

COMIC STRIP AS LITERATURE: ART SPIEGELMAN'S *MAUS* IN SLOVENIAN

Jerneja Petrič

Abstract

Until recently comic strips were predominantly categorized as either juvenile distraction or some odd adult enthusiasts' hobby. The genre experienced a minor revolution in the 1990s when on the one hand the mass visual media began to explore its rich potential whereas on the other hand the medium's ability to offer "tremendous resources to all writers and artists" (McCloud 212) came under scrutiny, prompting authors like Art Spiegelman to wage an experiment. His biographical Holocaust graphic novel *MAUS I* and *II* (1986, 1991) became a bestseller and Pulitzer Prize winner. The paper looks into its 2003 Slovenian edition from the point of view of the undividable entity of drawing and lettering within a panel. It also touches upon certain translation solutions – how closely they correspond to the source text in terms of syntax and transfer of information – but it is not a detailed contrastive analysis as such.

American literature abounds with works that depict the lives of Jewish immigrants, particularly those from Eastern Europe, and their efforts to assimilate themselves by juggling the demands of traditional Jewish life with the pressures of mainstream, non-Jewish society. It also abounds with works that portray the lives of second- and third-generation American Jews who are still trying to achieve an identity. For, as Horace Kallen said, "Men change their clothes, their politics, their wives, their religions, their philosophies, to a greater or lesser extent: they cannot change their grandfathers" (Kallen 231). After WW II, however, the theme of the Holocaust significantly increased the diversity of Jewish American literary production. It has become a recurring topic in the works of both Jewish and non-Jewish authors such as Saul Bellow and William Styron.

In my paper I am going to write about the work of a contemporary Jewish American author Art Spiegelman who chose to reconstruct the horrible reality of the Holocaust in the most unlikely form of a comic strip; *MAUS I* was published in 1986 and its sequel *MAUS II* in 1991. Fully aware that the word 'comic' traditionally connotes cheerfulness, Spiegelman attempted to redefine the role of comic strips by first suggesting and then persistently using the word 'comix' (a derivation from "co-mix, to mix together" words and panels) instead of comic strip (Spiegelman 1999: 74).

Spiegelman is a second-generation American Jew, born in 1948 in Stockholm where his parents, the survivors of Auschwitz, lived at the time. The family emigrated to the United States when he was three. His youthful interest in comic strips soon outgrew the common childish appetite for that particular art form, prompting him to draw his own comics already as a teenager. Due to his parents' traumatic war experience he was unable to enjoy a carefree childhood. The parents had had to cope with so many losses; worst of all being the loss of all their loved ones, in particular their young son Richieu. The trauma cast a deep shadow over the whole family. Art's mother suffered from depression and committed suicide even before he graduated from college. The traumatized, guilt-stricken son drew and wrote down his incomprehension and resentment in a cathartic comix that he symbolically titled *Prisoner on the Hell Planet. A Case History*. It first appeared in *Short Order Comix #1* (1973), a magazine co-edited by Spiegelman and Bill Griffith and was later included as a 'comix' within a 'comix' in *Maus I*.

The 'graphic novel' (Eisner 141)¹ *Maus* tells the story of Art (whom his father repeatedly refers to as Artie), a second-generation Jewish American son of Polish immigrants Vladek and Anja, survivors of Auschwitz, Dachau and Birkenau. In an attempt to patch up their broken relationship, Artie begins a series of interviews with his father in order to write and draw a comic book based on the story of his parents' life and particularly their Holocaust ordeal. Conversations with his widowed father, now remarried to Mala, another Holocaust survivor, reveal a traumatic story that began so promisingly in pre-war Poland with Vladek marrying Anja, the daughter of a well-to-do Polish businessman, accumulating capital, and fathering a son, Richieu. When the Nazis occupied Poland, his perfect world began to disintegrate piece by piece until he was left with nothing except his own and Anja's bare lives. They miraculously survived but tragically lost their son Richieu. After the war they emigrated from Poland to the United States where they were struggling to start all over again. They had another son Art, whom they called Artie. Vladek gradually found a way back to normal life whereas the burden of the past proved too heavy for Anja. She finally broke down completely and killed herself. Her suicide was a terrible blow for her remaining son. He suffered a nervous breakdown and estranged himself from his father. In the graphic novel the two stories alternate; both are stories of struggle and survival, Vladek's in wartime Poland and Art's in modern New York. When the novel begins, the father-and-son relationship has reached its lowest point; consequently Art's ties with his Jewish roots are severed as well.

