A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS ON THE PORTRAYAL OF MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS IN RICHARD WRIGHT'S *NATIVE SON* AND ART SPIEGELMAN'S *MAUS*

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A Thesis submitted to the

Faculty of the English Graduate Program of

Ohio Dominican University

Columbus, Ohio

in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH

[August 2020]

CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

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Abstract

The pairing of Richard Wright's *Native Son* and Art Spiegelman's *Maus* encourages a comparison between the lives of African Americans throughout the early twentieth century to that of Jews during the Holocaust, despite the protagonists' biases against each other's racial and ethnic group. Together, these texts are crucial to modern readers in identifying oppression and marginalization amongst minorities in the United States during this time of increased civil rights activism. With this thesis, I examine the shared themes of dehumanization and ghettoization African Americans and European Jews faced during the 1930s and 1940s and the unique ways that these texts make this dehumanization and marginalization visible to readers. *Maus* and *Native Son* open readers' eyes to traumatic historical events and derelict living conditions that otherwise would remain either unknown or be on too large of a scale for readers to connect with. In both novels, the female characters are victims of the most severe oppression, both by their societies and by the novels' male protagonists who go to vicious lengths to silence them. These texts highlight the need for a symbiosis between all racial and ethnic groups and genders, for oppression and marginalization to end.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

On August 9th, 2014, a police officer shot and killed 18-year-old unarmed teenager Michael Brown in the daylight hours of Ferguson, Missouri. Brown's death followed just weeks behind the death of another unarmed black man, Eric Garner, who was strangled to death on July 17th, 2014 by a Staten Island police officer. The slaying of these two unarmed African Americans, prompted the famed Twitter response from San Diego's Kim Moore (@SoulRevision) who found inspiration in author James Baldwin's quote "To be black and conscious in America is to be in a constant state of rage" (Walsh 53). This tweet and Baldwin's rage, along with the wrongful deaths of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and the 2013 shooting death of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, and with the eventual acquittal of the white officers and civilians responsible for their wrongful deaths would eventually lead to the formation of Black Lives Matter. Melanie Walsh, author of "Tweets of a Native Son: The Quotation and Recirculation of James Baldwin to #BlackLivesMatter" describes Black Lives Matter as "the national protest movement against police brutality and the American criminal justice system that had arisen in the wake of Brown's death" (54).

With the formation and growing activism of the Black Lives Matter movement, the oppression of other minority groups can be easily overshadowed; however, by looking at the marginalization and bigotry that other racial and ethnic groups also face, we see that oppression stems from more than just one strand of racism. African Americans are not the only group to face this continuous struggle against marginalization, oppression, and discrimination, as the American Jewish population still struggles with anti-Semitic attitudes popular in the 1930s and 1940s, as well. On October 27th, 2018, eleven members of the Tree of Life temple, a Jewish synagogue in the Squirrel Hill neighborhood of Pittsburgh, PA, lost their lives at the hands of 46-year-old Robert Bowers (Helling 50). During the massacre, Bowers, who committed this devastating atrocity by firing three handguns and an AR-15 assault rifle, screamed anti-Semitic rants, while shooting into the crowd (Helling 50).

In the wake of these events and the many like them which have since transpired, and with literary figures being called into our current day civil rights movement as "literary touchstones, consciences and pinups" we need to re-examine texts addressing racial and ethnic oppressions of varying groups from our historical past and apply them to issues of our current day (Walsh 54). It is important to view parallels between texts addressing the oppression of varying groups, rather than just of a single group, as seeing the similarities between the discrimination and marginalization of different groups reveals that oppression is about more than just race. We need to re-examine these texts in order to think more critically about the ancestries and consequences of stereotypes, understanding that victims of discrimination and oppression can be perpetrators as well. *Native Son's* Bigger Thomas embodies Baldwin's rage filled sentiments, showcasing the constant state of rage in which conscious blacks lived in during the 1930s. Together, the pairing of these texts highlight the stark similarities between the experiences of *Maus's* Vladek Spiegelman and Bigger Thomas, while highlighting their own contradictory prejudices against the other's racial or ethnic group despite their mirrored ghettoization and dehumanized status, revealing a deeper nature about the workings of prejudice, helping readers see that discrimination is not just a tool yielded by the powerful. It is my hope that after reading this paper, readers will accredit the same literary status to Richard Wright's *Native Son* and Art Spiegelman's *Maus* as Black Lives Matter has accredited to Baldwin, looking to these texts as touchstones in identifying, and navigating through modern marginalization and discrimination.

Though societal changes have taken place since the 1930s and 1940s, in which Richard Wright's *Native Son* and the majority of Art Spiegelman's *Maus* are set, racial and ethnic marginalization and oppression have certainly not been laid to rest in our current day. Perhaps the most intriguing component shared by both Richard Wright's *Native Son* and Art Spiegelman's *Maus* is the protagonists' biases between the other's racial or ethnic group, despite the extreme and mirrored marginalization that both men have faced. We see Bigger Thomas's bias against Jews

through his idealization of Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini. Bigger views these men as European heroes and wishes that a black dictator would rise up in America to help fight against white oppression, despite the Jewish dehumanization and genocide that occurred at the hands of these totalitarians. This same bias is seen in *Maus* when Vladek Spiegelman discourages his daughter-in-law Francoise from picking up a hitchhiker because he is black, stating that he will steal their groceries (II, 99). Francoise tells Vladek, "That's OUTRAGEOUS! How can you of all people, be such a racist! You talk about blacks the way Nazis talked about the Jews!" (II, 99). To This Vladek tells her, "I thought really you are more smart than this, Francoise… It's not even to COMPARE, the Shvartsers and the Jews!" (II, 99).

The purpose of this paper is to discredit Vladek Spiegelman's argument that no comparison can be made between the blacks and the Jews. I believe that the evidence presented in this paper establishes a clear connection between the treatment of African Americans during the early twentieth century and the treatment of Jews during the Holocaust, which may be eye opening to some readers, who had not previously made such a connection. The comparison of the treatment of African Americans and of Jews during the Holocaust, and in present day America, is certainly not a new conversation amongst scholars, though it is one that needs to be re-opened for discussion today amongst the injustice that minorities in the United States face currently, as it is perhaps one that many readers are not familiar with. A wealth of analytical scholarship exists providing insights into both Richard Wright's *Native Son* and Art Spiegelman's *Maus* as well, though no research currently exists making a direct comparison between these texts. Professor of English at Medgar Evers College in Brooklyn, Andrea Freud Loewenstein, explores African American biases toward the Jewish population, like that seen in Wright's Bigger Thomas, in her 1998 article "Confronting Stereotypes: *Maus* in Crown Heights". In her article, Freud Loewenstein states that she habitually teaches *Maus*, after teaching an African American text such as August Wilson's *Fences* or Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eyes*, in her predominantly black Freshman English classes, as a "history of

conflict and distrust" exists between the largely Caribbean neighborhood of Crown Heights in which Medgar Evers is located, and the Lubavitcher sect of Hasidic Jews who call the neighborhood home as well (397). Freud Loewenstein records the biases of one of her entirely African American classes against the Jewish population in this article. To counteract the overwhelmingly biased responses, Freud Loewenstein's goal is to teach her students that blacks have a place as both victims and participants in a larger system of injustice as do Jews, along with various other marginalized and oppressed populations. After working their way through the scene which unveils Vladek Spiegelman's biases against blacks, Freud Loewenstein asks her class to explore whether or not they had ever been oppressed by a person who had suffered from prejudice themselves, asking the follow up question, "Do oppressed people usually learn from their experiences not to oppress others?" (414). If racism is prevalent even in populations that have found themselves victimized, as Loewenstein points out in her research, changes must be made in the way society approaches racism, exploring their own biases as well as the unfair biases held against them.

Together, *Maus* and *Native Son* are crucial to readers today in identifying oppression and marginalization in our current societies, prompting us to ask ourselves 'What has changed and what has not'? Together, these texts serve as windows to the past, allowing us to draw parallels between past and present, encouraging readers to take a broader exploration between the genealogy of racial and ethnic discrimination, oppression and genocide, while revealing that these seeds of hatred are about more than skin color or religious affiliation and affect a variety of populations, which at first glance have little in common besides their oppression and often times see other marginalized populations as inferior as well. As author of "Denying the Holocaust", Deborah Lipstadt states: "Anti-Semitism begins with the Jews, but never ends with the Jews" (qtd. in Who We Are). By examining these two texts, which deal with two vastly different racial and ethnic groups, we gain insights into Boris Max's sentiments to Bigger Thomas in the closing pages of *Native Son*,

> Bigger, the people who hate you feel just as you feel, only they're on the other side of the fence. You're black, but that's only a part of it. Your being black, as I told you before, makes it easy for them to single you out. Why do they do that? They want the things of life, just as you did, and they're not particular about how they get them. They rule and regulate life. They have things arranged so that they can do those things and the people can't fight back. They do that to black people more than others because they say that black people are inferior. But Bigger, they say that all people who work are inferior. But deep down in them they feel like you feel, Bigger and in order to keep what they've got, they make themselves believe that men who work are not quite human… (543).

The pairing of Richard Wright's *Native Son* and Art Spiegelman's *Maus* allows for a parallel to be made between the lives of African Americans during the early twentieth century to that of the Jews during the Holocaust during this same period, as well as the treatment of oppressed and marginalized populations today. Pairing these texts allows readers to analyze the similarities between Bigger Thomas's life in the Chicago Black Belt and the treatment of Jews such as Vladek Spiegelman in Nazi Europe, though these men are from dissimilar backgrounds and seem to participate in an unjust ideology which feeds the oppression of the other's racial or ethnic group. When placing these texts side by side, we see that inhumane treatment of minorities was not unique to Nazi Europe, but occurred, and continues to occur in America today. It is my hope that a comparative analysis of these texts will help readers examine and bridge the discriminatory gap existing between various racial and ethnic groups today, for those who are "on the other side of the fence," and even those who know the pain of oppression, discrimination, and even genocide themselves.

In this thesis I explore two texts, Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, a retelling of his father Vladek's experience as a Polish Jew during the Holocaust and Richard Wright's *Native Son*, the story of twenty-year old Bigger Thomas, a young black man living in desperate poverty in Chicago's

Southside during the 1930s. I examine several symbols and themes within the texts, examining the rat in Chapter 1. The rat is a shared motif between texts and represents the non-human status assigned to minorities during this time, as well as the ghettoization and impoverished living conditions of African Americans and European Jews. In Chapter 2, I analyze themes of visualization. Wright uses the motif of blindness to shed light on his characters' blindness as well as his readers', while Spiegelman uses comic illustrations to enhance readers' connection with the unbelievable tragedy that was the Holocaust. In Chapter 3, I further extend my analysis of visualization to the authors' use of shadow imagery. Wright employs shadow imagery as a means of contrasting the differences between the white and black worlds, with Bigger's crime pulling him out of the dark margins and into the spotlight, while Spiegelman employs shadow imagery to further highlight Jewish oppression and marginalization. Lastly, I examine the texts' leading ladies, whose stories were silenced by further means of oppression than either of the male protagonists experienced. Together, these texts highlight the need for a symbiosis between these, as well as all, ethnic and racial groups, in order for oppression and marginalization to end.

CHAPTER 2: RAT SYMBOLISM

One of the most striking similarities between *Native Son* and *Maus* is the use of rat imagery. A few elements central to the authors' employment of rat symbolism in the texts that I examine in this chapter, are the dehumanization of minorities, an analysis of ghettoized living conditions, and the relationship of these factors to a societal desire toward the extermination of unwanted minorities. Both authors employ the rat to exemplify the less than human, animalistic status assigned to black and Jewish minorities, reflecting the social attitudes towards these groups during the early part of the twentieth century. Both Wright's and Spiegelman's rats symbolize the run-down living conditions in which black and Jewish minorities lived, on the outskirts of society's more privileged, who did not want these minorities living along side them. Many similarities can be found when looking at the slum like environments in which Bigger Thomas lives and hides in while on the run from the police, as well as the mouse holes and spaces alongside animals in which Vladek Spiegelman and other Jews are forced into, in order to survive in a society which treats them as pests. The conditions in which blacks in the Chicago Black Belt are living is remarkably like the ghettoized and marginalized spaces that Jews in Nazi Europe are forced to live in. Like the rat, both Bigger and Vladek must sneak to avoid those who seek their capture and extermination. The rat imagery employed by both Spiegelman and Wright helps bring the extreme marginalization and ghettoization of these minorities, as well as their humanity into perspective, highlighting the overwhelming similarities between the oppressions of these two populations. While examining the ghettos and garbage constrictive spaces in which both marginalized groups must live, readers should ask themselves if these marginalized ghettos have been eliminated, or if they still exist in our current day societies.

