

#### 4.3.Françoise Mouly:

Françoise is Art's wife. She is a French woman who converted to Judaism just sometime after married Artie to please his father. Artie and Vladek have a tense relationship what makes Françoise play a role as defusing between them. She always listens to her husband when he expresses his feelings and thoughts about his father. For example, Artie says to his wife: "When I was a kid. I used to think about which of my parents I'd let the Nazis take to the ovens if I could only save one of them..."(*Maus*.174). Also, when Artie tells her how his parents see him, unlike his oldest dead brother Richieu" The photo (of Richieu) never threw tantrums or got in any kind of trouble... it was an ideal kid, and I was a pain in the ass, I couldn't complete" (*Maus*. 173). Vladek as her father in law; Françoise was patient with all of his demands and behaviours. Vladek was affected by his experiences in the Holocaust what complicate things for his family members when dealing with him.

Françoise is in a lower position compared to the other female characters because she is not a part of Vladek's story. But, she is more related to Artie as an author and her husband in the book. She is intelligent, kind, and opinionated woman. Françoise built a tight relationship with Artie.

**Conclusion:**

The era of the Holocaust during which the events of the novel take place has notably affected the author Art Spiegelman. He lived within a family that survived the Holocaust after experiencing the horror of the camps. The narratives he has told to Spiegelman are part of his heritage and a source of influence for him. One can say that the Holocaust is one of the recently tackled topics that American literature deals with, and specifically the American Comics. *Maus* is a story that offers images and testimonies about life during and after the Holocaust. Furthermore, it is about the relationship of father-son, Vladek and Artie. The main female characters namely: Anja, Mala and Françoise represent different aspects in the story. The coming chapter is about the theoretical framework of the research, which are feminism and gender theories. The two theories used to understand more how the female characters are depicted in the novel and to give more sense about their behaviours and beliefs.

## **Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework**

**Introduction:**

The period where and when the graphic novel was written, the writer's biography and the description of the characters are elements that one cannot omit while analysing a graphic novel. The description of the main female characters is not sufficient to see how they are depicted and to understand their behaviours towards what they are living. Also, to analyse why the author portrayal his female characters passively or negatively. All of that will be clear and understandable through presenting the theories used as means in this study which are feminism and gender theory. This research will use these two theories as tools to facilitate understanding the depiction of female characters in Art Spiegelman's *Maus*.

Literary Theories for Culler (1997:145-149) "are used not only for enriching and deepening the understanding of the research work but also to assist in demonstrating the new approach to literature analysis" (as cited in Peter 2010, 22). Literary theories are necessary for applying critical analysis to literary works. These theories used as tools to guide and enable researchers to test texts veracity. Using literary theories help to unveil the element of subjectivity in literary texts written by males. Gender theory will be the point to begin the discussion about literary theories used in this research.

## 1. The Development of Gender Theory:

Gender is the cultural definition of behaviour defined as appropriate to the sexes in a given society at a given time. Gender is a set of cultural roles. It is a costume, a mask, a straitjacket in which men and women dance their unequal dance.

Gerda Lerner- the Creation of Patriarchy.

### 1.1. Gender as a concept:

Starting with a brief definition of the concept gender before moving to explain the gender theory, gender is the relation between males and females and how their roles socially constructed. The unequal power between the two is characterization of gender. And that is seen in some of a particular privileges and rights given just to men. Gender roles are when the person is behaving like a male or a female and gender identity is about the feeling as a male or a female. In other words, those are gender components. Gender attribution is about people's reaction and deciding whether the person is male or female the first moment they see or interact with them.

Eckert and McConnel-Ginet (2003:10) strongly believe that gender is not a convention with which people are born, and it is not something people have, but something people do. West and Zimmerman (1989:12) maintain that it is something people perform. Butler (1990:19) images a young boy proudly following his father. "As he swaggers and sticks out his chest, he is doing everything he can to be like his father, to be a man." Butler (1990:23) believes that the chances are that his father was not swaggering, but the boy is creating a persona that embodies what he admires in his adult male role model. (As cited in Peter 35)