Spiegelman's multi-layered graphic novel juxtaposes the survivor's (Vladek's) with his son's (Artie's) story. It is an attempt to pay homage to his parents and, by extension, to all the victims of the Holocaust. His choice of very simplified anthropomorphic animal figures (human bodies with faces of mice, pigs, dogs, frogs and deer depending on who they are meant to represent) was deliberate so as to make it easier for the reader to identify with them; his choice of iconic representation of characters having the purpose of giving a specific story a universal appeal. Scott McCloud says, "The cartoon is a *vacuum* into which our *identity* and *awareness* are *pulled*" (36). In a sense Artie resembles Styron's Stingo, the narrator of *Sophie's Choice* (1979), in his

¹ As a literary historian I prefer to use this term rather than 'comic strip' or 'comix'.

struggle to understand what it is like to be in the victim's shoes. In the end, however, he is forced to resign himself to the fact that the horrors of the Holocaust can never be fully comprehended by the 'outsiders'.

Even nowadays comic books have a reputation for being predominantly juvenile reading. After all, says Skinn, "[c]omics promote literacy by making reading fun" (9). In his textbook *Understanding Comics: the Invisible Art* (1994) Scott Mc Cloud recalls that he had a very clear idea of what comics were when he was young, "Comics were those *bright, colorful magazines* filled with *bad art, stupid stories, and guys in tights*" (2). But he goes on to vigorously reject this common prejudice, "Comics offers *tremendous resources* to *all* writers and artists. *Faithfulness, control*, a chance to be heard *far and wide* without fear of *compromise*... It offers *range* and *versatility* with all the potential imagery of *film* and *printing* plus the *intimacy* of the *written word*" (212). Skinn indicates that comic strip writing reached its dead end in the 1990s; however, the genre experienced an unprecedented reversal once it "realized the potential it was born with" (10). McCloud goes to great lengths to explain the complexity as well as the potential of the art form that only began to thrive at the turn of the century. According to him, the comic strip artist needs to bypass human inability to communicate directly from mind to mind (194). This is why "[i]n **comics** the conversion follows a path from **mind to hand to paper to eye to mind**" (195). Furthermore, he calls attention to the deceptive simplicity, particularly relating to the black-and-white drawing style of some modern graphic novels, such as Spiegelman's *Maus*: "As I write this, in 1992, American audiences are just beginning to realize that a simple *style* doesn't necessitate simple *story*" (44). Indeed, Spiegelman managed to prove that even this popular medium can deal with a subject matter and theme of great sophistication.

Reading comics or graphic novels presupposes full cooperation of the reader who needs to interpret both the graphic (visual) and the verbal components. "The reading of the comic book is an act of both aesthetic perception and intellectual pursuit," says Eisner (8). Indeed, as Wolf reminds us, recent research has shown "that the reading of words is but a subset of a much more general human activity which includes symbol decoding, information integration and organization" (Wolf in Eisner 8).

Ever since 1927, the year Slovenia (then a part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes) got its first comic strip (Sitar 9), the art form has flourished, albeit with a strong connotation of trashy literature. According to Sitar, the comic strip in Slovenia has long since lost its pejorative undertone (10). On pages 143-5 of his historical overview of comic strip artistry in Slovenia, he speaks about the students' fanzine *Stripburger* (established in 1991) that promoted Slovenian and international comic strip artists including Art Spiegelman (145). Sitar does not mention any particulars concerning Spiegelman's appearance in *Stripburger*; however on page 148 he briefly (albeit not quite accurately) remarks upon a 2006 "reprint (my italics) of the comic strip classic, Spiegelman's *Maus*" in Slovenian. The first Slovenian edition is not mentioned at all (sic!).

The purpose of this paper being a comparison of Spiegelman's *Maus* with its 2003 Slovenian translation, let me now first concentrate on that particular element of comics that, according to Eisner, "functions as an extension of the imagery" (Eisner 10), namely the lettering. "Lettering, treated 'graphically' and in the service of the story, functions as an extension of the imagery. In this context it provides the mood, a narrative bridge,

and the implication of sound” (10). However, comics also use non-verbal language. Not just the right typeface and the size and the shape of the lettering matter in a comic book or a graphic novel but also the panel shape and border ranging from straight to wavy edged to scalloped to jagged to no frame at all – each of the above used to convey sound, emotion of a character or the general atmosphere of the panel. As such “[t]hey make an effort to generate the reader’s own reaction to the action and thus create emotional involvement in the narrative” (59).

