

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

**Historiography of the Holocaust: Traumatic Memory in Ellie Wiesel's *Night* and Art Spiegelman's *Maus***

A Thesis Submitted to Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master of Philosophy in English.

By

Bishnu Bahadur Thapa

Central Department of English

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

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TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Central Department of English

Faculty of Humanities and Social Science

This entitled thesis “Historiography of the Holocaust: Traumatic Memory in Elie Wiesel’s *Night* and Art Spiegelman’s *Maus*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Bishnu Bahadur Thapa has been approved by the following members of the research committee.

Members of the Research Committee:

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Prof. Dr. Beerendra Pandey

Internal Examiner

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Prof. Dr. Ram Chandra Poudel

External Examiner

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Prof. Dr. Amma Raj Joshi

Head

Central Department of  
English

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Date:

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## Abstract

This dissertation explores the Holocaust literature from the perspective of traumatic memory of the victims. The memory of the survivors comes alive in diverse perspectives. The survivors and second generation of the Holocaust write in quite different ways. I have taken two different genres of literature: Autobiographical non-fiction and Memoir. It is normally considered that Autobiographical non-fiction alters facts changing names and genders of characters whereas memoirs are very true to facts using real names participants. But, Elie Wiesel's *Night*, an autobiographical non-fiction, and Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, a memoir, as the testimonies of the Holocaust. *Night*, by Elie Wiesel, is non-fiction from the perspective of the survivor who witnessed the harrowing Nazism. Similarly, *Maus*, by Art Spiegelman, is a graphic novel from the perspective of the second-generation of the Holocaust survivors. However, traumatic memory remains as the essence of the both literary works. In *Night*, Wiesel strives to show the Holocaust happenings and its psychological aftermath to the eye-witness. A young narrator tells the horrific story of deportation, burning people alive, and silence of the whole world at the cruel massacre of human being. In *Maus*, Spiegleman throws a flood of light on the psychology of the second generation. He also depicts that parent-child relation turns to be bitter when children of the Holocaust are deprived of the historical facts. While taking interview with his father, Vladek tells Artie not to include his story in the book, but Artie (Narrator/Writer) includes the story. It is not a betrayal to his father but it depicts that Artie is sincere in the exploration the Holocaust.

This dissertation presents the idea of how memory, history and trauma are the basic concerns of the Holocaust literature. The survivors of the Holocaust carry witness-testimony with them. Wiesel's *Night* is an example of survivors' narrative. The survivor gives testimony to his traumatic memory. Not only the written-testimony, but the survivors' unearthed experiences, which are to be disclosed, can be

the real source for the study of the Holocaust. Spiegelman's *Maus* on the other hand, is an example of the transmission of traumatic memory into other generations. Artie, as the son of Vladek, interviews his father, gets Vladek's traumatic memory and transfers it to readers. One thing that connects both these texts, at the thematic level, is the family-bond existing between the survivors and the second generation.

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