From the above explanation of the concept gender point out that the society is the

responsible about deciding the role of each sex. That's what resulted, a set of stereotypes about males and females. For instance, females are given the role of keepers inside their houses and of their families. They stereotype women because of the female ability to give birth and raise children. On the other hand, males are from the past time given the role of protectors of the family and work outside to provide income to the family. Gender as a concept is different from the gender as a theory and “the reason for using gender as a theory is that it has to do with stereotypes and inequality aspects that are evident in literary works of the selected male authors” (Peter, 16). Pilcher and Wheelhan (2004:56) state that the concept of gender, as it is now used, came into common practice during the early 1970s. (As cited in Peter, 16)

### **1.2. Gender as a theory:**

Gender occurs in the theoretical scene as the methodical collecting and experimentation of information on gender diversities and social relations cumulated. In the process of understanding the social differences and the unbalance between males and females, it was important to promote awareness publically trying to deal with this issue. In the past, gender theory was a part from feminist theory that used a diagnostic tool to make gender more efficient, but afterwards it came to incorporate the examination of all gender and sexual identities. The theory comes behind the reappearance of the political feminism in United States of America and Western Europe during 1960s.

According to Moser (1989:112) gender development does not end with the early age activities but developed with the movement of the person into social structures and institutions (Peter 36). By time, gender makes people know how to be females or males. They learn how to act and react in their social relations. Gender is one of literary text aspects and through gender person learns his/her development. It is a post-modern theory challenges the models and the intellectual offices of western thought. Gender theory is interested with



gender relationships and other types of gender as demonstrated in male literary works.

## **2. Gender as theoretical criticism:**

Gender is a concept not only concerned with subjective female practices. But also it is interested in deep with social relations between the two men and women. Gender gives the opportunity to scholars and feminist social engineers that are interested in the development of theories and practices, a fundamental tool to analyze and to help in setting policies to change the oppressive status of women.

McKinnon in Treichler described gender as a literary approach based in its improvement on well understanding of the unequal gender relations between females and males in a society. This is clearly what patriarchal societies can create (1985: 128 as cited in Peter 38). Gender for most of the people seems natural as it is a fact without any future change, for that people needs to have other new perspectives of understanding gender.

Peter states that "many scholars argue that readers of literature identify with characters of their gender. Therefore, the relative lack of positive portrayal of female characters in literary texts can limit the opportunities for females to identify with their gender and validate their place in society" (39). The representation of gender in female literary works influence women's way of thinking and perceptions about the suitable gender behaviours in society.

Writing about sexism in literary works can cause harm to males and females as to force them to accept it and later supporting these gender portrayals. Which lead females not to ask about the social relations existed in society. Stereotypical roles related to gender restrict both male and female. Where males are not often depicted as persons with not feelings of sadness or fear, and that are rigid unlike females who depicted fragile and in passive and submissive roles. It is hard to change those stereotypical roles and the imbalances of gender inequalities, which represent that, those ideas are take- rooted in society and

people's consciousness about everything around them.

In a large number of literary works written by males, gender bias found and illustrated. Where gender is presented as an essential character and the way is depicted by authors. Also, in the process of analyzing female characters in literary texts the researchers found out that most of the texts examined are written by male writers; where they found that the female characters are depicted according to gender stereotype roles in their traditional societies. Zola Welcome Peter stated in his thesis about the depiction of females characters that:

Literature written by male writers must also recognise the effect of negative depiction of female characters in their literary works. They depict female characters which are portrayed as being less competent than male characters. They are also judged according to gender. Where females are expected to be subservient and slave-like and play a role of dependence on men. Feminists do not conform to the above idea. Equality is their slogan.

(39, 40)

### **3. The development of feminist theory:**

#### **3.1. Feminism as a concept:**

Feminism is the idealistic view that willing permanently to eliminate the inequality between males and females. Feminism work for a social change in the inferior status of women and that happened by shifting the way in which society views women. It is the struggle against oppression that women go through and fight for their rights. For Kramarae and Treichter "Feminism has political theory and practice to free all women: working class women, poor women, physically challenged women etc, anything less than this is not feminism, but merely female self- aggrandizement" (1985:159 as cited in Moloi 4). Feminism is about political theories and practices to unbind the restrictions on women of

working class, women who suffer from poverty and physical harassment and so on. Also, Kramarae and Treichter, (1985:158) explained “feminism” as follows:

A movement seeking the re-organisation of the world upon a basis of gender equality in all human relations; a movement which would reject every differentiation between individuals upon the grounds of gender, that would abolish all gender privileges and burdens, and would strive to set up the recognition of the common humanity of women and men as the foundation of law and custom. (As quoted in Peter, 18)