Eisner emphasizes the singular nature of comic writing, “It is a special skill, its requirements not always in common with other forms of ‘writing’ for it deals with a singular technology” (123). Comic books have traditionally been done by a single artist who drew the panels and wrote the text. However, due to time pressure, comics may also be created by a whole team of people, which generates the dilemma of the authorship of the finished work (*ibid.*). Eisner opts for the writer and artist being the same person (127, 132) in order to avoid the difficulties of coordination among several artists as well as the embarrassing issue of authorship.

According to Eisner the first page of a story functions as an introduction that is a “launching pad for the narrative” and establishes a frame of reference. “Properly employed it seizes the reader’s attention and prepares his attitude for the events to follow. It sets a ‘climate’. It becomes a ‘splash’ page proper rather than a simple ‘first page’” (Eisner 62). Let us compare the source book’s ‘splash’ page and its Slovenian equivalent.

On pages 5 and 6 Artie remembers an event from his childhood that took place in Rego Park, New York around 1958; in Slovenian translation the event took place in 1958. Artie came home in tears. He had been roller-skating with friends when one of his roller-skate came loose. He and his playmates had been racing toward the schoolyard when it happened and the others did not want to wait for him but called him ‘rotten egg’ instead for being last. Artie found his father sawing a plank in front of their house. When he complained to him about his friends his father sneered at the word ‘friends’, saying, “FRIENDS? YOUR FRIENDS?...”, “If you lock them together in a room with no food for a week...”, “...then you could see what it is, friends!” (Spiegelman 6).

The graphic novel’s page spread was not changed in the Slovenian edition of 2003. The captions and balloons were first cleaned out and filled with Slovenian lettering. The distinction between small letters used for the text inside the captions and the capitals used for the spoken text in the balloons was preserved. Nevertheless the Slovenian page layout looks very different from the original already on first sight. The balloons and captions were not hand written but ‘filled’ with set type. Whereas hand written letters have the emotional potential of making an extremely powerful effect on the reader, the set type done by a machine cannot induce such emotional response, “PRIJATELJA? TVOJA PRIJATELJA?”, “ČE BI JU SKUPAJ ZAPRLI V SOBO BREZ HRANE ZA EN TEDEN...”, “...POTEM BI ŠELE LAHKO VIDEL, KAJ POMENI BITI PRIJATELJ!” (Spiegelman 2003: 6). Whereas Spiegelman’s original uses bigger letters to indicate Vladek’s emotional emphases, its Slovenian counterpart does not. The transfer of information from English to Slovenian is therefore incomplete. Artie’s stammering complaint (he does not stammer in Slovenian) provokes Vladek’s turbulent response. In Slovenian it is much more neutral.

On a general level Spiegelman's use of the lettering style is systematic and -- after reading a few pages -- predictable. On the splash page(s) (5-6) he uses small letters to fill the captions and capitals to fill up the balloons. Later on, however, Art's captions use small letters and upper-case ones in the balloons whereas Vladek's captions and balloons use capitals only. Just small letters are further used in balloons and captions to emphasize the feeling of smallness and insignificance in *MAUS II*, Chapter Two (AUSCHWITZ (TIME FLIES)), i.e. the part dealing with the publication and publicity of Art's book following his father's death (41-6). When Artie turns on the tape recorder and Vladek's voice resumes his wartime story both captions and balloons return to upper-case lettering. In addition to this small letters are used on page 99 of *MAUS II* in a footnote translation of a Polish sentence, in Vladek's maps (map of Poland, I, 60), partly in drawings of hideouts (I, 110, 112), Nazi official proclamations (I, 54, 82) the map of the concentration camp in Birkenau (II, 51), Vladek's camp calendar (II, 68), and, last but not least, to mark the dates on the gravestones of both parents and end the book with his own signature (II, 136).

In the *Prisoner on the Hell Planet: A Case History* (I, 100-3) Spiegelman uses an entirely different graphic style both in drawings and the lettering. The panels are darkly expressionistic, the characters no longer anthropomorphic but human beings, the hand-drawn lettering is tight, upright, using small-size capitals. The Slovenian edition uses pale capital fonts that give the page a much less sinister look. As for the panel integrated lettering, some of it was translated and some not.