The rat is such a crucial symbol to Wright that readers' first encounter with the animal occurs in the opening pages of the novel, scurrying across the floor of the Thomas family's one-bedroom, rented from Bigger's soon to be employer for a ridiculously high cost. According to

scholar Matthew Lambert in his article "'That Sonofabitch Could Cut Your Throat': Bigger and the Black Rat in Richard Wright's *Native Son,*" "The rat opens the novel… to test readers' ability to identify with Bigger by offering an animal appropriate to the urban environment and human carelessness" (80). It is in this scene that Wright introduces readers to the rat as a symbol of racism, impoverishment, and unfair housing conditions that African Americans living in racially charged Chicago were faced with. It is also in this first scene where Bigger Thomas realizes he has no control over his lot in life. All Bigger's insights and conclusions spring fourth from the first scene of the novel where he struggles to kill a rat in his home. In this way, Wright uses the rat as a symbol of African American poverty. In "How Bigger was Born" Wright discloses that he chose rat imagery after hearing and reading a multitude of stories concerning "negro children being bitten by rats in their beds" (qtd. in Lambert 76). When Bigger first arrives at the Dalton's, the cook Peggy comments on her employers' wealth, telling him "They've got millions, but they live like human beings" (Wright 70). If the Daltons are living like human beings, how are Bigger's people living? It is this same disparity that leads Bigger's lawyer Boris Max to ask Mr. Dalton, "Why is it that you exact an exorbitant rent of eight dollars per week from the Thomas family for one unventilated, rat-infested room in which four people eat and sleep" (Wright 412). As Lambert surmises, "Bigger and the rat become environmental fugitives, calling attention to the social and environmental practices that create the slums in which they are confined" (76). Wright employs the rat symbolically to highlight the ghettoization and asphyxiating spaces of the Black Belt, contrasting the difference of the environments in which black and white Americans call home.

A considerable amount of scholarship currently exists exploring the symbolism of the rat in *Native Son*. In his 2016 article, Lambert examines the symbolization of the black rat in Wright's *Native Son* stating that Wright's employment of rat imagery showcases the lengthy history of interactions between destitute urbanites and rats (76). In his article, Lambert states,

> In twentieth century, American urban landscapes, white power structures often relegated African Americans to peripheral slums, where garbage constrictive spaces, and dilapidated structures replaced the green parks, tree-lined avenues, and picturesque skylines of buildings and skyscrapers. In order to establish the slum as their natural habitat, whites frequently compared African Americans to animals… Any unauthorized deviation from this habitat was a fugitive breach on a highly organized, bucolic, and white urban landscape- like an ape escaping its cage or a rat infiltrating a home. (75)

Readers see the comparison of African Americans to less sophisticated life forms when Bigger tells the reporters about the fugitive breach of social order that he was forced to make when Jan and Mary insisted that he dine with them in a black restaurant. While Lambert does not examine this scene in his article, his analysis of white opinions of African American deviation from the ghetto is highlighted when Bigger explains the events that took place on the night that Mary was killed. Bigger explains his uncomfortable dining situation to reporters, saying, "They told me to eat and I ate. It was my job" (Wright 269). The reporter requests a further explanation from Bigger asking, "In other words, you felt you had to eat or lose your job?" to which Bigger simply responds, "Yessuh" (Wright 269). The reporter exclaims: "What a story! Don't you see it? These Negroes want to be left alone and these Reds are forcing 'em to live with 'em, see? Every wire in the country'll carry it! …Say, I'm slanting this to the primitive Negro who doesn't want to be disturbed by white civilization" (Wright 269). Here we see an uncomfortable white man using an unpleasant social scenario to squash and suppress Communist efforts of equality between races toward a race that he sees as more primitive and less socially advanced than whites. Blacks were not less advanced than their white counterparts; segregation, ghettoization and an imbalance of power made them uncomfortable fraternizing with the members of society that had been deemed a superior race, but Bigger made no statement of preference toward his own "natural habitat," "the slum," in comparison to the living conditions of the white world. In fact, later in the novel, Bigger's attorney

Boris Max argues that Bigger's underprivileged upbringing and treatment as vermin within his society forced him to use his animal instincts to kill without thinking when he found himself in a dangerous social situation in the room of a white woman with her blind mother present, in an act of self-defense.

The "peripheral slums" and "garbage constrictive spaces" which Lambert asserts African Americans were delegated to are most prevalent in Book 3, where Bigger searches for a place to hide from the police. In one monologue, Bigger highlights the scarcity of empty flats in the Black Belt, recalling an incident when his mother had put in a request to move. Bigger tells readers that "He remembered that his mother had once made him tramp the streets for two whole months looking for a place to live… he remembered the time when the police had come and driven him and his mother and his brother and sister out of a flat in a building which had collapsed two days after they had moved"(Wright 314). Here we see a perfect example of the unsafe "dilapidated structures" that African Americans were forced to live in outside of the margins of white society. Bigger admits that he had not seen his longtime landlord Mr. Dalton once before he started working for him, though Bigger is only one of many Chicago negroes living under these conditions. While searching for a hiding place, Bigger catches a glimpse of a family through a window,

> In one bed sat three naked black children looking across the room to the other bed on which lay a man and woman, both naked and black in the sunlight. There were quick, jerky movements on the bed where the man and woman lay, and the three children were watching. It was familiar; he had seen things like that when he was a little boy sleeping five in a room (Wright 312).

There is no doubt that whites of the 1930s would find children watching adult sexual relations abhorrent, leading readers to question the justification for forcing blacks to live in this uncivilized and animalistic fashion. Lambert offers insight to scenes like these, stating that, "Wright uses animals (such as the rat) to explore the constricted comprehension of what constitutes a human,

especially when looking at oppressed and marginalized populations….while pointing out cultural attitudes and discriminations deeming African Americans to be less than human" (Lambert 77). It is after this scene, while searching for an empty flat to hide in, that Bigger has his second experience with a rat. As Bigger tramped through the Black Belt, "He paused at a corner and saw a big black rat leaping over the snow. It shot past him into a doorway where it slid out of sight through a hole. He looked wistfully at that gaping black hole through which the rat had darted to safety" (Wright 314-315). Bigger identifies with the rat, and we see Bigger mimic rat-like behaviors soon after this second meeting (i.e flattening against a building, tiptoeing) as he scurries through the night for a hiding place in the Chicago Black Belt after murdering Chicago heiress Mary Dalton. Just like the rat, Bigger is so far beneath the social hierarchy of the whites, that he is beneath eye level, able to sneak about throughout the novel without getting caught. As long as they stay away from human feet, urban rats are often able to shuttle past humans undetected, due to their size and low to the ground stature. Bigger too is able to sneakily fly under the radar in the Dalton home without much suspicion or notice by police, reporters, or the Daltons, after murdering Mary. Unfortunately for Bigger as a human, he faces physical limitations that rats are not limited by, preventing him from hiding from human predators in small marginalized spaces, such as holes in the wall, making safety in his urban environment harder to achieve. Likewise, an army of volunteers and police set loose upon the Black Belt to search for Bigger, a worry with which a lowly rat of the animal kingdom would not have to concern himself.

Bigger can be put into direct comparison to Wright's symbolic rat in more ways than one. As Wright states, admitting a connection to the lab rat, chosen for its physical, psychological and dietary similarities to humans, "Why should I not, like a scientist in a laboratory, use my imagination and invent test tube situations, place Bigger in them, and following the guidance of my own hopes and fears, what I had learned and remembered, work out in fiction form an emotional statement and resolution of this problem" (qtd. in Lambert 82). We see that Wright's motivation for

Native Son was a social experiment, showing readers what violence could arise when a population is forced to live under the marginalized conditions of segregation and discrimination. The importance of Wright's social experimentation with *Native Son* is showcased in Boris Max's comments that giving Bigger the death sentence "will not solve the problem which this crime exemplifies" (Wright 513). Max goes on to argue, "But if we say that we must kill him, then let us have the courage and honesty to say: 'Let us kill them all. They are not human. There's no room for them'… whether this boy lives or dies, the marked-off ghettoes where this boy lived will remain" (Wright 513). According to Lambert, "In his own violent struggles against entrapment and scarcity as well as fear and disgust, Bigger takes on a kind of rat-ness that transforms him into a subject of critical empathy, rather than an object of pity or fear" and it is Boris Max who attempts to inspire this empathy by pointing out the less than human status that oppressed African Americans and exemplified the extreme oppression which created these violent capabilities in Bigger (79). In the first scene of the novel, Wright tells us that, "A huge black rat squealed and leaped at Bigger's trouser-leg and snagged it in his teeth, hanging on" (6). Bigger is not rid of the rat after kicking it free, he must dodge it yet again when it leaps to attack a second time. When Bigger finally kills the rat, he does so in a way that is unnecessarily violent and revolting: "He kicked the splintered box out of the way and the flat black body of the rat lay exposed, its two long yellow tusks showing distinctly. Bigger took a shoe and pounded the rat's head, crushing it, cursing hysterically: 'You sonofabitch'" (Wright 7). Though we don't feel empathy for the rat, as it is not quite human, Bigger's blind rage and violence toward the rat is echoed back to him later on in the novel by the white's outrage at him for having killed Mary (Lambert 83). Just as Bigger's slaughter of the rodent pest is unnecessarily violent, so too was the mob who wanted to lynch Bigger for his murder of Mary before giving him the chance of a civilized trial by jury. In this way, Bigger finds himself in a similar situation to the rat due to the analogous fright and repugnance that his accusers have for him (Lambert 82). We see the other side of Wright's social experiment and the social attitudes that kept

negroes oppressed in the reaction from the mob who wants to slaughter Bigger like an animal. Max meets this violent prejudice by attempting to "de-exoticize Bigger as something alien or other to the American environment and dream" (Lambert 452). Max attempts to de-exoticize Bigger by comparing Bigger's actions to early American immigrants, coming "from lands where their personalities had been denied," and by stating that prison "holds advantages for him that a life of freedom never had" (513). In the end white prejudice proves superior to Max's empathetic pleas as Bigger is put to death for his crimes.

Though Bigger Thomas does not have the same small size as the sneaky rodent he encounters, Bigger consistently finds himself crammed into tight, rundown spaces, squashed as far into the margins and away from white civilization as possible. As critic Lawrence Buell states, Wright illustrates the environmental portrayals of urban blight "through the sparsely described and interchangeable enclosed spaces Bigger continually finds himself trapped in as well as through the symbol-oriented events like Bigger's encounter with the rat in the opening pages of the novel" (qtd. in Lambert 77). Though Bigger and his family all share the same cramped space, this confined space does not generate intimacy, as the shame of their poverty has Bigger "holding them with an attitude of iron reserve" (Wright 4). After the hype of the rat scare in the first scene fades, the narrator tells readers that Bigger lived with his family "behind a wall, a curtain. He knew that the moment he allowed what his life meant to enter fully into his consciousness, he would either kill himself or someone else" (Wright 4). Though Bigger is able to take care of the family's pesky rat problem, the violent death of the rat changes little, if nothing, concerning the state of his living conditions, just as his life isn't much changed by the murder of Mary. It is in this first emergence of the rat that Bigger learns he is so far entrenched in poverty that he shall never be able to rise-above his current conditions. Later, Bigger reiterates the same sentiments concerning his family, no doubt a result of their suffocating impoverished living conditions, stating, "He wanted to wave his hand and blot them out. They were always too close to him, so close that he could never have any way of his own"

(Wright 124). The disparity between white and black Chicago is easily grasped when we contrast Bigger's rat infested reality with the Dalton's way of life. When speaking of his home, Bigger states that it is much different than Dalton's home as: "here all slept in one room", while at Dalton's he would have "a room for himself alone"; at home he can smell food cooking, while "one could not smell food cooking in Dalton's home" and "pots could not be heard rattling all over the house" (Wright 131). Of the Dalton's home, Bigger says, "Each person lived in one room and had a little world of his own" (Wright 131). Of his own home, Bigger says, "He hated this room and all the people in it, including himself. Why did he and his folks have to live like this. What had they ever done?" (131).

Not only do Bigger and the rat share the environment of the marginalized urban ghetto, but the two also share what Lambert refers to as "potential transgressive abilities"; a mobility across socially imposed boundaries (Lambert 77). Though Bigger lives in his socially prescribed section of the city, his employment provides him the opportunity to cross boundaries in ways that other characters in the novel are not able. Besides Bessie, Bigger is the only black character who has business in the rich white section of the city. Likewise, the white characters seem ignorant of the conditions of the Black Belt, which Mary Dalton emphasizes when she tells Bigger that she wants to see how his people live. Mary states, "we know so little about each other… Never in my life have I been inside a Negro home" (Wright 88). As Lambert states in his 2016 article, the "rat not only reflects the economic squalor of Bigger and his family, it also takes on a life of its own that pushes against the boundaries of normalcy and strangeness" (80). As Edward Kearns addresses in his 1971 article, "The 'Fate' Section of '*Native Son*'", Bigger "was nothing but a symbol to Mary - the oppressed negro, the new recruit, her first personal chauffeur to the black world" (Kearns 149). Bigger's role as a chauffeur highlights both his limitations and mobility. Though Bigger drives a car for a living, he would never be financially able to own his own. Transportation and transportation limitations are a big theme throughout the novel. This theme is expressed early in the novel in a

conversation between Bigger and his friend Gus. Bigger tells Gus, "I could fly a plane if I had a chance", to which Gus retorts, "If you wasn't black and if you had some money and if they'd let you go to that aviation school, you could fly a plane" (Wright 20). In this instance we see that Bigger does not have the same social mobility that white people have, as whites were allowed in aviation school but not blacks. Though Bigger is aware of the discriminatory aspects limiting his mobility and means of transportation, Bigger possesses a transgressive mobility to travel between the white and black worlds, a characteristic of which no other character in the novel is capable. Though Bigger cannot fly a plane or own his own car, like a rat, Bigger possesses his own personal means of transportation, his own feet. Animals, such as the rat, are their own and only personal vessel of transportation. Though Bigger cannot live outside the Black Belt due to social restrictions, his employment with the Daltons gains him mobility into the white section of town, but after his guilt in Mary Dalton's murder is discovered, the space he can occupy dwindles further and further as his search party closes in and he is eventually caught like a rat in a trap (Lambert 83).