Changing the stereotypes and the ideas in the societies by reducing the patriarchy refers to society that is ruled and controlled by men. Hooks argues that:

Feminism, as liberation struggle, must exist apart from and as a part of the larger struggle to eradicate domination in all its forms. We must understand that patriarchal domination shares an ideological foundation with racism and other forms of group oppression. And that there is no hope that it can be eradicated while these systems remain intact. (1989:22 as cited in Moloj 17)

Also, women should treat as a valuable part form society to build an active person within a healthy community. Feminist theories emerged in order to solve problems related to the status of women, empower analysis the problem, and mainstream of development process.

Feminist movement is a movement to secure legal, economic, and social equality for women. It has its roots in the nineteenth-century women’s movement, which sought among other things, to secure property rights and suffrage for women. The modern feminist movement, often said to have been galvanized by the publication of Betty Freidan’s book *The Feminine*

Mystique, began in the 1960s. (Hirsch, 1993, 299 as cited in Gassman 13)

### **3.2. Feminist literary theory:**

Feminist theory is not one but many theories or perspectives, attempts to describe women's oppression to explain its causes and consequences and to prescribe strategies for women's liberation.

(Tong 1992 as cited in Adeyemi and Ajibade 104)

Feminist theory is not just studying women but also to study gender, exactly the social relations between men and women, as well the way these relations are socially constructed. Feminism as a theory seeks to disjoint the opposition men/ women and the other related oppositions in the history of Western culture. Feminist theorists celebrate the identity of women, call for women rights, and propel women's writings to support the portrayal of females experience in this writings. Elaine Showalter, an American feminist, differentiates "the feminist critique' of male assumptions and procedures from 'gynocriticism', a feminist criticism concerned with authors and the representation of women's experience" 126. The feminist theory is the early practices by literary feminist as to study the works written by female writers, also how the male authors depict their female characters (1986: 134-138 cited in Peter 35).

There are types of feminist literary theory starting with traditional feminism or white feminism, Radical feminism, Marxist and Socialist feminism, Liberal feminism, Cultural feminism, Black feminism or Womanism, and Jewish feminism. As Culler explained that "Feminism has effected a substantial transformation of literary education in the United States and Britain, through its expansion of the literary canon and the introduction of a range of new issues" (28)

### **3.3. Jewish feminism:**

Jewish feminism goal is to empower Jewish women all over the world through

focusing on the multiple deprivation that the Jewish female go through and experience in her life as part from the Jewish society. It is a theory stated in the margins of the Western male, Jewish male and women's traditions. Feminism and gender studies are researching for new ways to go deeply in studying Jews, more specifically Jewish female and Jewish male and their equality. It is concerned with changing the position of Jewish women from margins to the centre. The struggle of the Jewish women was early with feminist critics but not for Jewish women and for their lives and identities as Jews. They were fight for all women. Heilbrun as a Jewish woman perceives that "Being a woman and a Jew were in no way of comparable importance in my life" (as quoted in Horowitz 272). This movement seek to change the status of Jewish women religiously and socially to make it equal with Jewish men.

#### **4. Feminism as theoretical criticism:**

As a complex and dynamic theory, feminist literary theory is a set of critical theories such as gender, psychoanalysis, and anthropology. It is the outcome of the expansion of feminism on theoretical ground. The theory includes working in different disciplines. The main aim of the feminist theory is to understand the female status and gender conflict as an element in literary works written by male authors.

For McDowell (1995: 134) the first objective of feminist literary theory is to see in what way gender is important and how affect the existence of mankind. It is unlike the feminist movement, feminist literary theory not just seek to improve and to change the social class of women, but also to come up with new alternative ways of reading and writing. Also, it tries to delineate the reasons why women have these living conditions in the modern world. The main concern of feminist theory is to ensure equal social rights for females and to avoid the differences based on sex between man and women.

Feminist theory motivates females to raise their voices and fight for their rights and to change the old way that female characters depicted in literary works, as inferior and less than

male characters.