I first chanced upon *MAUS* in 2002 thanks to an American Fulbright professor who selected this graphic novel for the Ethnic American literature class that he was teaching at the time. Not a great fan of comic books, I began reading it with a slight diffidence but was pulled into it after only a few pages. Being a literary historian I read it as I would normally read a novel i.e. concentrating on the text. After having read Eisner's and McCloud's books on the history and theory of comics I realized there was a whole new dimension to Spiegelman's work that went practically unnoticed on my first reading. The second time I did it right, absorbing both the drawings, photographs and the text. When word came around about a Slovenian translation of *MAUS* being in progress I was curious: how does one go about translating a comic book? Can it be done by one person only? *MAUS* was translated into Slovenian by Oto Luthar. It appeared in 2003 in two books (*MAUS I* and *MAUS II*) and then, surprisingly (the Slovenian market is small, after all) again in 2006 in a single volume. My paper will concentrate on the 2003 edition.

MAUS I: A Survivor's Tale. My Father Bleeds History was translated as *MAUS I: zgodba o preživetju. Krvava zgodovina mojega očeta*. The subtitle was freely translated by Luthar as "A story of survival. The bloody history of my father". In doing so the horror implied in the source text was downgraded. The word 'survivor' implies personal experience, i.e. a person who has had a very unpleasant experience and is still affected by it (Collins Cobuild 2001) whereas the Slovenian equivalent stands for a dangerous situation in general during which it is possible that people might die (*ibid.*). The phrase "my father bleeds history" generates the impression of the protagonist's extreme suffering, whereas the Slovenian counterpart 'bloody history' implies suffering in general.

As expected, the verso of the title page looks different in Slovenian as it provides information concerning the current edition of the book. Besides the translator's name it lists the proofreader (Helena Majcenovič), the plastic editor (Mateja Belak) and the printing editor (Milojka Žalik Hozjan). The book was published by Založba ZRC in Ljubljana.

Spiegelman's original (I will refer to it as 'the source book' rather than 'the source text') is handwritten and hand drawn using hand tools whereas Luthar's translation reprinted the original panels (a couple of them were moderately changed, as will be shown later) whilst resorting to computer fonts to fill the balloons and captions. In my opinion the decision to separate the text from the imagery was not a good one; as already pointed out, only hand-written letters have the power to support as well as upgrade the meaning of the images.

The Slovenian edition maintains the difference between using small letters and capitals in the balloons and captions as well as in panel-integrated lettering. But computer print cannot reproduce the wide range of emotions expressed in numerous panels. Let me illustrate this with an example from *Mouse I*: In 1944 Vladek and Anja had to leave their bunker in the ghetto of Sroducta after the Gestapo had emptied the town of its Jewish population. They sneaked to Sosnowiec where they were hoping to find shelter with Janina, Richieu's former governess. Having realized who it was standing in her doorway, she exclaimed, "YOU'LL BRING TROUBLE! GO AWAY! **QUICKLY!**" (136). Spiegelman's hand-drawn letters capture the panic of the woman and underscore the ugliness of her character expressed already in the drawing itself. Vladek and Anja then knocked on the door of their one-time janitor but were spotted by "an old witch" who recognized Anja and screamed "THERE'S A JEWESS IN THE COURTYARD! POLICE!" (137). Spiegelman placed large, uneven capitals in a sharply jagged balloon. The word 'police' uses large round letters, Spiegelman's 's' – the half-swastika he uses consistently throughout the book (not reproduced in Slovenian either) – gives the pig-faced Polish woman's shrill exclamation a special edge. In short, the lettering style in the above case is suggestive of terror, anger and there is an implication of violence. The letters and the icon are inextricably intertwined. In Slovenian the text has been freely translated as, "ŽIDJE NA DVORIŠČU! POLICIJA!" (Jews in the courtyard! Police!) although Vladek previously explained that of the two of them it would be impossible for Anja to hide her Jewish origin. The Polish 'witch' obviously meant her and not the Jews in general. Visually, the Slovene equivalent lacks the emotional dimension of the source text.

As we will see, the most inconsistencies occurred where letters were part of the graphic design of a panel. Some panels display German inscriptions – instructions, orders, prohibitions etc. – that, appropriately were not translated into Slovenian (e.g. I, 105). However, in the case of English panel-integrated text the authors of the Slovenian edition either translated it, partly translated it or left it in the original. If they did, it required some alteration of the original panel, i.e. the English inscription had to be erased and replaced with the Slovenian equivalent. The result was sometimes but not always good. For example, each chapter is introduced by a single 'chapter panel' containing a handwritten title which has been translated and the panels partly re-drawn. In

the source book the title page is numbered whereas in Slovenian numbers have been erased although page numbering continues the same in both versions. 'Chapter panels' use slimmer, sometimes smaller and sometimes larger capitals in Slovenian than in the source panel. I believe the size of the letters is important: large, broad and round letters reinforce the meaning as well as contribute to the menacing atmosphere, e.g. in the panels Chapter four: THE NOOSE TIGHTENS (ZANKA SE ZATEGUJE) and Chapter Five: MOUSE HOLES (MIŠJE LUKNJE); due to the change in the lettering style the Slovenian panels appear less threatening, the foreshadowing less intense. Contrariwise, in Chapter Two, Slovenian letters are larger than those in the source panel: The HONEYMOON (MEDENI TEDNI). Small rounded letters used in the source panel give the impression of powerlessness in the face of the huge swastika on the Nazi flag that dominates the panel.