In Art Spiegelman's 1980 graphic novel *Maus*, the Jewish mice are constantly in avoidance of and hiding deep within the margins of society from the Nazi felines, while also avoiding and trying to camouflage themselves as Polish pigs. Similarly Wright's protagonist Bigger Thomas employs marginalized hiding and avoidance to escape police capture. Spiegelman's use of animal cartoon characters rather than realistic human characters was more than just an artistic and symbolic choice, however. As author and comic artist Scott McCloud states, "Storytellers in all media know that the sure indicator of audience involvement is the degree to which the audience identifies with a story's characters," and Spiegelman needed his audience to identify with this Holocaust narrative in order to shed a new light onto the Holocaust in a way that had not been done before (42). In his 1994 *The Invisible Art Understanding Comics*, Scott McCloud explores cartooning, or "amplification through simplification" as he calls it, diving into the question of why audiences would respond to an animated image as much or more than a realistic one (30). McCloud dives into the psychology

between cartoons and viewers stating: "When we abstract an image through cartooning, we're not so much eliminating details as we are focusing on specific details. By stripping down an image to its essential meaning; an artist can amplify that meaning in a way that realistic art can't" (30). In her 2009 article "Tailing Violence: Comics Narrative, Gender, and the Father-Tale in Art Spiegelman's *Maus*," author Alison Mandaville too comments on Spiegelman's use of cartooning in this Holocaust narrative. Using mice to represent Jews, Mandaville argues, enhances the universality of the story, quoting scholar Jeanne C. Ewert in that, with the use of cartoon characters, "there is more room, literally, for the reader to fill the character with her own subjectivity" (qtd. in Mandaville 224). On the universality of the cartoon, McCloud supports Mandaville's insights on *Maus's* animal caricatures, explaining: "the more cartoony a face is… the more people it could be said to describe… When you look at a photo or realistic drawing, you will see it as the face of another. But when you enter the world of the cartoon- you can see yourself" (30-36). In this way, readers who never experienced the Holocaust can feel as though they are journeying through the enormity of Nazi Europe alongside Spiegelman's rats. McCloud elaborates into the significance of cartooning further, stating:

> The cartoon is a vacuum into which our identity and awareness are pulled… an empty shell that we inhabit which enables us to travel into another realm. We don't just observe the cartoon, we become it… Without cartooning- we're far too aware of the messenger to fully receive the message. Who I am is irrelevant, I'm just a little piece of you? But if who I am matters less, maybe what I say will matter more (36-37).

As an experienced comic illustrator and author, Spiegelman is no rookie to the power of animated images and audiences' identification with them. In his characterization of his mice, Spiegelman explains, "the mouse heads are masks, virtually blank, like Little Orphan Annie's eye-balls— a white screen the reader can project on" (qtd. in Ewert 97). *Maus's* cartooned character brings his father's Holocaust narrative to life in a way that realistic portrayals could not. Readers can see Spiegelman's

choice behind the rat characterization of the Jews when looking at the epigraph of *Maus I*, in which Spiegelman quotes Adolf Hitler that, "The Jews are undoubtedly a race, but they are not human" (I, 4). Throughout the novel, readers can see the nonhuman vermin status assigned to Jews, as well as their marginalization, when examining the necessity of cramming themselves into marginalized spaces to hide from Nazi capture, and the treatment of those in concentration camps such as Auschwitz.

Throughout the novel, the Jewish mice shove themselves into makeshift bunkers, slums and garbage constrictive spaces, and are shoved on top of each other into concentration camps, not conducive to human life. In the chapter entitled "Mouse Trap," Vladek visits his cousin Miloch who is hiding in a garbage chute. Gazing into the garbage chute, Vladek tells Artie, "The conditions how Miloch was living— You couldn't believe" (I.153). "Inside this garbage hole was here separated a tiny space- Maybe only 5 feet by 6 feet…. I looked down only for a second, but in there was living Miloch, his wife and their 3-years old boy," Vladek continues (I.153). "How can you LIVE there? You must be freezing!", Vladek asks Miloch. Miloch replies, "We have no choice. At least our bunker is underground. And the decomposing garbage gives some heat" (I.153). Though the characters are portrayed as rodents, readers come to know them as people, as Spiegelman is retelling his father's own experiences during the Holocaust. *Maus* is a real-life horror story with Jews forced to live alongside garbage like rats.

After being moved to the ghettos, Vladek hears from a cousin that they are planning to deport all the Jews to the concentration camps. In order to avoid this, a fellow Jew tells Vladek that he, his wife and his nephew can hide in a bunker that had been created behind a pile of shoes (I, 121). While crawling through the tunnel, Haskel and Vladek look like rats crawling through a rat hole in the wall of a home, with the door cut into the rounded shape of a rat hole leading into the bunker (Fig. 1) (I, 121). In order to avoid deportation, twelve Jews crammed themselves into this bunker, hiding from Nazi officers. The asphyxiating bunker situations throughout the novel are

reminiscent of Bigger Thomas's cramped, rat infested living situation in *Native Son*. It is in this packed bunker scene that the starving Jews chew on chunks of wood to feel as though they are eating food (I,123). After leaving the bunker, Vladek and his wife Anja hide in Mrs. Kawka's barn with her cow (I,140). During this time, Jews such as Anja and Vladek Spiegelman had to move deep into the margins into spaces designed for animals, which is fitting as Jew's were viewed as less than human and seen as unfit to occupy civilized spaces. After they can no longer hide in Kawka's barn, Anja and Vladek stay in an underground cellar full of rats, which induces a fear in Anja, who is also a rat in this animated graphic novel (Fig. 2) (I, 147). The true humanness of the rodent Jews in the novel comes through as Miles Orvell points out in his 1992 "Writing Posthistorically: Krazy Kat, *Maus*, and the Contemporary Fiction Cartoon" as Anja's fear of the rats "somehow seems sensible to the reader" (121). Orvell states that "In contrast to these ugly rodents" depicted in this scene, "Jew mice are drawn with subtlety and economy – postures and expressions suggesting vividly and movingly their human feelings" (121). Like Wright, Spiegelman was also inspired by lab rats in scientific experimentation, so much so that Orvell reports an early version of chapter 3 "included a reproduction of a 1937 LIFE magazine featuring lab rats huddled in a helpless mass" (121). Like with the rats in the underground cellar, Orvell comments that "After coming to 'know' the mice of *Maus*, it is shocking to see these lab mice, so 'dumb'- looking and expressionless, such faceless victims… one sees them without their 'humanity'" (Orvell 121). Somehow, Spiegelman is able to create a cognitive dissonance in his audience between actual rats and his Jewish rat characters, enhancing their humanity despite the animal status that both Nazi society and between the lab rats that once graced the pages of an original Chapter 3. In these instances we see that Spiegelman is successful in inspiring his audience to fill his animated vermin with his or her own subjectivity, a crucial and enchanting element of this Holocaust narrative.

Fig. 1. MAUS I, pg. 121. By Art Spiegelman. © 1992

Fig. 2 MAUS I, pg. 147. By Art Spiegelman. © 1992

Spiegelman does not only write about the loss of the Jew's status as human, but also depicts this visually. Mirroring Mandaville's observation that throughout the novel the tail is a mark of Jewishness, Jeanne C. Ewert, author of the 2000 article "Reading Visual Narrative: Art Spiegelman's *Maus*" dives deeper into the significance of tails, remarking that in the beginning of his narrative, Vladek as well as future wife Anja, and the children of the novel, are drawn with tails (98). As the story progresses from Vladek's days as the handsome "Sheik" bachelor, to increased Nazi control, with the implementation of the German's "final solution", fewer characters are depicted with tails (Ewert 98). Ewert explains this stating, "Midway through Volume I, tails are used only to mark those mice at risk of being caught and "exterminated": Anja, when she hides the illegal papers for

the Communist underground, has an obvious tail (I,28) and she has one again in the last pages of Volume I when she and Vladek try desperately to evade arrest" (100). Ewert explains that children are illustrated with tails throughout the novel, as they are "less able to recognize their danger and dissemble" (100). "But the children have all been annihilated by midway through Volume I, and except for the few instances cited above, the adult mice are untailed, unmarked, once again universal," Ewert continues (100). She remarks that this theme continues into Volume II as "not a single mouse has a tail, not even when they are drawn naked for inspection in the camps" (II,26) (100). None of Spiegelman's illustrations in the concentration camps depict the mice with tails, "the telltale marking of the Jews," as in Spiegelman's depiction of the camps there is a "deliberate refusal of racial, cultural difference" (100). Though Nazi society paid close attention to these racial and cultural differences, forcing Jews to wear silver stars of David for easy identification and discrimination, after separating undesirable minorities such as the Jews from the general population and removing them to camps, they cut their ties to civilization, and therefore, did not need to recognize their humanity or any cultural differences between prisoners. This "deliberate refusal of racial, cultural difference" is best-depicted in the scene when Vladek tells of a prisoner in Auschwitz who cries to the guards that he is not a Jew, stating that his son is a German soldier and that he has medals from the Kaiser (qtd. in Ewert 101). When Artie inquires whether this said prisoner was in fact Jewish, Vladek answers, "who knows. For the Germans, this guy was Jewish," fitting in with Sartre's statement in *Anti-Semite and Jew*, "a Jew is someone whom others call a Jew" (qtd in Ewert 101). Ewert positions that an evolution takes place in Artie, concerning his own Jewish identity. She comments that, "By the time he begins to depict the camps in Volume II, he is outraged not just that Jews died in the Holocaust, but that anyone did" (101).

Despite the animalistic depictions and statuses of the characters in the novel, evolutions take place in the character's animalistic caricatures, as well as deep within the characters' psyche. In her article, Ewert draws readers' attention to a crucial evolution that takes place for Vladek and

Artie. As Ewert remarks, on Pantheon's cover for *Maus* I, Anja and Vladek are depicted crouched down in hiding, with Vladek unable to hide his tail, or "the mark of the Jew," as he was able at various points throughout the text (98). She further points out that in the beginning of their visits, Artie Spiegelman doesn't have a tail, but acquires one the more he hears about his father's story, as he identifies with his martyred family more and more through the stories as the novel progresses, rather than feeling he can never be a real Jew since he was not present during a defining moment of historical genocide (Ewert 98). Despite criticism landing *Maus* on the banned book list, such as Harvey Pekar's attack on *Maus's* insulting characterizations, the animal caricatures were no kitschy or lighthearted task for Spiegelman. Alison Mandaville disagrees with the criticism of unflattering animalistic portrayal of the characters in *Maus,* highlighting the importance of these characterizations, stating that, "By portraying groups as cartoon stereotypes, not only does the text explicitly make visible these powerful narratives ordering groups of people, but also, each time individual characters act in a manner contrary to or in excess of their stereotyped animal shape, it becomes startling" (227).