Blain (1983: 47) concurs that all feminist movements were against females living in an age characterized by gender inequalities in literary works written by male counterparts, where female characters are expected to remain subservient to male characters, who are portrayed as being superior to them.(as cited in Peter 49)

In males literary works (texts) most of the time women characters are depicted as characters have limited choices. They are domestic; females portrayed only as wives and mothers doing house work, sitting at home raising children and take care of them. The positive influence of the feminist movement on females can be seen through "defining them as being the more morally refined of two sexes and therefore the guardian of morality and social cohesion" (Peter 49).

**Conclusion:**

Theories such as gender and feminism are used as literary theories that help readers in understanding literature. The gender theory focuses on gender roles within a society. As a theoretical framework, gender describes the roles of males and females. In addition to gender theory, there is the use of feminism theory which used as a mechanism for similar opportunities, calls for female freedom and the honour to live the way they want. Feminism is to show oppression that women face from powerful social structures and how women are silent in different issues specially the one related to the family. With all of that, still there is the struggle against patriarchy. Literary works can help females transmit their social oppression and pain to the entire world. In the next chapter both feminism and gender theory will be cornerstone in analyzing the portrayal of Spiegelman's female characters.

## **Chapter Three: The Depiction of Female Characters**



**Introduction:**

The third chapter is about the depiction of female characters in the graphic novel (*Maus*) by Art Spiegelman. In addition to that, it is about to examine the negative portrayals of the main female characters in the comic. This chapter also attempts to explore the exact reasons to depict the female characters in that way or another. Furthermore, it is to study the position of women during Holocaust and females as a part of Jewish society. As well, how the female characters depicted in the story, which considered as a memoir telling historical events (Holocaust survivor) a graphic novel written by man. The study will focus on three female characters which are Anja, Mala and Francoise. In other words, this chapter is going to shed light on the double oppression that Jewish women go through from Holocaust and their society.

### 1. The depiction of female characters:

From the beginning and before going through analysing the depiction of female characters, there is a point to take it in consideration which is that the story of *Maus* is “Male Gaze”, which means that when literature in general portrays the story through man perspectives. Specifically, it is about to see beyond the narrow vision approach to female characters. Here concerning *Maus*, the survival tale is narrated by Vladek as his story and his son Artie as the author of the story. Artie records and draws the story that his father telling him through interviews and later he create a graphic novel (which means images and words in form of panels).

The story of *Maus* is a representation of the Holocaust horror that Jews experienced during the Second World War In this period Jewish men, women, children and even other minorities who are non-Jew subjected to racial discrimination by the Nazis. In early twentieth century Jews faced several types of oppression, discrimination and marginalization as racism attitudes from anti-Semitic Nazis in Germany then occupying Poland and other parts of Europe.

This study is to examine in this literary text how the author depicts his female characters lived in such circumstances under the oppression of Holocaust. The reason of tackling this topic is to think critically about the impact of Holocaust, the results of stereotypes in Jewish society and about Jewish people, precisely Jewish women. Again for more understanding that even how experienced oppression and discrimination can be guilty also. *Maus* female characters are double standard oppression, one from the Holocaust and the other from Jewish males "male dominant society".

Oppression is a dominant theme in the graphic novel *Maus*, all types of oppression are represented in Spiegelman’s comic book. The most oppressed and marginalized female character is Anja Spiegelman Art’s mother and Vladek’s first wife and she is depicted as

follows.

## 2. Anja Spiegelman:

As a Jewish lady than a wife and mother of a dead kid after the end of the Holocaust, Anja suffered from depression all along her lifeline. Anja depicted as a character who goes through a series of breakdowns and depression, always wants to die, started after giving birth to her first child Richieu. Spiegelman portrays Anja as a weak woman who is dependent on males. A gender role, according to Antill is seen as an "oppressive force" that Anja undergoes in dealing with the Nazi officials, unlike her husband (Vladek). Here is her weakness as a female who needs interference from a male. Anja, most of the time, requires her husband.

With all the oppression Anja's experience as a woman, she silenced after her death by Vladek. She faces elimination and silence after she committed suicide, Vladek in a moment of anger he destroyed her story by burning the diaries she wrote and kept them for her son (Artie); which can help Artie in the process of writing his graphic novel about the Holocaust experience of his father.

-Vladek: These notebooks and other really nice things of mother... one time

I had a very bad day ... and all of these things I destroyed.

-Artie: you what?

