

ang070 S/Ü "Key Concepts in Cultural Studies"

Assignment 2: Identity, Discourse, Media - Print Media: Graphic Novel

This assignment is a mandatory part of your portfolio and needs to be handed in on time. It is ungraded but you will receive feedback. Additionally, a sample solution will be published on the Institutswiki.

Please make sure to submit your assignment stapled together but not bound in any folder. Every assignment must include a cover sheet and the statement on plagiarism. You may write up to three pages of text, according to the formatting specifications of our style sheet. Any text beyond the first three pages will be ignored.

Please analyse the following sequence taken from our graphic novel: Art Spiegelman. *The Complete Maus*. London: Penguin, 2003. 214-15. Print.

1. Formal and media-specific analysis

1. Comment briefly on relevant formal aspects (cf. handout narratology and handout graphic novels and comics).

This passage represents one of the many conversations between Artie and Vladek in 1980s New York, in which Vladek remembers the events of WWII, here specifically his experience as a prisoner in Auschwitz in 1944.

The narration changes between

- the diegesis (extradiegetic homodiegetic narrator: Artie; external focalization; panels 2, 4, 5, 9; panels without borders; two-shot panels, medium shot to close shot, panels 4-5 over-the-shoulder) and
- the hypodiegesis (intradiegetic homodiegetic narrator: Vladek; changing between external focalization in mostly narratory blocks in the gutter and internal focalization in the narrator blocks inside panels; panels 1, 3, 6-8, 10-15; rectangular panels with strict borders; medium shot in panels 1, 3, 6, 7, 11-14; panel 7 resembling a two-shot, zooming out and high angle in panels 8, 10, 15, also: long shot; reverse panels 11-12).

This passage begins with the hypodiegesis (e.g. narratory blocks inside and outside the first panel as part of the dialogue between Vladek and Artie on the diegetic level; cf. also 3, 6-8, 10, 12, 15; i.e. these narratory comments are part of the question and answer dialogue). On this level, speech balloons appear in panels 6-8 and 10-14. There is one jagged speech balloon in panel 8 (exclamation). Narrator perceptibility is marked through e.g. temporal summary ("each day", "summer 1944), identification and definition of characters ("he had even a little heart"; "he was afraid any more to speak"), commentary ("how could it be there an orchestra!"). Vladek's (but also Artie's) reliability is part of the discussion between Artie and Vladek, cf. functional analysis (also: truth-claim which pertains to the genre of autobiography, cf. slave narrative).

Each row contains 2 panels, only the last row consists of a splash panel, which contains a panel-inside-panel (close up of gas chamber chimney which resembles a polaroid picture attached over the splash panel and could be no.16; splash panel: bleeding, crossing borders, extends across panels 13-14). There is a visual irregularity as the narratory blocks in the gutters change positions from above or below the rectangular panels.

2. Identify various discourses in the given passages by considering terms / vocabulary / visual motifs; settings / institutions; subject positions / roles.

- Holocaust
 - Nazi Germany, WWII, Holocaust with particular settings: [Auschwitz], Birkenau (vs. "beautiful city" / Nuremberg); terminology and visuals (fences, camp, chimney); subject positions (guards and prisoners represented by anthropomorphized cats in uniform and mice in striped clothing) and differentiation (one German guard with "a little heart"; Yidl acting as group leader/ spokesperson / protector)
 - (Representation of) History of the Holocaust: "I just read", "documented", discussion of the presence of an orchestra
- Industry, technology, labour (jobs, trains, chimneys, tinmen)
- Gender, cf. segregation ("women's camp")

2. Functional analysis: Toward a problem-oriented sample analysis

Based on the data generated through your formal and media-specific analysis, provide a **coherently written** analysis with a clear research problem that addresses the following points:

1. the discursive construction of identity (consider the interaction of visual and literary elements);

- Construction of German and Jewish identity
- Construction of Holocaust witness/survivor vs. "documented" history
- ...

2. relevant contexts (historical, cultural, literary, generic, etc.).

- The representation of the Holocaust: historical, literary, witness accounts; between visual and textual culture
- Graphic novels and representation of humans via animal figures (cf. e.g. Orwell, *Animal Farm*, etc.)
- Inter-generational conflicts/ trauma, i.e. Artie's wish for documented "facts" of survivor's tale as opposed to Vladek's personal trauma and experience (cf. Chute)
- ...

3. Comparison and/or contrast: Second section

Suggest one other section from the text that contrasts and/or corresponds with the given section in an aspect relevant to your research problem. Briefly discuss how both sections relate to the problem by addressing differences in representation and their possible functions.

4. Lecture

In a short concluding paragraph, relate your analysis to knowledge and skills from the lecture. (Profs. Kirchhofer & Butler)

- WWII and popular culture (visual culture)
- Postmodernist takes on narrative form (posthistorical writing)
- Construction of history (problem of periodization)
- ...