Spiegelman takes his characterizations seriously. So seriously, in fact, that at one point in the novel, Artie breaks the fourth wall between himself and readers about his struggle in identifying his characters, discussing his dilemma in the portrayal of his wife, a Frenchwoman who converted to Judaism, deciding whether she should be portrayed as a French frog, or a fellow mouse (Ewert 94). The most impactful example, however, comes from Artie's struggle with his own identity. As a post-Holocaust Jew, readers see Artie's struggles to identify with his own heritage best in "Time Flies," perhaps the most discussed frame of the novel amongst critics. Spiegelman plays with an unconventional structure and chronology throughout the novel, but particularly in the scene entitled "Time Flies," in which he takes his animal symbolism and breaking of the fourth wall a step further. In this frame, the tailless Spiegelman depicts himself as a human in a mouse mask, discussing the seemingly unrelated events such as his wife's pregnancy, the composition of *Maus*,

his father's death, his mother's suicide and the death of hundreds of thousands of Jews in Auschwitz (Mandaville 222). Beneath the thought bubbles floating above Artie's head in the frames of him seated working away at his writing desk, lie a pile of naked and emaciated mouse bodies of Holocaust victims with flies raising up throughout the frames (Mandaville 222). Though some of the faces in this pile of bodies are visible, the majority are not, and these are representative of the lives lost in vain and the stories which we will never know. As Mandaville states, "Facing the success he has built upon this pile of bodies, Artie says (tragic-comically), 'Lately I've been feeling depressed'" (222). According to Mandaville, this "defies the neat narrative chronology, illustrating the breakdown of narrative separation of past and present. Buzzing about the artist's head, about the pile of bodies, the flies sensibly remind him of the rotting stench of historical violence upon which he seems to have built his success" (222). As Ewert states of "Time Flies," "If the reader has not had the sense yet that the 'mousiness' of the characters is only a veneer that could be pulled away at any moment to reveal their essential humanity, she will here" (Ewert 94). On Spiegelman's stylistic choices, Ewert further states, "Spiegelman…. Then, move(s) towards a universality of character. At the same time, however, he can't afford to let his reader forget that his family was victimized because they shared very specific racial and cultural traits" (94). Spiegelman's methodology is driven by his desire to create both a universality within the narrative that all readers can identify with, and, as Ewert again states "a specificity of historical and Jewish fact" (94). Like with the marginalization, discrimination, and oppression that Bigger Thomas faces in Wright's *Native Son*, Spiegelman needs his audience to understand that his family was treated this way, specifically because of their ethnicity, but also needs his audience to feel a connection to the characters as humans, despite social attitudes and the superficial forces which fueled Jewish oppression, marginalization and genocide. Though Spiegelman has been accused by some of creating an unfavorable representation of his father, he too has a reason behind his honest, and critical portrayal of him. Spiegelman states, "If only admirable people were shown to have survived, then

the implicit moral would have been that only admirable people deserved to survive, as opposed to the fact that people deserved to survive" (qtd. in Ewert 102). This theme is huge with Wright's *Native Son* as well, as Wright tries to shine a light unto the unfair marginalized conditions that Bigger Thomas had to live under, which may have played a part in his murders.

CHAPTER 3: VISUALIZATION

The power in both Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and Richard Wright's *Native Son* are their ability to pull the stories of the marginalized out of the shadows and into the light. The authors' visualizations of racial and ethnic marginalization and oppression in these texts are crucial, as still today there are people who deny the Holocaust happened and people who think that African American oppression ended with the abolition of slavery, 75 years before the publication of *Native Son*. Wright approaches visualization using the motif of blindness, shedding light on his characters' blindness as well as his readers', while Spiegelman approaches visualization in a more literal way in *Maus*, using comic illustrations to show the events that his father experienced during the Holocaust so that readers can experience the world of Nazi Europe before their very eyes. Bigger's own character development parallels readers' discovery of the harsh realities in the Chicago Black Belt. *Native Son* helps readers to visualize 1930s black Chicago through internal monologues, themes of blindness, and examples of irony. Looking at Bigger's mental state during daily realities, rather than large scale events, aides readers in visualizing Bigger's burden as a black man in the Chicago ghetto, which fosters an empathy for him despite his heinous crimes. Spiegelman reinvents his father's world and composes the graphic novel under the philosophy that seeing is believing. Spiegelman's graphics show readers just how inescapable the Nazi regime was, stretching further and further into the margins until there was no escape. On his motive for his comic depiction of his father's Holocaust novel, Spiegelman states, "Instead of making comics into a narcotic, I'm trying to make comics that can wake you up, like caffeine, comics that get you back in touch with things that are happening around you" (qtd. in Chute 214). The power of both *Native Son* and *Maus* lie in readers' experience of the novels. We feel almost as if we are going through the experiences with the characters of these works, particularly thanks to *Maus*'s illustrations, enhancing our understanding.

Though the text in *Maus* is crucial to understanding the marginalization and oppression of Jews in Nazi Europe that protagonist Vladek Spiegelman encountered, if a picture is worth a

thousand words, *Maus*'s illustrations are worth 11 million, the number of Jews that historians estimate died in the Holocaust, most of whom whose experiences were forever silenced. In his *The Invisible Art Understanding Comics*, author Scott McCloud investigates the visual power of the graphic novel, exploring how the human mind interprets the language of comics. In his expedition into finding a working definition for the art-form of comics, McCloud turns to insights from master comics artist Will Eisner (5). Elaborating on Eisner's ideas, McCloud defines comics as: "Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence intended to convey information and/ or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer" (McCloud 20). McCloud describes the effect of graphic novels, such as *Maus*, on enhancing the believability of narratives with the following scenario:

> When I was very young, I had a recurrent daydream that the whole world was just a show put on for my benefit, that unless I was present to see things, they just ceased to exist… Later in life, I found others who had similar daydreams as children. None of us really believed these theories, but we had all been fascinated by the fact that they could not be disproved. Even today, as I write and draw this panel, I have no guarantee that anything exists outside of what my five senses report to me…. I've never been to Morocco, but I take it on faith that there is a Morocco. As infants, were unable to commit that act of faith. If we can't see it, hear it, taste it, or touch it, it isn't there. The game of Peek-a-boo plays on this idea. Gradually, we all learn that even though the sight of mommy comes and goes, mommy remains. This phenomenon of observing the parts but perceiving the whole is called closure (60-62).

This excerpt from *The Invisible Art Understanding Comics* highlights the significance of comics, especially in narrating large-scale historic tragedies. If seeing is believing, Spiegelman's *Maus* helps readers understand what the Holocaust was like for Jews such as Vladek Spiegelman on both a visual and textual level, enhancing reader's believability of stories. Like in McCloud's analogy that though he has never been to Morocco, but takes it "on faith that there is a Morocco," Spiegelman

gives readers more to go on than just blind faith; he gives them an aesthetic experience of something that would otherwise be too large a scale to understand (61). In *Maus*, Spiegelman visually transports us to Nazi Europe, illustrating for readers exactly what Vladek Spiegelman saw during this time, making us as readers feel as though we are a part of the events of Vladek's time and world, without having physically been there. Spiegelman's comic illustrations open readers' blind eyes to his father's experiences in a way that text alone could not. Chute notes the significance of Vladek beginning his tale on an exercise bike, stating, "You enter into the past for the first time through that wheel" (105). Vladek is moving but is going nowhere, yet as readers we too are transported into a visually depicted time and space not otherwise available, so that we can experience the world just as he did all those years ago.

It is the illustrations in *Maus* that take the text a step further. We know that Jews during the Holocaust were assigned a status of less than human, but it isn't until we see Miloch hiding in his garbage hole just how animalistically outside of the margins that the Jews of the Holocaust had to live in order to survive (Fig. 3). In an earlier scene, Vladek explains the family's bunker in Srodula, Poland. When Artie is surprised to learn that his parents hid in a bunker, Vladek explains, "The Germans started to grab out anybody if he had papers or not. Therefore, I arranged for us a very good hiding spot- in our cellar, where it was coal storage" (I.110). When his verbal description fails him, Vladek tells Artie, "Show to me your pencil and I can EXPLAIN you… such things it's good to know EXACTLY how was it- Just in case" (I.110) (Fig. 4). Vladek highlights the power of images to express what words alone cannot. Vladek takes Artie's pencil and visibly sketches out the bunker that the family shared, giving readers a visual representation of just how far into the margins that Jews during this time were pushed, an understanding which could not be produced by words alone. In his sketch, Vladek explains, "In the kitchen was a coal cabinet maybe 4 foot wide. Inside I made a hole to go down to the cellar. And there we made a brick wall filled high with coal. Behind this wall we could be a little safe" (I.110). Vladek also says that there were worms in the bunker (I.111).

Jewish marginalization had reached such an extreme, that Jews had to resort to hiding in garbage chutes and underground bunkers, amongst rats and worms.

Perhaps the most powerful visual scene in *Maus* occurs when Anja and Vladek have just escaped a Polish ghetto, walking on a swastika shaped path, which is white against the shaded and shadowy background in which everything else falls (I.125)(Fig. 5). They are trying to escape the Nazis, but the range of Nazi power is presented beautifully in this scene when Vladek asks, "But where to go?" Mandaville emphasizes just how crucial this scene is by stating that, "Through cartoon, this image reinforces the material impact of Nazi ideology as no photo-realistic landscape could… there is no place where their existence is anything but violently conditional and circumscribed…." (238). It is the visualization of this scene that we see just how desperate Jews were in their unfeasible search for a place to hide in the shadows from the Nazi regime. Just as the space Wright's Bigger Thomas can occupy dwindles further and further as police and volunteers close in, illustrated by the growth of the shaded section of a map in a local newspaper, this illustration shows that "Nazi violence is the narrative promise of every physical step the characters take" (Mandaville 238). Readers see that Bigger is trapped in his racist society through a second-hand visual account, as Bigger views the shaded map, showing the section police had searched in his pursuit, which truly highlights that he has nowhere else to go. While this illustration shows the extremity of Nazi control, the morning after he goes on the run, Bigger learns from the newspaper that, "He could not leave Chicago; all roads were blocked, and all trains, buses and autos were being stopped and searched," regretfully realizing that "it would have been much better if he had tried to leave town at once" (Wright 310). After looking at a shaded black-and-white map of the South Side displaying areas searched and to be searched, Bigger came to the conclusion that, "He was trapped" (Wright 310). Bigger mimics Vladek and Anja's sentiments asking, "But where could he go? Empty buildings would serve only as long as he stayed within the white portion of the map, and the white portion was shrinking rapidly" (Wright 310). Though Wright does not illustrate this map for

readers, Wright introduces Bigger Thomas to a tangible and visual piece of evidence to highlight just how ensnared Bigger is by the forces that seek to capture him.

Fig. 3. MAUS I, pg. 110. By Art Spiegelman. © 1992

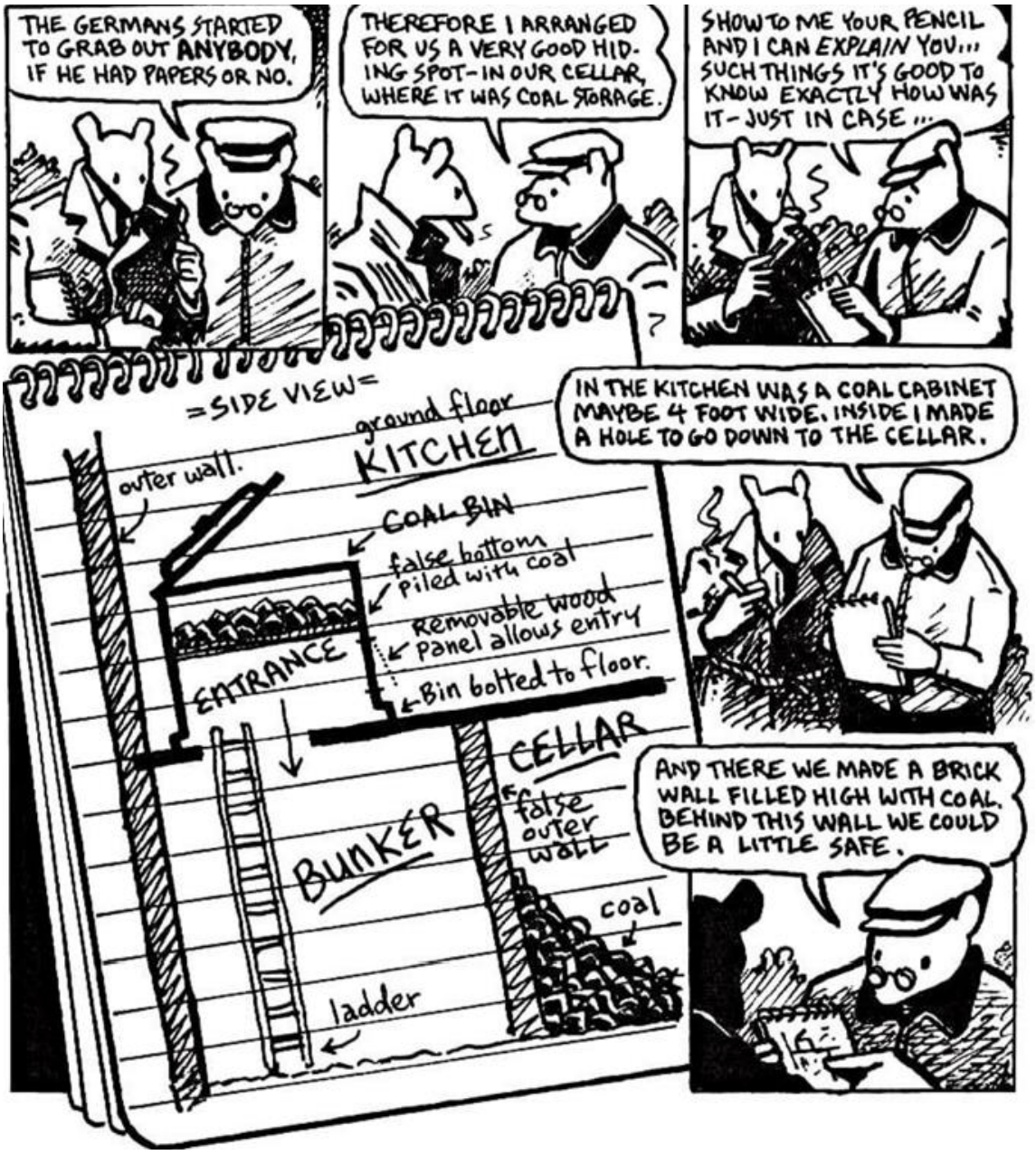

Fig. 4. MAUS I, pg. 153. By Art Spiegelman. © 1992

Fig. 5. MAUS I, pg. 125. By Art Spiegelman. © 1992

Though Richard Wright's *Native Son* does not have the same visual tangibility for readers as Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, as it is not a graphic novel, Wright artfully employs motifs to make up for this lack of visual imagery in explaining the severity of African American marginalization and oppression in 1930s Chicago. As Aaron Rosenberg points out in his 2012 article "Living for the City: Urban Displacement and Incarceration in Wright's '*Native Son*' and Rajabu's "*Masudi,*" Wright shows us just how restrictive and asphyxiating urban Chicago is to African Americans during the 1930s through the employment of Bigger's internal monologues, themes of blindness, and examples of irony (Rosenberg 43). According to Rosenberg, Wright's internal monologues dive deeper into Bigger's mental state, helping the reader "create a web of empathetic responses which focus upon Bigger, despite the heinous crimes he has committed" (43). Rosenberg elaborates, further stating,