-Vladek: after Anja died i had to make an order with everything ... these papers had too many memories. So I burned them. (*Maus* I. 158-159)

By destroying Anja's journals and she left no note after her death (suicide note). As Arite mentioned in his comic strip "*Prisoner on the Hell Planet*" *A Case History*: "In 1968 my mother killed herself... she left no note" (*Maus* I. 100). She left no choice to Artie in order to narrate her story from her perspective. So, he narrates the story of his mother from his perspective and the times they spent together. Here is the second male perspective of narrating Anja's story after the narration of Vladek.

Even though Vladek experienced oppression but he still play an oppressive role towards women in his life. Antill states in his thesis, a comparative study of *Maus* and *Native Son*, that "though Bigger and Vladek knew the pains of oppression personally, there seems disconnect from and superiority towards the women in their lives" (54). With the destruction of Anja's diaries of her Holocaust story will stay unknown forever. Here one can say that males who experience oppression practice oppression on others, especially women in their lives.

Gender role considered as the first source of oppression and sufferance in the Holocaust, for Anja. In her article tailing violence comics narrative gender and the father tale in art Spiegelman's *Maus*" Alison Mandaville mentioned that "the oppressive role of gender is especially apparent when Vladek tells Artie that he could more easily camouflage himself than his wife Anja" (Cited in Antill 54-55). "I was a little safe. I had a coat and boots, so like a Gestapo wore when he was not in service. But Anja -her appearance- you could see more easily she was Jewish. I was afraid for her" (qtd in Mandaville 230) by this quote Vladek was explaining to Artie that was difficult for Anja to hide her Jewishness unlike him. And Artie illustrated that by drawing a tail to Anja and Vladek was "tail less" (Antill 55). Also, she depicted as a woman always suffering because of her gender. Antill viewed that "it is Anja's womanhood that makes her more likely to be spotted from amongst the crowd and identified as Jewish" (55)

Through the act of destroying the diaries by Vladek confirming that he is in a high position than women. In addition to that, he marginalized his wife from telling her Holocaust narrative and silenced her. As Antill explains:

Despite Anja's death, her own Holocaust narrative lives on through post-war journals which she saves for her son, re-written copies of the ones that she had lost during the Holocaust. Though Anja does not "tell to survive",

as Mandaville would position it, her journals survive to tell her story. Unfortunately, Vladek silences Anja by burning these journals. It is clear from this act of destruction, that Vladek holds himself superior to women, not recognizing other marginalized groups and genders as comparable to what he has been through.(55)

Another scholar who analyzed the destruction of Anja's journals is Ewert. He hypothesizes that Vladek burned the diaries just when Artie is working on *Maus*. As is stated in Antill's thesis "Vladek continually assures his son that he's been searching for the diaries, which to Ewert, serves as a hint that the diaries were not destroyed years before, as Vladek claims, rather during composition of *Maus*, to silence and destroy a rival narrative" (91 as cited in Antill 55-56). Vladek in multiple times tried to control his wife in different ways and aspects of life, one of Anja's that she cannot make her own decisions and her decisions are not heard or even important. One scene can explain that is when she suggests leaving the farm of Mrs. Motonawa to Hungary where Vladek did not listen to her decision. So, they get caught by the Nazis.

Anja is always under the control of her husband. He threatened her if she not obeys him when he discovered that she is working with the Communist Resistance. As if she cannot have her choices. He said that "if you want me you have to go my way" (Ewert 91 as cited in Antill 56). As quoted in Mandaville's article, Victoria Elmwood comments "While we can observe the tangible marks of trauma and the limits of the narrative form, we are no closer to imagining what Anja's own story might have looked like and it is her absence that is the most significant in *Maus*"(219 as cited in Antill 56). The unknown story of Anja, her experience in the Holocaust, can be one of the Holocaust consequences. As Mandaville cites in her article "the absence of all the other stories we cannot, because of the Holocaust, ever know" (219).

Another proof that Vladek silence Anja by destroying her diaries, it is when Artie calls his father “Murderer”. As quoted from *Maus*:

Artie: God damn you! You--- you murderer!