The translation of the title panel of *PRISONER ON THE HELL PLANET. A CASE HISTORY* required redesigning as well. The source panel presents, in its left-hand corner – a hand drawn male hand clutching a real photo. It shows Anja and Artie on the shore of Trojan Lake, N.Y. in 1958. Anja, in bathing suit, is standing, looking seriously into the camera, holding her hand maternally on the head of her crouching son. Artie, some 10 or 11 years old, is fully dressed and smiles happily. To the right of the photo the title is spelled out, top to bottom, one word at a time (except 'AT THE'). The words PRISONER and PLANET use broad-rimmed white-centered capital letters, whereas the key word HELL is printed in large, handwritten letters that look like flames. The background to the lettering and the photo is black nocturnal sky interspersed with stars, planets and the moon. The letters, except for the 'burning' HELL cast deep shadows that vanish into the universe. In Slovenian, the background sky is darker and there are hardly any stars. The translation of the title *UJETNIK PEKLENSKEGA PLANETA. PRIMER IZ ZGODOVINE* was printed both in set type (UJETNIK and PRIMER IZ ZGODOVINE) and handwritten letters for PEKLENSKEGA PLANETA. The former word being very long, it had to be printed slantwise, left to right. It uses much smaller capitals than the original word and leaves out the effect of 'burning', too. The other letters were meant to cast shadows – the way they do in the source panel – but they are hardly visible. Last but not least, 'A CASE HISTORY' should be regarded as a primarily medical and not historical term; the appropriate equivalent being 'ŠTUDIJA PRIMERA'. To sum up, Spiegelman's title panel foretells a far-reaching, 'burning' problem that will cast a deep shadow over Art's whole life. The source panel induces the feeling of extreme suffering normally associated with sinners burning in Hell. The Slovenian design of the above panel is far less telling than the source panel.

The Slovenian edition offered some good solutions as well, e.g. in *MAUS I*:

Page 13: Vladek is pedaling on his home trainer in front of a huge poster displaying a scene from the motion picture *The Sheik*. Both key words SHEIK and PICTURE are adequately translated and integrated in the panel as ŠEJK and FILM.

Page 20: Vladek is slamming the door to Lucia's (his girlfriend before he met Anja) face. The huge inscription SLAM is written across the closed door, Lucia lying on the floor. The Slovenian equivalent looks good indeed with large expressive TRESK spelled out across the slamming door.

Page 46: Pavel, Artie's shrink and Auschwitz survivor, yells "BOO!" so as to frighten Artie in an attempt to demonstrate what Auschwitz felt like. In response Artie shrieks "YIII!"; in Slovenian they are adequately replaced by "BUU!" and "AIII!"

Page 74: Vladek is moaning in his sleep – "AAWOOWAH!" is translated and adequately redesigned as "AAUUUUVA!" On the same page, in the last but one panel PSHT, the sound of spraying the insects, is correctly rendered as PŠŠŠ.

Page 80: The sound of distant warfare is represented with a large BOOM over-arching the camp rooftops. Slovenian version uses the same lettering style to rewrite it as BUUM.

Page 100: *Prisoner on the Hell Planet*: Having discovered Anja's body, Vladek shrieks, "SHE'S DEAD! A SUICIDE!" His words are spelled out in black, uneven letters against a dark gray background. The Slovenian equivalent "MRTVA JE! SAMOMOR!" captures the sense of horror both in terms of meaning and visually.

Page 136: Vladek and Anja seek shelter with Richieu's former governess Janina (a Pole) but she won't let them in and slams the door in their face telling them to go away. Big lettered panel-integrated SLAM! is adequately translated and hand written into the panel as TRESK!

Let us look at some good solutions from *MAUS II*:

Page 59: Vladek is describing to Artie the repeated selections the Nazis were performing to eliminate the weakest prisoners. He remembers a sick Belgian who cried and screamed all night. His scream "AAWOWWAH!" is printed in huge capitals across the panel. In Slovenian they were adequately replaced by handwritten "AAUUUVAA!" And then again in the last, smaller panel on the same page.