"Wright's use of internal monologue allows readers to experience the thoughts and emotions of a character whose development closely parallels our own discovery of the brutal realities of life in Black Chicago" (43). Here, Rosenberg is commenting on the eye-opening power of *Native Son* to the marginalized realities, which a large percentage of his readers were not aware. Like *Maus*, readers experience the truths of the protagonists' worlds alongside the characters, something, which like the Holocaust, could be hard for readers to grasp the enormity of, otherwise. While on the run to escape police capture, readers see the true living conditions of Bigger and his people and how few options African Americans during this time truly had in life. In his 1971 article, "The 'Fate' Section of "*Native Son,*'" Edward Kerns points out Wright's use of irony and blindness to tell the crippling complexities of life for African Americans living in the margins, and how social devices of control backfired immensely on whites. On the irony of *Native Son*, Kearns states:

> The characters' inability to deal with events concretely and their preference for illusions and stereotypes over facts and human beings is the source of irony when Bigger accidentally kills a girl who wishes to help him, when his ransom note works because those for who it is intended are as naïve toward "the Reds" as he, and when Bigger is almost saved by acting as the whites expect him to act (that is by becoming his own stereotype). (147)

When speaking of Bigger behaving as the whites expected him to act, Kearns is referring to the change in Bigger's behavior after killing Mary, in which he learns to play a role that satisfies white stereotypes about blacks, deflecting suspicion away from his guilt. A huge irony lies in the fact that by breaking the law in such an extreme and violent way, for the first time, Bigger finds freedom. Another ironic instance comes from Mrs. Dalton. It is interesting that Wright chooses the only physically blind character in the novel to have a "very deep interest in colored people" (Wright 59). Even though Mrs. Dalton cannot see Bigger's skin color, she still understands the social inequality between blacks and whites. The blind Mrs. Dalton wants to help Bigger and his kind, by sending him to night school, which once again highlights the limitations placed on African Americans who could

not attend college with the whites during the day, but only after dark. When the Dalton's visit Bigger in jail, Mr. Dalton states, "I tried to help him," while Mrs. Dalton interjects, "We wanted to send him to school" (Wright 372). Max replies to the Dalton's, "But those things don't touch the fundamental problem involved here. This boy comes from an oppressed people. Even if he's done wrong, we must take that into consideration" (Wright 372). To this statement, Mr. Dalton states that Bigger's actions will not "influence his relations with the Negro people," stating, "Why only today I sent a dozen ping-pong tables to the South Side Boy's Club…" (372). Max responds to Mr. Dalton, "This boy and millions like him want a meaningful life, not ping-pong… If you felt that millions of others experienced life as deeply as you, but differently, you'd see that what you're doing doesn't help" (373). Though Mr. Dalton makes noble efforts to help the Negro community, he still charges Negro renters more than he does his white clients, and only rents to them in the ghettoized South Side of town, remaining blind to the fact that ping-pong tables and the employment of black chauffeurs is not doing enough to change fundamental human rights issues within the black community. If Bigger experienced oppression and marginalization just as other African Americans during this time did, then we can assume that many whites made sympathetic, yet blind efforts toward the progression of African Americans that did not lead to meaningful change, like Mr. Dalton.

Visually, through Bigger, we are shown numerous examples of irony and blindness. Another instance of irony comes from Buckley, the Defense Attorney which will later prosecute Bigger. Buckley's billboard reads, "If you break the law, you can't win," however, as Kearns points out, voting for Buckley won Bigger $5.00 in two different elections in which he wasn't even old enough to vote (147). When Bigger steals a newspaper, he reads that Southerners are encouraging the use of scare tactics and fear to keep African Americans in their place, stating, "We have found that the injection of an element of constant fear has aided us greatly in handling the problem" (qtd. in Kearns 148). We know that this is untrue, however, as both Mary and Bessie's murders are

committed from fear and self-contempt (Kearns 148). Likewise, Kearns states that "the white world counts heavily on Bigger's fear and illusions of himself to force him to adapt to the realities of a racist social structure and forswear destructive behavior," however, while fear prevents him from robbing Blum's, it leads him to kill Mary Dalton because, as Kearns again states, "the white world's fundamental assumptions about the means of 'control' is wrong" (148). Though fear does, in some cases lead to conformity, we see that was not the case for Bigger when he states that, "He did not feel sorry for Mary… he felt that his murder of her was more than amply justified by the fear and shame she had made him feel" (Wright 142). Bigger's fear caused him to depersonalize whites, transforming them into non-human, yet powerful beings. This depersonalization is expressed when Bigger states that Mary "was not real to him, not a human being," with Wright continuing that, "To Bigger and his kind, white people were not really people; they were a sort of great natural force, like a stormy sky looming overhead" (142). The imbalance of power between whites and blacks leads Bigger to view whites as something more powerful than humans, but in this way, he is not able to empathize with them as he is members of his own race, making the murder of a white woman not seem like murder at all to him.

Blindness effects every character in *Native Son.* When Bigger first enters the Dalton's house, he "felt strangely blind" (Wright 48). After murdering Mary, however, Bigger's perspective switches from his own blindness to everyone else's, which is evident in Bigger's statement that, "They were simply blind people, blind like his mother, his brother, his sister, Peggy Britten, Jan, Mr. Dalton and the sightless Mrs. Dalton and the quiet empty houses their black gaping windows" (qtd. in Kearns 154). Bigger gains sight throughout the novel, a transformation which can be contributed to Mary Dalton's Communist boyfriend Jan Erlone. As Wright states, "He saw Jan as though someone had performed an operation upon his eyes, or as though someone had snatched a deforming mask from Jan's face" (Wright 268). It is after Bigger's jail cell conversation with Jan, that his eyes are first opened to the fact that white people are people, which is when he first begins to accept the moral

weight of Mary's murder. Likewise, Bigger is blind to the fact that Mary Dalton was trying to help him, something which his attorney Boris Max brings to his attention (Brivic 239). Bigger, accepting that the murder of Mary Dalton must have resulted from a misunderstanding on both sides, states, "White folks and black folks is strangers. We don't know what each other is thinking," enhancing Wright's blindness motif even further (qtd. in Brivic 241). Wright best explains Bigger's motive in the accidental murder of Mary Dalton, when he states that Bigger, "closed his eyes and struck out blindly, hitting what or whom he could, not looking or caring what or who hit back" (Wright 303). Mary and Jan are blind to the fact that the problems for blacks are much worse than they'd ever imagined. They attempt to gaze into the shadowy, marginalized world with only a flashlight, while those like Bigger, who called the cramped shadows of society home, had eyes that had adjusted to the dark for so long that their reaction to the light was that blinding, stinging sensation which occurs when the lights are turned on to awaken a sleeping individual. Max experiences this same sensory overloading experience in he and Bigger's dark, last meeting before Bigger enters into the ever-darker world of death. Max cannot look at Bigger as he leaves his cell for the last time on the last page of the novel, as he is afraid that he will never unsee the true horror of what's in the dark, realizing the problem is more personal, at least to Bigger, and scarier than he'd ever imagined. "Like a blind man," Max "felt for the door, keeping his face averted," as he must adjust from the darkness that is Bigger's life and death in a cramped cell (Wright 392). As Bigger points out, however, Bigger's life was spent in one cramped cell or another, as he states, "he saw a black sprawling prison full of tiny black cells in which people lived;… no one could go from cell to cell and there were …yells of suffering and nobody could hear them, for the walls were thick and darkness was everywhere. Why were there so many cells in the world?" (Wright 457). Max's averted eyes parallel the opening of the book where Bigger and his younger brother Buddy must avert their eyes while their mother and sister dress (Brivic 243). As Brivic states, "it is clear that Wright intentionally makes the averted eyes of the last page recall those of the first. The shame and inhumanity which

white America has visited on black people are coming back on it" (Brivic 244). As Kearns states, "The theme of blindness follows through to the end of the novel, with Bigger's attorney Boris Max groping his way out of Bigger's cell like a blind man" (154). As readers, we enter into the novel as blind Daltons, and set the novel down feeling that something should have been done to change things for Bigger Thomas, before the brutal murders.

It is the visualizations that take these texts a step further. On *Maus*, Alison Mandaville states, "*Maus* is a unique text because it employs a graphic vision using the 'visual terrain' of *Maus* to envision the graphic depiction of mediation itself encouraging a more complete understanding of the phenomenon of post memory and of the blind areas created by broad historical narratives" (217). The problem with historical narratives is that they often take a widescale approach in the narration of historical events, sticking to facts, while ignoring individual's everyday experiences, which is too large of a scale for readers to really grasp. Both *Native Son* and *Maus* break away from this model. Sure, Vladek Spiegelman's experience is individual and therefore cannot ever fairly represent all Jew's experience of the Holocaust, just as Bigger Thomas's experience of 1930s racially segregated Chicago cannot ever fully express the experiences of every black man in Chicago. Through the well-rounded, yet individualized perspectives of everyday life during racially and ethnically charged times in which the novels are set, readers can focus on bigger themes, such as oppression, animal like treatment of minorities, and the silencing marginalization that all members of their race and ethnicity experienced, rather than individualized differences of other's experiences of less frequent global events. This gives these texts a power that broad historical narratives do not possess. *Maus* and *Native Son* open readers' eyes to events and living conditions that otherwise would remain either unknown or be on too large of a scale for readers to connect with. In this way, these texts make disputed and debated issues, such as African American oppression and the Holocaust, real to readers. *Maus* gives readers an experience, proclaiming that the Holocaust is real, and this is what it looked like, at least to

Vladek Spiegelman, while *Native Son* shows readers racial segregation and oppression through Bigger Thomas's eyes. For those who accept the validity of the Holocaust, there is an understanding that Jews were treated like animals, but it isn't until we see Jews living amongst garbage that we understand the severity of the marginalization and oppression they faced.

CHAPTER 4: SHADOW IMAGERY

One way that visualization is further implemented in both *Maus* and *Native Son* is through their use of shadow imagery, used in both texts to represent the oppression of marginalized stories. In the case of *Native Son*, violence and crime brought Bigger Thomas's narrative out of the shadows, making him a public spectacle, while so many stories like Bigger's remained untold. For *Maus's* Vladek Spiegelman, it is his survival of Nazi violence and genocide, along with the composition and completion of *Maus*, that brings his story out of the margins, while many others remain untold. For much of the novel, Bigger is a shadow figure, as the society in which he lives does not pay much attention to him, restricting him to the ghettos where there is no room for growth. The nature of Bigger's transgressive and taboo murder of white Chicago heiress Mary Dalton sparked a social transformation for Bigger; he was now the one gazed upon, rather than the one gazing. Bigger is extremely uncomfortable by this change in status, which can be seen through his suffocating internal monologues, and by him fainting at the Cook County Morgue. Wright uses shadow imagery to contrast the differences of the white and black worlds, using light imagery to represent the privileged and powerful white world, and shadow imagery to represent the repressed black world. Art Spiegelman uses shading and shadow imagery in the same way that Richard Wright does, to showcase the extreme marginalization of Jews during the Holocaust. In *Maus*, dark shading and expressionistic lines are intentionally used to depict the horrors of the Holocaust in some of the more traumatic scenes of the novel. In other terrifying scenes, Spiegelman uses white, unshaded backgrounds with prominently depicted stars of David to highlight that Jews during this time were singled out into the spotlight because of their ethnicity. When Vladek is safely separated from Nazi violence, he is drawn as a dark silhouette watching the illuminated violence transpiring around him, as he hides fearfully in the shadows. Visualized themes of marginalization and oppression are expanded upon by both authors through the shadow imagery found in these texts.