How the hell could you do such a thing!! (I. 159)

Artie yelled at his father calling him murderer as if he is partly responsible of her death because he was not aware of her need to keep the diaries for her son. Vladek said that:

“No. I looked in, but I don’t remember ...only I know that she said, “I wish my son, when he grows up; he will be interested by this.” (*Maus* 159)

Because of the depiction of Anja's character as a silent character, most of her story is unknown. So, Mandaville points out to the cover of the first volume *Maus I: A Survivor's tale "My Father Bleeds History"* that Vladek “is prominently depicted in a tailored trench coat with his hands visible, whereas Anja, whose story has been silenced, is “draped in shapeless fabric below the neck; neither her hands nor her tail is visible” (220 as cited in Antill 85). She also notices that the drawings of Artie to his mother represents that, as readers no one can knew her story, she is silenced. Starting with the cover of *Maus I* moving to the page (17) where Vladek received a picture of Anja. Most of her appearance in the novel, she was portrayed in black and dark clothes. Unlike Vladek was wearing white and not dark.

### **3. Mala Spiegelman:**

She is Vladek’s second wife and a Holocaust survivor as her husband. Females in *Maus* are somehow helpful in understanding and characterizing the character of Vladek.

Mala abused by her husband, she is Art’s second female character. In the story of Vladek, she is depicted as passive female looks just for Vladek's money. Despite all of the harm but she returns to take care of Vladek, as if she is accepting his treatment. He does not give her the money she needs. He just gives her a small amount of money par month. She cannot buy all

what she want because there is enough money. Because of that, she has a tense relationship with Vladek. She always argues with him about money. Vladek because of his strong personality always wants to control the females in his life, Anja in the past and now with Mala. Vladek plays his supremacy over Mala. She had enough from him for the comparison that he makes in reference to his first Anja. He compare Mala to Anja and that they have the same small size and that Anja is more caring than Mala. Mala depicted as a reminder for his first beloved wife. Mala has some talks with Artie about his father as if Mala in relation to Vladek represents the struggle of father-son relationship (Vladek and Artie).

One day Artie is in a visit to his father interviewing him for the book. Artie felt that his is a little upset, so he goes upstairs to ask Mala the reason why his father is in this situation. He opened the door accidentally surprised her. As in *Maus*:

Artie: Hi! Mala.

Mala: Oy! You scared me, Artie. My nerves are completely, living with you father.

This scene describes her rough times with Vladek.

The incomprehensible character of Mala leads us to a set of questions for more understanding for her character. Asking about the way she is depicted. Again, she is a Holocaust survivor but she does not behave like Vladek Spiegelman and his first wife. Mala was tired from Vladek's treatment. He treats her badly without any feeling of love for her and also being cheap.

Mala: Pragmatic? Cheap!! It causes him physical pain to part with even a nickel!

Artie: Uh-huh. I used to think the war made him that way.

Mala: Fah! I went through the camps ... All our friends went through the camps. Nobody is like him!

Artie: Mm ... It's something that worries me about the book I'm doing about him ... In some ways he's just like the racist caricature of the miserly old Jew. (*Maus* I 131)

Through the panels of the graphic novel she appeared and portrayed as "the brunt of Vladek's abuse" (A Tale between the Margins 2021) Mala and Vladek are both Holocaust survivors, what make them attracted to each other, despite the fact that they cannot stand one another. Another assumption about what makes Mala stay and return for him is: "also the possibility that Mala, like many abused women, are naturally attracted to abusers, having been abused during the Holocaust, Mala now subconsciously seeks the emotional abuse of Vladek." (A Tale between the Margins 2021)

Moreover, the marginalization of female characters in *Maus* does not stop with just Anja, but Mala also marginalized by the author. As he collected memories of the Holocaust experiences of his father, Artie has no interest in recording her Holocaust testimony, as if she is not his father's wife or has no experience in Holocaust.

Vladek married Mala not because he loves her but just he hates staying alone, so he married her short time after Anja's death because he wants someone with him and around him and that they experienced the Holocaust.

#### **4. Françoise Mouly**

Françoise Mouly is Artie's wife. She is a French woman converted to Judaism just because Vladek wants her to be a Jewish woman. She accepts to do so to please him as her father-in-law. Her role in the story is as a calming pill for the tense relationship between Vladek and his son Artie. Artie always tells his wife the struggles he goes through in dealing with his father. She is level-headed and tempered. She is depicted as supportive to her husband during the process of working on *Maus*.