As already mentioned, in some cases the authors of Slovenian edition chose not to translate or just partly translate the panel-integrated lettering. Let us look at some examples from *MAUS I* first:

Page 47: Vladek is shooting KPOK! KPOK! KPOK! The source panel was copied without changing the gun sound to POK! POK! POK!.

Page 48: Vladek shoots at a 'moving tree'. The sound his gun makes is written as PNG whereas the 'target' gasps "AKH!" There is no translation, however PENG and "AH" would sound much more natural in Slovenian.

Page 98: Vladek is dividing long nails from short ones, throwing them into separate metal containers. The long nails say PLUNK and the short ones PLINK. In Slovenian, however, they make opposite sounds (PLINK, PLANK).

Page 107: Vladek is telling about "ONE OLDER GUY, HE WAS MAYBE 50, JUMPED TO THE LAKE, IT WAS A FAR SWIM". The onomatopoeic SPLASH arches above the jumping body. In the subsequent panels the resulting shooting of German soldiers is verbalized as KBANG! KBANG!, the letters integrated in the panel. The Slovenian translator should have used ČOF for SPLASH and BUM! BUM! for the shooting explosions.

Page 111: The commotion of the collapsing barn is heard as KABOOM! In Slovenian KABUMM! does not make much sense. TRESK! or BUUM! would be a much more natural, reader-friendly solution.

Page 111: Vladek is drinking milk for the first time after God knows how long. He makes greedy sounds, forgetting the world around him: SLUPP! SLUPP! should be replaced by Slovenian onomatopoeic SRK! SRK!

Page 112: American soldiers make a signal to inform fellow soldiers of having found a cache of Nazi ammunition: BANG! BANG! In Slovenian ‘A’ should change to ‘E’: BENG! BENG!

Page 119: Vladek recalls the devastating consequences of eating a ‘homemade’ cake that contained soap powder: the nocturnal silhouette of the barracks is pierced with exclamations of anguish emanating from sufferers through open windows: “OW! GROAN OY! OUCH!” Slovenian translation is rather curious: “OUE! GROAN (sic!) JOJ! AUČ!” If one could still accept the first (though I would prefer “AU!” in its place) the exclamation ‘groan’ does not exist in Slovenian. Its meaning being ‘moan’ or ‘grunt’ I could think of the nearest Slovenian equivalents as “O JEJ JEJ!” or “O JOJ JOJ!” or “JOJMENE!” The last interjection, “AUČ” is a relatively young addition to Slovenian vocabulary, obviously of English derivation. Since very few people spoke English during WW 2 the Slovenian “AU!” would sound more natural.

Page 124: Vladek is hiding behind a corner and hears loud shooting -- TAKKA, TAKA, TAK – probably from a machine gun. Slovenian language does not use doubled letters so the nearest onomatopoetic approximation would be TOKA, TOK, TOK.

Below is an example from *MAUS II* where the translation changes the style of lettering and leaves out a sentence:

Page 105: In the commotion of the last days of WW 2 the prisoners suddenly realize: “THE WAR IS OVER!” In the source panel this inscription is written in large, broad, black-rimmed letters with plenty of white inside, joyfully overlapping and leaning every which way, floating above the heads and raised hands of disbelieving prisoners. The Slovenian translation uses black-rimmed but narrower, elongated, serious looking, erect letters. The effect is that of a matter-of-fact, sober recognition of a fact without an emotional undertone. Apart from that the caption above the same panel has been omitted, probably overlooked (“IT WAS COMMOTIONS AND RUMORS THEN SHOUTS”).

Let us now move to the ‘contents’ of the balloons and captions. In the source book their size was determined by the quantity of lettering to be placed inside. In the Slovenian translation the balloons and captions were ‘emptied’ first to make room for the translated text. As the length of Slovenian phrases and sentences differs from English the balloons are occasionally too big. In such cases the editor simply increased the letter size (e.g. *MAUS I*, p. 16) to solve the dilemma. The translator was further confronted with the difficult task of having to translate Vladek’s Polish inflected English. Although Vladek takes pride in his English proficiency already in his years of successful business career (“...BUT I TOOK PRIVATE LESSONS...I ALWAYS DREAMED OF GOING TO AMERICA” (I, 16), his English never loses its foreign accent. His syntax is a mixture of English and Polish and Yiddish. This means there are two Englishes in *MAUS*; in contrast to Vladek, Artie acts out his part in impeccable standard English. By neutralizing Vladek’s stylistically marked English the translator lowered the value of Slovenian edition. Not knowing how to deal with Vladek’s funny language, he frequently resorted to reduction, summarizing Vladek’s complex sentences or simplifying them. For example, on p. 17 (*MAUS I*) Vladek says in a caption, “IT PASSED MAYBE A WEEK UNTIL LUCIA AGAIN CAME AND SAW THE PHOTO...” In Slovenian, “POTEM JE ENKRAT ZNOVA PRIŠLA LUCIJA IN VIDELA FOTOGRAFIJO” (Then Lucia