Before Bigger's violent crimes, blacks were stuck watching out on a world that they could not participate in. Knowing the transformative power of his crimes, Bigger took to hiding deep within the margins to avoid both capture and the spotlight, as his crimes were not motivated by any desire for a change of status in the public eye. After Mary's murder, Wright again employs the theme of blindness, stating that for Bigger "things were becoming clear; he would know how to act from now on. The thing to do was to act just like how others acted, live like they lived, and while they were not looking, do what you wanted" (Wright 132). In this way, Bigger resorts to deception and camouflage as a means of survival in what he has come to know as a judgmental and oppressive world; a strategy that is incongruent with any desire for public notoriety. Wright elaborates further on Bigger's newfound philosophy stating, "He felt that they needed a certain picture of the world; there was one way of living they preferred above all others; and they were blind to what did not fit" (Wright 133). Bigger comes to the startling conclusion that, "there was in everyone a great hunger to believe that made him blind, and if he could see while others were blind, then he could get what he wanted and never be caught" (Wright 133). Bigger's artful attempt to survive, and perhaps succeed as a wolf in sheep's clothing, does not align with any attention seeking motives. Bigger was, in fact, not motivated to bring attention to the oppression and marginalization that African Americans, like himself, experienced, only to blend in and survive to deflect white suspicion. The plight of the black Chicagoans was called to attention only by Bigger's attorney Boris Max, who acted as Bigger's mouthpiece in his defense against the death penalty.

Despite any conscious or subconscious motives, or lack thereof, held by Bigger in relation to his crimes, it took the murder of a white woman to draw Bigger and the conditions of his people out of the shadows of the marginalized world. Readers see that Bigger is uncomfortable in his ascension out of the margins and into the spotlight, first in his asphyxiating, self-conscious interactions with Jan Erlone and Mary Dalton, who were trying to see inside of him. In an early scene in the novel, readers see Bigger employ shadow imagery to explain how astonished,

uncomfortable, and violated Bigger feels when Mary and Jan pay personal attention to him as an equal, yet uniquely individualized person. In this scene, Mary Dalton's Communist boyfriend Jan shakes Bigger's hand. Bigger explains that this handshake causes him to lose all connection to his physical existence (Wright 84). This dissociation that Bigger describes, leads him to recognize his own self-hatred. Wright tells us that "he was something he hated, the badge of shame which he knew was attached to a black skin" (84). Bigger, at that moment, uses shadow imagery to discuss the foreign, liminal space that this interaction with Jan had brought him to. During these events, Bigger describes his physical setting as "… a shadowy region, a No Man's Land," stating that he stands upon the "ground that separated the white world from the black" (Wright 84). Bigger had been conditioned to see the world in black and white, however, Jan's attempt to form a friendship with him drags Bigger into an unfamiliar gray area, in which he was extremely uncomfortable. Bigger was accustomed to his own black world, and he knew how to behave in the white world, however, this melting pot of the black and white world which Jan and Mary were attempting to show Bigger felt alien and strange. Jan's show of friendship brings the intimate self-hood of Bigger under a microscope, leaving Bigger feeling "naked" and "transparent" (Wright 54). Rather than feeling elated that Jan and Mary were making the first steps (or perhaps mis-steps) toward easing the wounds that Bigger's oppression and ghettoization had caused, Wright tells readers, "he felt that this white man, having helped put him down, having helped deform him, held him up now to look at him and be amused" (85). Despite their intentions, Bigger "felt toward Mary and Jan a dumb, cold, inarticulate hate" (Wright 85). Bigger's discomfort intensifies further when Jan insists that he drive the car and that Bigger sit upfront between he and Mary, rather than offering the same division between himself and the white world which Bigger was so accustomed, allowing him to sit in the backseat. Bigger describes his discomfort at this special attention from these two white strangers, with the following monologue:

> His arms and legs were aching from being cramped into so small a space, but he dared not move. He knew that they would not have cared if he made himself more comfortable, but his moving would have called attention to himself and his black body. And he did not want that. These people made him feel things he did not want to feel… so he sat still, his arms and legs aching" (86).

Here, readers see just how violated Bigger feels by Mary and Jan's attention to him, as white people, as compared to the marginalized shadows he is used to inhabiting that the whites know little about.

Bigger's boundaries are further encroached upon by the white world when Mary not only states that she wants to "just see how his people live" but also when they force him to dine with them at a black restaurant. Again, with an internal monologue, Wright highlights Bigger's discomfort in being pulled into the spotlight of this blended environment, using shadow imagery. Wright explains Bigger's feelings with the statement, "Good God! He had a wild impulse to turn and walk away. He felt ensnared in a tangle of deep shadows, shadows as black as the night that stretched above his head" (91). Though the shadows represent a demoralizing and depressing space, it is a space that Bigger is used to inhabiting, a space in which he feels safe in his impoverishment. Though Bigger is comfortable in the shadows of his own marginalized world, he is not comfortable in the shadows of this new, desegregated world, in which Jan and Mary have transported him. We see Bigger's discomfort with white attention, once again, when he is taken to the morgue for the identification of Mary Dalton's body. In this scene, white attention is highlighted by the intense bright lights.

> And then one morning a group of men came and caught him by the wrists and led him into a large room in the Cook County Morgue, in which there were many people. He blinked from the bright lights and heard loud and excited talking. The compact array of white faces and the constant flashing of bulbs for pictures made him stare in mounting amazement. His defense of indifference could protect him no longer… He saw Jan… Hot shame flooded him

> as the scene in the car came back: he felt again the pressure of Jan's fingers upon his hand. And then shame was replaced by guilty anger… the more he came to himself, the more a sense of fatigue seeped into him… He tried to move his tongue and found it swollen. His lips were dry and cracked and he wanted water. He felt giddy. The lights and faces whirled slowly, like a merry-go-round. He was falling swiftly through space… When he opened his eyes he was stretched out upon a cot (348-350).

Bigger is not only uncomfortable about being in the spotlight, after living his life in the shadows simply because he is not accustomed to this kind of attention or judgement, but also because he knows that his white audience was "determined to make his death mean more than a mere punishment," as "the atmosphere of the crowd told him they were going to use his death as a bloody symbol of fear to wave before the eyes of the black-world" (349).

Though we can clearly see that Bigger was not motivated by notoriety, the allusions of shadow imagery and its connection between the marginalized life that Bigger leads begin early in the novel. Wright begins the novel with an alarm clock ringing in the dark, silent one room flat which Bigger's four-person family shares and Bigger's mother tells him to turn on the light. Wright presents the Thomas family to readers, by narrating that "Light flooded the room and revealed a black boy standing in a narrow space between two iron beds, rubbing his eyes with the backs of his hands," in the novel's opening page (3). Wright presents the marginalization of African Americans to readers who are blind to it by shining a light onto the Thomas's family's rat-infested living situation, in a way that is like the opening of the Biblical Book of Genesis. Wright's motivation is to "let there be light" into the living conditions of God's creations, which no attention has thus far been paid. Privileged readers will immediately see the differences between their way of life, and the way of life of blacks in Wright's 1930s segregated Chicago. Wright brings to readers the next major example of the light of the white world and the shadowy darkness of its Black counterpart in the theater scene. In this scene, Bigger and his friend Jack go to the theater and watch a film of rich

white heiresses sunbathing in the sands of Florida, which features Mary Dalton, the daughter of Bigger's soon to be employer. While Mary Dalton is in the spotlight of the big screen, Bigger, who shares a flat with his four-person family, sneaks into the shadows of the dark theatre to masturbate, something which most people could do in the privacy of their own home (Wright 39). Readers see how great the divide between the illuminated white world, and the shadowy world of the marginalized Black Belt are when Jack tells Bigger that he would like to be on the beach in Florida with the rich white heiresses of the film. To this, Bigger tells Jack, "You can… But you'd be hanging from a tree like a bunch of bananas" (39). This statement by Bigger highlights the seriousness of the segregation of the white and black worlds during this time, and the threat that encroaching on the white world presents to blacks. Bigger's allusion to lynching shows how dark the consequences of trespassing into the white world was.

We see the use of shadow imagery once again when Bigger passes time before he is to be at his employers. During this scene, Wright tells readers that "Outside his window he saw the sun dying over the roof-tops…and watched the first shade of dusk fall…. Dark clouds were slowly swallowing the sun. All at once the streetlamps came on and the sky was black and close to the house-tops" (53). The illuminated streetlamps, contrasting the night sky, showcase the differences between the white and black worlds, and illuminate Bigger's path to his unfortunate destiny. It is no coincidence that Bigger's cross over into the white world where he will meet his employer, happens as dusk turns into night. This narration concerning the changes in the sky, represents the liminal space that Bigger holds as he awaits entry into the white world, entry into what Wright has deemed Bigger's dark "fate". Bigger makes his journey to the Dalton's house at night. While Bigger walks through the "quiet and spacious white neighborhood," he remarks that the houses were huge and that "lights glowed softly in the windows" (Wright 55). This depiction is vastly different from the cramped, suffocating one room flat which the Thomas family shares. At one point in the text, Bigger comments on black oppression with an internal monologue, "They keeps us bottled up here like

wild animals, he thought. He knew that black people could not go outside of the Black Belt to rent a flat; they had to live on their side of the 'line," and we see that there were separate aspects between the white and black worlds (Wright 293). Rosenberg comments that the "suffocating restriction" becomes increasingly apparent after Mary's murder, in which Bigger flees even deeper into the marginalized Black Belt, seeking shelter and safety from capture in abandoned buildings that he describes as having "windows gaped blackly, like the eye sockets of empty skulls" (Rosenberg 40). If these buildings had been kept up with, they could have comfortably housed hundreds of blacks, however, in their vacancy, they instead hide black criminals hiding from the wrath of white society. The shadow imagery that Wright employs in this scene, starkly contrasts with the glowing windows of the Dalton house. In one of Bigger's abandoned hiding places, he reiterates this shadow imagery to highlight the gap between the white and black world, stating, "He saw dusty walls, walls almost like those of the Dalton home…. Some rich folks lived here once, he thought…That was the way most houses on the South Side were, ornate, old, stinking; homes once of rich white people, now inhabited by Negroes or standing dark and empty with yarning black windows" (229). Again, we see the employment of shadow imagery as Bigger flees from police capture through the white, snow-covered streets, contrasting the blackness of Bigger's own skin, which Siegel points out in his study on the use of whiteness in the text as an oppressive force (qtd. Rosenberg 44). Although Bigger contemplates skipping town altogether, he realizes that he will find the same oppression and discrimination everywhere he goes. As Rosenberg again states, "This feeling of being trapped prey to some unseen force" leads Bigger to "reflect upon the ways in which the city is both spatially and racially defined in order to limit the movement and activity of black people", which mirrors the Swastika sidewalk scene in which Vladek and Anja Spiegelman try to escape Nazi capture, with Vladek asking "where to go" (Rosenberg 40). It is through the use of shadow imagery that both authors highlight the marginalization of minorities within their societies.

Spiegelman employs dark shading and shadow imagery order to showcase the extreme ostracism and hiding of Jews during the Holocaust. As McCloud points out, Spiegelman's "Prisoner on the Hell Planet", a comic about his mother Anja's suicide included in *Maus* I, but predating *Maus*'s composition, uses "deliberately expressionistic lines to depict a true-life horror story" (103). The use of dark shading is apparent especially in some of the more traumatic scenes of *Maus* also. Dark shading is used to depict the horrors of marginalization and is most noticeably present in Spiegelman's chapter four of *Maus* I, entitled 'The Noose Tightens." In one scene, Vladek goes to see his friend Ilzecki, late in 1941. One prominent scene depicts Nazi cats attacking Jewish mice with or without papers. The faces of both Nazis and Jews in this scene, along with their bodies, are darkly shaded, as the story here lies not in those imposing violence or victimized by acts of violence, but in the violence itself. It is not to say that the perpetrators of violence and those victimized by this ethnic violence is not important, but that this is just one violent incident that Vladek witnessed during this period of wide scale violence. The stories of those upon which this violence was inflicted are stories that have forever remained in the shadows, except for Vladek's impersonal, yet horrifying passerby account unveiling the faceless victims and their marginalized stories (Fig. 6) (I, 80). Vladek, a Jew, finding himself spotlighted by this ethnically driven hate crime is depicted in a white unshaded background, placed in the center of a shaded star of David, contemplating whether sneaking or running away yields the best chance of survival (Fig 7) (I, 80). Thankfully, Vladek runs into Ilzecki, who invites him into his house to hide (I, 80). In this scene, Ilzecki, Vladek, and Ilzecki's wife, all of whom are safely hidden in the margins, are drawn silhouetted, staring out the window below at the illuminated violence transpiring beneath them (Fig. 8) (I, 80). Once again, Vladek is saved by hiding quietly deep within the margins, depicted by darkly shaded shadows (I, 80). Later in this same chapter, Spiegelman narrates the hanging death of some Jews who were involved in the black market, illegally trading goods without coupons. In one frame, Vladek describes what he witnessed to his family in a small frame, which overlaps the larger frame of the men hanging in the

street, covering the faces of two men (Fig. 10) (I, 83). Vladek explains, "The Germans wanted to make an example of them! The next day I walked over to Modrzejowska Street and I saw them… They hanged there one full week" (I, 83). In this scene, Spiegelman uses a white backdrop illuminating that the crimes of these men had drawn them out of the shadows, precisely like Bigger Thomas, and also like Bigger, they were executed as an example to others. No intimate details of these men are depicted, as their facial features cannot be seen, yet their stars of David are bright and unshaded as a reminder that these men were killed for the crime of being Jewish above all else (I, 83). The Jewish passerbys are shaded in as they pass the hanging men, with only the feet of the hanged men shown dangling before their faces in subsequent frames (Fig. 11) (I, 83). In a scene on the following page, Vladek and Anja are in an entirely darkly shaded frame, with Vladek thinking about his hanging comrades, hanging in the upper portion of the frame (I, 84). Vladek states, "I was frightened to go outside for a few days… I didn't want to pass where they were hanging. And maybe one of them could have talked of me to the Germans to try and save himself" (Fig. 12) (I, 84). Here also we see shadow imagery to represent oppression and marginalized hiding. This dark shadow imagery is immensely prevalent in *Maus* II's Auschwitz scenes, and in the scene where Vladek and Anja are rejoined in the last page of the book. In this scene, the two are pictured with a spotlight of light encircling them in the midst of the black background of the frame, as Vladek's experiences of this dark time in Jewish history escape the shadowy margins and are successfully illuminated to readers of *Maus*.