**Conclusion:**

In *Maus* the events happened in the past taking place later in the 1930s and 1940s, in Eastern Europe countries like Germany, Poland and other nearby countries. There were traditional societies where traditional gender roles still exist. Because all of that, females in *Maus* are portrayed as subservient characters whose main duty is to serve the male in their lives. As *Maus* is a representation of a Jewish family during and after the Holocaust. So, the society is traditional Jewish society where women, according to Jewish religious beliefs, are in a lower and inferior status unlike Jewish men. Yet, Jewish women are under double oppression and social stereotypes, from both society (dominant-male society) and the horror of the Holocaust. Female characters in *Maus* are depicted as overemotional and dependent on the male characters in their lives, especially for Anja and Mala. As in the story, the female protagonist Anja is always in need and dependent on Vladek for her mental stability. But, Mala is dependent on Vladek for his financial support.

In *Maus*, men and women have traditional gender roles because where men are responsible for all the house and women responsible just for the domestic chores inside the house and look after the children. Women in *Maus* do not interfere in Vladek's story line. The author, as his story protagonist, marginalized the females. The female characters' main role is just making things clear and for more understanding of his relations, as such his relationship with Artie. It seems more clear when the reader comes across with his relation with Mala and when Artie is telling his struggles with Vladek to his wife Françoise.

## **General Conclusion**

This dissertation explores the depiction of female characters in Art Spiegelman's *Maus* as the main events happened in the late 30s and early in 40s during the Second World War Where Jews face genocide inside the death and extermination camps. As named the Holocaust by the Nazis with the leadership of Adolf Hitler. In this graphic novel, Spiegelman is telling the story of his father as Holocaust survivor with his wife.

Females in art Spiegelman *Maus* as main characters are three Anja, Mala and Françoise. As a result to this study is that female characters are depicted in a passive way. They suffered from oppression in two different ways, one is they are oppressed by males and the other one is the oppression and discrimination during Holocaust and also they suffered from sexual abuse. Women in *Maus* depicted as mothers and wives played typical Jewish women roles (domestic).

Female Jewish characters of *Maus* are depicted as domestic females in different ways. As if their reason of life is to do house work and family matters such as cooking, cleaning, taking care of children, also looking after their husband's needs.

Spiegelman showed that Jewish females in the late 1930s and in the early 1940s were severely oppressed by the Nazis inside the camps. Jewish females are part of Jewish minority that Hitler wants to eliminate them following propaganda to exterminate them all. Because they believe that Jews are a race under humans. That's why, Artie in his book depicts his characters in animal faces with human body, to show how people from different ethnicities and minorities see and stereotypes each other.

*Maus* as male-authored and male-centered book the female characters are portrayed from male perspectives. In Traditional cultural societies women face several stereotypes" the stereotype of female passivity, submission and silence entrenched in Europe's cultural tradition"(Duffy 140). The reason that women are depicted silent is as Ronit Lentin puts that in words "the conspiracy of silence that enveloped displaced women Shoah survivors" (as

cited in Duffy 149). For further research, it is recommended to study the side of the story from males point of view and why did they treat women in such ways. Also, it is possible to study the female portrayals in selected graphic novels.

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## ملخص

هذه المذكرة تحت عنوان "الروايات المصورة: تصوير الشخصيات الأنثوية في رواية أرت سبيجلمان ماوس" تهدف إلى دراسة كيف قام ماوس بتصوير شخصيات النساء أثناء الحرب العالمية الثانية و بالتحديد أثناء مجزرة الهولوكوست و كيف نجت هؤلاء النساء من هكذا حادث مروع. من أجل دراسة الشخصيات المذكورة سابقا , قام البحث بتبني النظرية النسوية و نظريات الجنس لتحليل شخصيات النساء اللاتي صورهن الكاتب و الذي هو أيضا يقود دور البطولة مع والده في الكتاب. كشفت النتائج النهائية للبحث أن النساء في هاته القصة عانين من الحمل المضاعف , من جانب كونهن نساء و من جانب آخر كونهن يهود. صورت النساء بطريقة مهمشة و غير فعالة لدرجة أنه لم تعطى لهن الفرصة لسرد جانبهن من القصة مما يجعلهن يعانين من الاضطهاد من جانبين: من جانب الهولوكوست و من جانب أبطال القصة الذكور.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الشخصيات النسائية, النظرية النسوية, القصة المصورة ماوس. التصوير الغير فعال.