came once again and saw the photo). The meaning is preserved but the juiciness of the original is lost. In my opinion the Slovenian edition of *MAUS* is an adaptation rather than a translation proper.

In order to illustrate the above thesis, I will compare pages 74 and 75 of the source book (*Maus I*) and its Slovene equivalent: Vladek has run away from a German concentration camp and is reunited with his large family.

(Source text, balloon) WHEN I FIRST CAME HOME IT LOOKED EXACTLY SO AS BEFORE I WENT AWAY...

(Slovenian translation) KO SEM SE PRVIČ VRNIL, JE BILO VSE NATANČNO TAKO, KOT TAKRAT, KO SEM ODŠEL. (When I first came back, everything was exactly the same as when I had left.)

(Source text, caption) IT WAS STILL VERY LUXURIOUS. THE GERMANS COULDN'T DESTROY EVERYTHING AT ONE TIME.

(Slovenian translation) ŠE VEDNO ZELO NOBEL. NEMCI NISO MOGLI NAENKRAT UNIČITI VSEGA. (Still very classy. The Germans couldn't destroy everything at one time.)

(Source text, caption) IT WAS TWELVE OF US LIVING IN FATHER-IN-LAW'S HOUSEHOLD...

(Slovenian translation) DVANAJST NAS JE ŽIVELO V TASTOVEM GOSPOD- INJSTVU... (There were twelve of us living in father-in-law's household.)

(Source text, caption) IT WAS ANJA AND ME, AND OUR BOY RICHIEU...

(Slovenian translation) ANJA, JAZ IN NAJIN SIN, RICHIEU... (Anja, myself and our son, Richieu.)

(Source text, caption) ANJA'S OLDER SISTER, TOSHA, HER HUSBAND, WOLFE, AND THEIR LITTLE GIRL, BIBI...

(Slovenian translation) ANJINA STAREJŠA SESTRA TOŠA, NJEN MOŽ WOLF IN NJUNA HČERKA BIBI... (Anja's older sister Toša, her husband Wolf and their daughter Bibi.)

(Source text, caption) AND IT WAS ANJA'S GRANDPARENTS. THEY HAD MAYBE 90 YEARS BUT VERY ALERT...

(Slovenian translation) ANJINA STARA STARŠA. OBA BLIZU 90, AMPAK OBA ČISTO PRI SEBI... (Anja's grandparents. Both close to 90 but both quite alert.)

(Source text, caption) AND, OF COURSE, MY FATHER-IN-LAW AND MY MOTHER-IN-LAW...

(Slovenian translation) IN SEVEDA TAST IN TAŠČA... (And, of course, father-in-law and mother-in-law.)

(Source text, caption) AND ALSO THE 2 KIDS FROM YOUR UNCLE HER- MAN AND AUNT HELEN: LOLEK AND LONIA

(Slovenian translation) POLEG TEGA PA ŠE OTROKA TVOJEGA STRICA HERMANA IN TETE HELEN: LOLEK IN LONJA. (And besides this the children of your uncle Herman and aunt Helen: Lolek and Lonja.)

(Source text, balloon) HERMAN AND HELEN WERE LUCKY. THEY WERE VISITING THE N.Y. WORLD'S FAIR WHEN THE WAR CAME. THIS SAVED THEM.

(Slovenian translation) HERMAN IN HELEN STA IMELA SREČO. KO SE JE ZAČELA VOJNA, STA BILA RAVNO V NEW YORKU. TO JU JE REŠILO. (Herman and Helen were lucky. When war started they were in New York. That saved them.)

(Source text, balloon) AH, GRANDMOTHER – YOUR STEW IS EVEN TASTIER THAN I REMEMBERED.

(Slovenian translation) OOO...STARA MAMA – TVOJ KOMPOT JE ŠE BOLJŠI, KOT SE SPOMNIM. (OOO, grandmother, your compote is even tastier than I remember.)