Fig. 6. MAUS I, pg. 180. By Art Spiegelman. © 1992

Fig 7. MAUS I, pg. 121. By Art Spiegelman. © 1992

Fig. 8. MAUS I, pg. 121. By Art Spiegelman. © 1992

Fig. 9. MAUS I, pg. 121. By Art Spiegelman. © 1992

Fig. 10. MAUS I, pg. 121. By Art Spiegelman. © 1992

Fig 11. MAUS I, pg. 121. By Art Spiegelman. © 1992

CHAPTER 5: THE MARGINALIZATION OF WOMEN

While oppression is a discernible theme in both *Maus* and *Native Son*, hidden deeper within these texts are the quieter, untold stories of even more severe oppressions, left for the analysis of careful readers to uncover and decipher under a critical lens. The evidence suggests that the most marginalized characters in the texts are Anja Spiegelman and Bessie Mears. We see the role of gender as an oppressive force in *Maus* as Anja Spiegelman has an increased disadvantage of blending in with the strictly male Nazi officials in the same way that her husband can. Likewise, we see the further marginalization and oppression of Bessie Mears as her body is used as evidence in the trial of Bigger Thomas, while Bigger is tried only for the murder of a white woman. Not only does Anja face increased oppression as a woman during her life, she also faces erasure and silencing in her death as well. Vladek erases Anja's story by destroying the journals she had authored and saved for her son, which he most likely intended to use in the composition of this Holocaust narrative. As she leaves no suicide note, Artie is left to narrate only his own experiences of his mother's suicide. Once again, Anja's story is told through the perspective of another male. Unlike Anja Spiegelman, readers hear *Native Son's* Bessie Mears speak a few times throughout the text before she is murdered for her silence. Of Bessie, we learn only that her life is comprised of merely work and suffering. Though Bigger and Vladek knew the pains of oppression personally, there seems a disconnect from and superiority towards the women in their lives. Bigger kills Bessie to keep her from talking, while Vladek destroys Anja's diaries posthumously, forever destroying her Holocaust story. With the treatment of Anja and Bessie by their male counterparts, we are further able to answer Freud-Loewenstein's proposition, that Bigger Thomas and Vladek Spiegelman had not learned from their own experiences not to oppress others.

For Anja Spiegelman, the role of gender is an apparent means of further difficulty and oppression during the Holocaust. As Alison Mandaville points out in her 2009 article "Tailing Violence: Comics Narrative Gender and the Father Tale in Art Spiegelman's *Maus*", the oppressive role of gender is especially apparent when Vladek tells Artie that he could more easily camouflage

himself than his wife Anja. “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,” Vladek explains to Artie, who responds by illustrating her with a tail as a motif for Jewishness, while Vladek is featured as tail-less in this scene (qtd. in Mandaville 230). As a woman, Anja’s gender puts her at an increased vulnerability, preventing her from the privilege of passing as a member of the male Gestapo. It is Anja’s womanhood that makes her more likely to be spotted from amongst the crowd and identified as Jewish.

In her article, Mandaville raises an important question in her analysis, asking, “Who survives to tell? Who tells to survive?” (216). Clearly, Vladek Spiegelman, the protagonist of his son Artie’s biographical graphic novel *Maus*, survives to tell this Holocaust narrative. While other characters such as Vladek and Anja’s eldest son Richieu don’t survive the Holocaust, Vladek’s wife Anja lives simply to end her own life years later. 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. Like Mandaville, scholar Jeanne C. Ewert also mentions Vladek’s destruction of Anja’s post-war diaries offering an in-depth hypothesis for and timeline of the journal’s destruction. Ewert cites Artie’s multiple, unsuccessful attempts to obtain his mother’s journals as evidence that Spiegelman did not envision the project as an individual father narrative, rather a family narrative (91). Ewert points out the unlikeliness that the miserly Vladek who refuses to discard anything, collects bits of wire from the street, returns a half-eaten box of cereal to the grocer, and makes his current wife wear his late wife’s clothes, suddenly recollects destroying Anja’s narrative after her funeral (91). 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). This would not be the first time that Vladek asserts control over his wife. Vladek refuses to listen to Anja's protest about leaving Mrs. Motonawa's farm for Hungary, a decision which leads to their capture. Ewert also points out Vladek's assertion of control over Anja when threatening to leave her for working with the Communist Resistance, stating, "If you want me you have to go my way" (qtd. in Ewert 91). 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"* (qtd. in Mandaville 219). Though Vladek has quite a few interactions with his wife while the two are in Auschwitz, we can never know Anja's experience of the camps. Mandaville remarks that it is the absence of Anja's story that represents the Holocaust best of all as she represents, "the absence of all the other stories we cannot, because of the Holocaust, ever know" (219).

Though readers receive the opportunity to hear *Native Son's* Bessie Mears speak a few times throughout the text, the audience is left in the dark on many of the details of her personal narrative, leaving only speculation to fill in the blanks as to what her life must have looked like prior to her murder. Though, like Anja, we are only able to hear bits of Bessie's story, readers learn that Bessie works much more and even harder than Bigger, only getting a few hours a week off, while in various points of the novel we see Bigger enjoying at least some leisure. Of Bessie, Wright states, "She worked long hours, hard and hot hours seven days a week, with only Sunday afternoons off; and when she did get off she wanted fun, hard and fast fun, something to make her feel she was making up for the starved life she led" (Wright 174). Like Bigger's lawyer Boris Max tells the jury of Bigger, Bessie also "had but two outlets for [her] emotions: work and sex- and [she] knew these in their most vicious and degrading forms" (Wright 477). Though Max originally makes this statement concerning Bigger, as a rape victim, Bessie knows sex in its most vicious and degrading form far

greater than Bigger, her rapist. We see just how vicious Bessie's workload and work schedule are in multiple incidents throughout the novel. When Bigger forcefully assigns Bessie a role in his ransom scheme, Bessie highlights her plight stating: "Bigger, please! Don't do this to me! Please! All I do is work…like a dog! From morning til night. I ain't got nothing and you do this to me…. I ain't done nothing for this to come to me...I'm black and I work and don't bother nobody" (Wright 226). Later, when the ransom falls through and Bigger flees from the authorities with Bessie, she enlightens readers once again that, "All my life's been full of hard trouble. If I wasn't hungry, I was sick. And if I wasn't sick, I was in trouble. I ain't never bothered nobody. I just worked hard every day as long as I can remember, till I was tired enough to drop; then I had to get drunk to forget it…" (289). From all the references to work, we see that Bessie Mear's plight in 1930s Chicago is not far removed from the days of slavery and is a much more grueling work than Bigger's. While it could be argued from these statements that Bessie's employers view her as a slave, holding little to no interest in her personal selfhood outside of her work, Bigger Thomas views Bessie as a mere object. When Max asks Bigger if he loved Bessie, Bigger replies, "Naw…I wasn't in love with Bessie. She was just my girl…I killed Bessie to save myself. You have to have a girl, so I had Bessie. And I killed her" (Wright 445). Readers can see from Bigger's statement, "You have to have a girl, so I had Bessie", that he saw Bessie as a personal possession that society deemed necessary for him to own, but someone, or perhaps something, which he felt no true personal attachment towards and could dispose of when she was no longer of use. Bigger's lack of attachment to his steady girlfriend becomes increasingly obvious when he tells his lawyer that he killed Bessie, "to keep her from talking" (445). Bigger continues, "I didn't have to think much about killing Bessie. I knew I had to kill her and I did…" (445). Here, there is a clear connection between the destruction of Anja Spiegelman's journals and Bessie's murder. In reaction to his admittance of destruction to his wife Anja's story, Artie Spiegelman calls his father a "murderer". Though Anja is already dead when this destruction takes

place, the acts of "murder" of these two women are committed to silence them so that their truths remain concealed, never ascending from their graves within the shadows.

Because of the parts of Anja's story that remain unknown, Mandaville draws attention to the cover of the first volume of "A Survivor's Tale," where 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). Both Anja and Vladek are dwarfed by the white spotlight which surrounds a thick black swastika featuring Adolf Hitler in black and white cat form in the center (Fig. 12). Similarly, in Chapter 1, Vladek receives a photo of Anja for him to keep. Anja again has her hands hidden; this time concealed in a fur muff (I.17). Anja's outfit and part of her face is darkly shaded and shadowy, only to become even darker when placed as a decoration on Vladek's desk in a thick, black frame in the margins of the next scene (Fig. 13). Another important focus for analysis occurs on the last page of *Maus II*. In this scene Anja and Vladek have found each other months after the liberation of Auschwitz. Vladek wails "My Anja," commenting, "We were both very happy, and lived happy, happy ever after" (II.136). Despite Vladek's account that the two lived "Happy ever after," we know from Anja's perspective that that is very likely untrue, as she takes her own life. In this frame, Anja wears a black dress, while Vladek a white suit. Vladek's white clothes represent readers' enlightenment to his experiences during the Holocaust at the book's completion, while Anja's black dress represents the mystery of all which remains unknown of her tale. The two are shown embracing in a spotlight of white light, contrasting against the black background (Fig. 14). *Maus* has drawn Vladek Spiegelman out from the margins and into the spotlight, however, Anja is appropriately faced away from viewers, as her story is hiding in the shadows; a ghost text that can only be speculated on but never recovered.

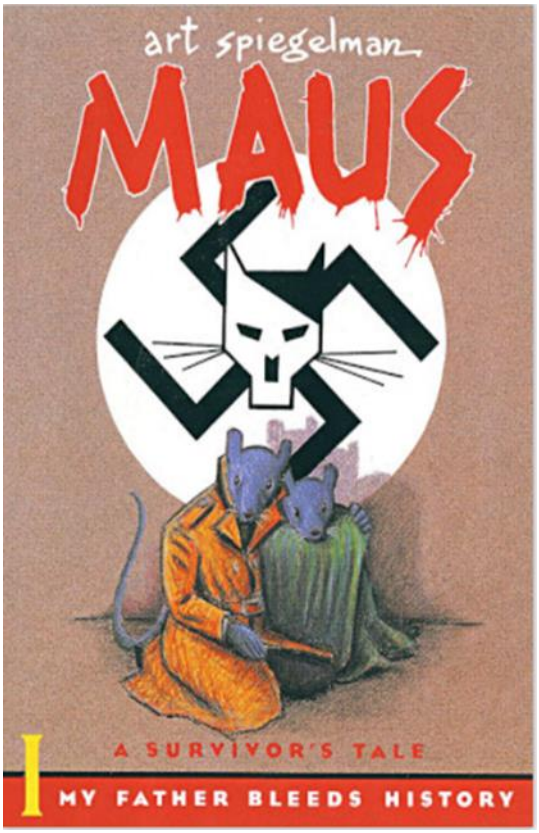

Fig. 12. MAUS I, cover. By Art Spiegelman. © 1992

Fig 13. MAUS I, pg. 17. By Art Spiegelman. © 1992

Fig. 14. MAUS I, last pg. By Art Spiegelman. © 1992

Though there is a section devoted singularly to Anja's suicide in *Maus*, it is dedicated simply to her son Artie's struggle with his mother's suicide and the effect her death had on him. This section is a short work which Spiegelman published prior to his composition of *Maus*, entitled "Prisoner on the Hell Planet". In her 2006 article, Hillary Chute discusses "Prisoner on the Hell Planet," discussing how the older strip's pages are set in the shadows against a black, unmarked background, forming a "funeral border," as Spiegelman calls it (208). The thin black line of the funeral border stands out on the edge of the pages when the book is closed (Chute 208). Of the fourteen frames in this comic, Anja appears only four times. Though Artie gives insights into his mother's suicide, claiming "Hitler did it" and "menopausal depression" as her underlying psychological motives, Spiegelman's insights are only speculations, as no suicide note was left (II.103). Artie gets the last word on Anja's death, stating: "Congratulations!...You've committed the perfect crime… You MURDERED me, Mommy, and you left me here to take the rap!!!" (II.103). Anja's suicide is the only act of Anja's life that readers can learn about firsthand. Despite her desire for her son to someday read her journals, which becomes impossible after her widower's destruction of them, Anja's suicide is the only complete act of authorship she achieves. The act itself is her suicide note, the only piece of storytelling that she can offer. The statement that criminal defense attorney Boris Max states of his client Bigger Thomas holds true for Anja Spiegelman as well, Anja Spiegelman "did not kill!...It was an act of creation!" (Wright 366). Anja's piece in *Maus* is outlined by merely a strip of shadow found in the comic's margins. Her true story will forever remain in the shadows of history. It is only her suicide that brings her out of the margins of the story and into the spotlight, and we are only able to see the details of her suicide from her son's perspective in "Prisoner on the Hell Planet," with a shadowy line, drawing our attention to his account of it in the very margins of the novel.

