

Maus

Postmodern literature is literature characterised by reliance on narrative techniques such as fragmentation, paradox, and the unreliable narrator; and often is (though not exclusively) defined as a style or a trend which emerged in the post-World War II era. Postmodern works also tend to celebrate chance over craft, and further employ metafiction to undermine the text's authority or authenticity. Another characteristic of postmodern literature is the questioning of distinctions between high and low culture through the use of pastiche, the combination of subjects and genres not previously deemed fit for literature.

Heteroglossia: Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia: the coexistence of two or more voices within a text. The text shirks the traditional stylistics and univocality associated with poetry in favour of multivocality, incorporating "[a]uthorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, [and] the speech of characters...each of them [permitting] a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships..." (Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* by M.M. Bakhtin, p. 263). A novel also features languages "...that are socio-ideological: languages of social groups, 'professional' and 'generic' languages, languages of generations, and so forth" (Bakhtin, p. 272), which, in other words, is more indicative of common, every day conversation.

Poïoumenon (plural: poïoumena; from Ancient Greek: ποιοῦμενον, "product") is a term coined by Alastair Fowler to refer to a specific type of metafiction in which the story is about the process of creation. According to Fowler, "the poïoumenon is calculated to offer opportunities to explore the boundaries of fiction and reality—the limits of narrative truth." In many cases, the book will be about the process of creating the book or includes a central metaphor for this process.

Fragmentation is another important aspect of postmodern literature. Various elements, concerning plot, characters, themes, imagery and factual references are fragmented and dispersed throughout the entire work.

Maus is a combination of different writing – biography, autobiography, oral history told through the medium of a graphic novel, as well as Metafiction – self-referential fiction, focusing on the writer writing the fiction.

Tradition of holocaust fiction (other texts of note): *If this is a man* – Primo Levi, *This way for the gas, Ladies and Gentlemen* – Tadeusz Borowski, *Leap into Darkness* - Leo Bretholz, *Night* – Elie Wiesel.

Anthropomorphised characters – Jews = mice, Germans = cats, Pigs = Poles, US = dogs, French = frogs, Gypsies = moths.

Maus plays off the racial stereotypes, and even stereotypical thinking in general, by indicating where the allegory falls apart. The mice are not universally good, nor are the pigs universally good or bad. Mice can pass for other animals by wearing pig masks or cat masks. The allegory falls apart at times when the animal-humans deal with actual animals, as when in *Maus 2*, Art's Jewish therapist has pet cats (!), or when Art and Françoise have to use bug spray to get rid of bugs when they are vacationing in the Catskills, a reference to Zyklon-B.

Vladek's Eastern European dialect – a dialect is the variety of language that is distinguished from proper speech by pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, in addition to its use by a group of geographically or socially distinct speakers, especially when it is considered improper or substandard. Vladek's dialect, highlighted by his fractured and awkwardly worded English, is featured prominently throughout the two volumes of *Maus*. The inclusion of Vladek's dialect is important, as it highlights Spiegelman's commitment to linguistic and historical authenticity throughout the graphic novel.

Stylistic choices – swastikas and SS symbols permeate every page.

"Prisoner on the Hell Planet" – comic within a comic – mise en abyme.

Jagged panels/fractured panels borders to literalise disconnect between characters.