(Source text, balloon) NO – IT'S NOT LIKE BEFORE THE WAR VLADEK – I CAN'T GET THE FOODS I NEED.

(Slovenian translation) NE, NE VLADEK, SPLOH NI TAK KOT PRED VOJNO... SPLOH NE MOREM DOBITI PRAVEGA SADJA. (Ne, ne, Vladek, it's not like before the war...I can't get the right fruit.)

(Source text, balloon) EACH OF US GETS COUPONS FOR 8 OUNCES OF BREAD A DAY, AND A TINY BIT OF MARGARINE, SUGAR AND JAM PER WEEK. THAT'S ALL!

(Slovenian translation) VSAK OD NAS DOBI BONE ZA KOŠČEK KRUHA IN REZINICO MASLA, NEKAJ SLADKORJA IN MARMELADE NA TEDEN... IN TO JE VSE! (Each of us gets coupons for a piece of bread and a slice of butter, some sugar and jam per week. And that's all!)

(Source text, balloon) SO HOW DO WE MANAGE?

(Slovenian translation) KAKO POTEM SPLOH SHAJATE? (So how do you manage then?)

(Source text, balloon) I'VE DONATED A LOT TO THE **GEMEINDE** – THE JEWISH COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION – AND WOLFE WORKS THERE... SO WE GET A LITTLE EXTRA.

(Slovenian translation) VELIKO SEM DAROVAL JUDOVSKI SKUPNOSTI, PA TUDI WOLF DELA TAM... ZATO DOBIMO VSEGA MALO VEČ. (I've donated a lot to the Jewish community , and Wolf works there... So we get a little extra.)

(Source text, balloon) AND THERE'S THE BLACK MARKET. WITH MONEY YOU CAN ALWAYS GET ANYTHING.

(Slovenian translation) PA ŠE ČRNI TRG. ZA DENAR LAHKO DOBIŠ VSE! (And the black market. You can get anything for money!)

(Source text, balloon) IT'S DANGEROUS THOUGH. THE NAZIS TAKE YOU OFF TO A WORK CAMP FOR BREAKING ANY MINOR LAW.

(Slovenian translation) JE PA NEVARNO. NACISTI TE ŽE ZA NAJMANJŠI PRESTOPEK ZAPREJO V TABORIŠČE. (It's dangerous though. The Nazis shut you off in a camp for breaking any minor law.)

(Source text, balloon) WORSE – EVEN IF YOU **DON'T** BREAK ANY LAWS!

(Slovenian translation) PA TUDI ČE NE NAREDIŠ NIČ, TE ZAPREJO! (Even if you don't do anything, they lock you up!)

(Source text, balloon) ...AND THOSE THAT WERE TAKEN AWAY – THEY'RE NEVER SEEN AGAIN!

(Slovenian translation) ...IN TISTIH, KI SO JIH ODPELJALI, NISMO VIDELI NIKOLI VEČ! (We never saw those who had been taken away again.)

The conception and writing of *Maus* was affected by the limitations of the graphic novel medium. This determined the scope of the story as well as its depth. Spiegelman proved that even this 'childish' medium could deal with a sophisticated subject matter and theme. The 2003 Slovenian edition of *Maus* falls short of the original particularly in terms of its limited possibilities for viewer identification. Although the original page layout – the arrangement of page margins, panels, gutters and captions -- was not changed, the translator and his team prepared a Slovenian edition that passed on the information but allowed for only a limited aesthetic response in the viewer-reader. The question is whether the Slovenian translator "abdicated the 'writing role'" (Eisner 123) due to his lack of recognition of the seriousness of Spiegelman's intention or was he pressured into publishing the book as quickly as possible? The Slovenian viewer-reader can interpret the hand drawn panels whereas the use of the rigid set-type reduces the emotional weight of the text. Typesetting "[h]as a mechanical effect that intrudes on the personality of free-hand art. Its use must be carefully considered because of its effect on the 'message' as well" (Eisner 27). Be that as it may, a second Slovenian edition followed in 2006. This time the lettering was hand-drawn - the translator was the same as in the 2003 edition (Oto Luthar) – whereas the specifications concerning the current publication cite Lucijan Bratuš, Ciril Horjak², Sebastjan Kurmenšek and Art Spiegelman as the authors of Slovenian lettering.

University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

² Sitar's *Zgodovina slovenskega stripa* (The History of Slovenian Comic Strip) includes only Ciril Horjak's original work but does not mention his part in the publication of the second edition of Slovenian *Maus*.

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