The role of gender alone is not an ostensible means of oppression when examining Wright's *Native Son*. The murder of Mary Dalton, a white woman and daughter of a respected real estate

mogul, leads to a search for her killer with an army of 5,000 police officers and 3,000 volunteers set loose upon the Chicago Black Belt. During this search, several hundred negroes, resembling her killer, are held for investigation. The textual evidence does not suggest that gender is in any way an oppressive force for Wright's Mary Dalton, as so much discriminatory effort is put forth by the community into finding her killer. When we look, however, at Thomas' second victim, his betrothed Bessie Mears, we see that with race and gender combined, black women like Bessie Thomas are the most oppressed of all in Wright's world. When Bessie has no choice but to go into hiding with Bigger, the two settle on an abandoned building in the Black Belt as their hiding place. It is in this building where Bessie is murdered and then thrown down an airshaft attached to the side of the building. Being pushed so far into the margins, readers must ask themselves if Bessie's body would have ever been found if it was not found in the pursuit of Mary's killer. Though Wright's Bigger Thomas murders two women, it is only for his first victim, Mary Dalton that he is ever tried. During the trial, Bessie's body is carted into the courtroom as evidence into the violent events that most likely transpired in Mary's murder. As Bigger states:

> It was not because he had thought any less of Bessie that he had forgotten her, but Mary's death had caused him the most fear; not her death in itself, but what it meant to him as a Negro. They were bringing Bessie's body in now to make the white men and women feel that nothing short of a quick blotting out of his life would make the city safe again. They were using his having killed Bessie to kill him for his having killed Mary, to cast him in a light that would sanction any action taken to destroy him. Though he had killed a black girl and a white girl, he knew that it would be for the death of the white girl that he would be punished. The black girl was merely "evidence". And under it all he knew that the white people did not really care about Bessie's being killed. White people never searched for Negroes who killed other Negroes. He had even heard it said that white people felt it was good when one Negro killed another, it meant that they had one Negro less to contend with.

> Crime for a Negro was only when he harmed whites, took white lives, or injured white property. (419)

Bigger is not the only one who sees the injustice of the fact that he is not charged in Bessie's death, as his lawyer brings this fact up to the jury as well. Even though Max makes this argument, he is no more of a supporter of Bessie Mears than any other character in the novel. Max excuses Bessie's murder with the argument that Bigger's "relationship to this poor black girl also reveals his relationship to the world" and that "under the stress of fear and flight, Bigger Thomas did not think of Bessie. He could not" (508). In this right, Max makes an allowance for Bigger not recognizing or valuing Bessie's selfhood. Though Max argues that Bigger felt little remorse killing Mary and framing her white Communist boyfriend Jan Erlone, stating, "Jan and Mary were not human beings to Bigger Thomas. Social custom had shoved him so far away from them that they were not real to him…" Max is unable to use this race-based argument towards Bessie's murder, as she and Bigger are of the same world (501). Unless introducing gender as an equally divisive variable to race, which he fails to do, Max makes no further defense of Bigger's murder of Bessie, besides that that he killed her to save himself, though, the same could be said about the accidental murder of Mary Dalton.

In an equally, if not perhaps even more insensitive light, Max takes his depersonalization of Bessie a step further, asking the courtroom "Was not Bigger Thomas' relationship to his girl a masturbatory one", as a defense against Bigger's rape of Bessie Mears (Wright 509). We can be certain of Max's attitude toward Bessie when he explains to Bigger the psychology to why he feels that whites discriminate against the blacks on the last page of the novel. "But deep down in them they feel like you feel, Bigger, and in order to keep what they've got, they make themselves believe that men who work are not quite human. They do like you did, Bigger, when you refused to feel sorry for Mary," Max explains (Wright 543). The fact that Max only mentions Mary's death here and not Bessie's, shows that Bessie was just a detail in Bigger's story, rather than a real person. Not only

does Bessie never receive justice for her murder, like Anja's suicide, it is solely Bessie's body and the condition of her death which draws her out of the margins and into the courtroom for spectators to examine as evidence. In this way, it is only the most heinous pieces of her story that are illuminated, with the more intimate details of Bessie Mears being left in solemn mystery.

When examining the marginalization of women in these stories, as readers, we must ask ourselves the crucial question: *What would it have taken for these female voices to have survived*? As Vladek Spiegelman and Bigger Thomas are solely responsible for Anja and Bessie's silencing, I would dare to answer that support from their male counterparts was essential for their stories' survival. Just like we see a lack of support for Jews from Bigger, and a lack of support for blacks from Vladek, despite their mirrored oppression, we also see this same lack of support for the women they love, who face dehumanization, oppression and marginalization alongside them, and by their actions toward them as well. Oppressed populations can be both victims and participants in a larger system of injustice by discriminating against other oppressed groups, experiencing a cognitive dissonance and bias between themselves and other groups who have been treated the same way. The dehumanization that the male characters in these texts face does not impact their empathy for the women in their lives, nor translate into their treatment of them, as they dehumanize and oppress them as well. Rather than recognizing the importance of these female voices in telling their marginalized stories, the protagonists choose to take a superior stance and silence them. Segregations within a society do not only come from privileged groups marking off space for minorities to occupy but can also exist between members of the same group, using factors such as gender to segregate themselves from one another. Together these texts encourage a broader look into the biases of marginalized groups, as well as biases toward members of the same group, separated only by gender. We need to examine these factors as well as the privileged populations' role in discrimination and oppression, as this reveals something more about the nature of discrimination, as no one, not even those who have experienced discrimination firsthand,

is immune to it. As experience does not eliminate discrimination, an examination of personal biases and the origins of said biases, like that which Freud Loewenstein addresses with her students, is crucial to fighting segregation, marginalization, and oppression. Together, these texts remind us that despite racial, ethnic, and gender-based biases, as humans, we are much more alike than we are different.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Together, these works shine a light on the lives of African Americans and European Jews in the early part of the twentieth century, opening the door for further scholarship of oppression, marginalization, and discrimination in our societies today. Both Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and Richard Wright's *Native Son* use rat imagery, visualization, and shadow imagery to shine a light on the oppression and marginalization that specific minorities faced globally during the 1930s and 1940s. These texts are both lacking in their illumination of minority female texts, presenting devices within the text which showcases the further silencing, marginalization and oppression that Bigger and Vladek's female counterparts experienced. These texts are two of few that escaped the darkness of the margins in order to tell the tales of what their people faced during racially charged times. As Audre Lorde comments on speech, violence, and survival in the context of American Racism, "My silence has not protected me. Your silences will not protect you" (qtd. in Mandaville 218). If stories like that of Bigger Thomas and Vladek Spiegelman are not told, then there stands no chance of change in the lives of those who society has deemed inferior, or continues to deem inferior in the present day. *Maus* and *Native Son* use literature to illuminate the marginalized living conditions of minorities, so that past genocides and oppressions do not continue to repeat themselves further. On *Maus*, Mandaville states, "To write and read this story requires recognition of, and so a symbolic participation in, stereotypes that are inextricable from the shifting cultural and social narrative systems that permitted the Holocaust and, in fact, continue tacitly to condone other violent life conditions" (224). As Chute discusses in her article, Art Spiegelman attempted to make a show about Bosnia to be shown in The Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C., to explore our "non-divorce from the traumatic events of the past, the impossibility of rejecting horror as ever completely 'behind us'," which as *Maus* showcases, historical trauma is unending (Chute 102). Spiegelman first suggested the title of "Genocide Now" to approach this topic, however when that

title was rejected, he pitched the title of "Never Again and Again and Again" (Chute 102). Ultimately, the project was rejected.

Though, as Mandaville points out, "addressing the how" of the Holocaust and of institutional racism, oppression and marginalization plaguing minorities throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, may be a more a difficult question to answer, it is one that Naomi Madel challenges in her study *Against the Unspeakable*, as we too often assume that "the unspeakable has already happened and is somehow 'out there', an independent, amorphous presence somewhat detatched from the culture that produced it and posits in its wake" (qtd. Mandaville 217). *Maus* in particular showcases the interweaving of the past and present times, particularly as it shows Artie Spiegelman's struggle with his own Jewish identity as a second-generation Holocaust survivor, not present for a defining trauma in Jewish history, as he shows his parent's present struggle with the trauma of the past, with his Mother's suicide and his Father's hoarding and miserly behaviors, and as he slips images of the past into present scenes. One scene in which Spiegelman does this when Vladek tells of four female Jewish prisoners of Auschwitz who were hanged for trying to start a rebellion, with Spiegelman depicting them hanging from the trees in the Catskills as the Spiegelman's drive back to their summer cabin (Chute 199). In "Prisoner on the Hell Planet" Artie Spiegelman is shown wearing an Auschwitz uniform, which Chute comments posits "that Artie inherited the burden that the uniform represents in a natural transfer of pain that wasn't consciously accepted or rejected, but seamlessly assumed" just as the burden of blackness is thrust upon Bigger Thomas at birth (208). Mandaville quotes Hirsch, highlighting the importance of these two texts, stating, "[t]he growth of memory culture may, indeed, be a symptom of or a need for inclusion in a collective membrane forged by a shared inheritance of multiple traumatic histories and the individual and social responsibility we feel toward a persistent and traumatic past" (qtd Mandaville 217). Past events have a ripple effect into the future, and the past can never be fully separated from the present as trauma is inherited.

In a crucial scene in *Maus*, we see that the hatred of Jews was often times directed equally to those who were not Jewish. In this scene, Vladek tells of a prisoner in Auschwitz who cries to the guards that he is not a Jew, stating that his son is a German soldier, and that he has medals from the Kaiser. When Artie inquires whether the said prisoner was in fact Jewish, Vladek answers, "Who knows. For the Germans this guy was Jewish", fitting in with Sartre's statement in *Anti-Semite and Jew*, "a Jew is someone whom others call a Jew" (qtd Ewert 101). As Spiegelman begins illustrating the concentration camps in *Maus* II, Ewert comments that Spiegelman is "outraged not just that Jews died in the Holocaust, but that anyone did" (Ewert 101). This same sentiment is reflected in Wright's *Native Son* when Lawyer Boris Max tells Bigger:

> Bigger, the people who hate you feel just as you feel, only they're on the other side of the fence. You're black, but that's only a part of it. Your being black, as I told you before, makes it easy fro them to single you out. Why do they do that? They want the things of life, just as you did, and they're not particular about how they get them. They hire people and they don't pay them enough; they take what people own and build up power. They rule and regulate life. They have things arranged so that they can do those things and the people can't fight back. They do that to black people more than others because they say that black people are inferior. But Bigger, they say that all people who work are inferior. And the rich people don't want to change things; they'll lose too much. But deep down in them they feel like you feel, Bigger and in order to keep what they've got, they make themselves believe that men who work are not quite human… But on both sides men want to live; men are fighting for life. Who will win? Well, the side that feels life most, the side with the most humanity and the most men… (543).

Despite Bigger's own oppression, he is unable to recognize the oppression of others outside of his own race. Bigger does not recognize the human status of Mary Dalton, the white woman he murders, uses his lover Bessie Mears as a sex object and forces her into a life of crime, and idolizes

Adolf Hitler's "running the Jews into the ground" (Wright 145). In the same way, Vladek Spiegelman, despite the oppression, marginalization and ethnic genocide that he experienced, finds blacks to be inferior. Spiegelman has been criticized by scholars for his unflattering portrayal of his father, to which Spiegelman defends his motives, stating, "If only admirable people were shown to have survived, then the implicit moral would have been that only admirable people deserved to survive, as opposed to the fact that people deserved to survive" (qtd. Ewert 101). It is this same logic for which Wright presents us a protagonist who has committed multiple murders and rape, suggesting that the violent conditions in which Bigger was raised played a part in this animalistic behavior in a society which pushes him into the slums, as far away from white society as possible, and views him as less than human. It is because of these attitudes and blind spots, displayed even in those who themselves suffered from great societal mistreatment, that literature on the marginalized is still needed. As Sheldon Brivic presents, "Ezra Pound's well-known definition, "Literature is news that STAYS news", and with the discriminations of Wright and Spiegelman's protagonists, as well as racial and ethnic inequalities that still exist in our societies today, we see that revealing the plight of the marginalized is still relevant and crucial in our societies (231). "We must reunderstand ourselves as people who are capable of such acts and find out what within us has led to those acts" (Jay Cantor, qtd in Orvell 125).

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