
The Theme of Dehumanisation After a Loss in Night and Maus

After witnessing a lifestyle in such harsh conditions as the concentration camps, both of the texts explore the loss of identity very early on as well as the importance of having a family member alongside you, going through the same thing. Dehumanisation is a common theme among survivors of such events, both of these novels aid us to understand how the Jewish citizens lost everything they had. In *Night*, Wiesel has a very close relationship to his father, this is due to the fact that they have seen unseeable things and survived most of war together.

This has not only lead to a closer relationship to his father, however there is a very special attachment that they have built, which is evident from several quotes that are seen throughout the book. Including, “. . . “Please sir. . . I’d like to be near my father. ” // “ All right. Your father will work here, next to you” // We were lucky” (*Night*, Wiesel. E, pg. 50). Wiesel tells his story of how the guard allowed them to stay together and live for each other. Furthermore, in despair he was hiding his fear, although he was thankful that he received the same assignment as his father. Furthermore, throughout the book, there are several statements that convey family separations, however one that is emotional is when a distant cousin of Wiesel asks to whether they have received any letters from the rest of his family. “. . . But I lied: // “Yes, my mother did hear from them. Reizel is fine. So are the children...” // He was weeping with joy. He would have liked to stay longer, to learn more details, to soak up the good news, but an SS was heading in our direction and he had to go, telling us that he would be back the next day. ” (*Night*, Wiesel. E, pg. 44). It depicts that it is important to lie sometimes if it is reason to go on living, especially when it is a family member. In the same way, it is evident that Wiesel tries to convince himself and his father that their loved ones are still alive.

On the contrary, *Maus* is a novel where a son explain his father journey. However, in this biography, we see a different relationship between Art and Vladek. They are very distant from each other and seem to always be competing, even about small tasks. In the book, we are told that Art would go long periods of time without visiting his father, Vladek. This can be seen early on in the book when they get into a fight over counting pills “No! You don’t know counting pills. I’ll do it after... I’m an expert at this” (*Maus*, Spiegelman. A, pg. 32). This highlights their distance due to the fact that Vladek thinks of Art as a person that is unable to do tasks correctly, due to the fact that he did not witness the same thing as his father did. Furthermore, their distance is recognised when Art first learns about the importance of his religion, the parsha he read out at his bar mitzvah. He begins to understand the importance of the date when his bar mitzvah. “You mean your ‘parsha truma’ dream actually came true? // Yes- this is for me a very important date ... // I checked later on a calendar it was this parsha on the week I got married to Anja // ... and this was the parsha in 1948, after the war, on the week you were born!. . // And so it came out to be this parsha you sang on the saturday of your bar mitzvah!” (*Maus*, Spiegelman. A, pg. 61). Other than recognising the significance of the date, we can further comprehend the lack of communication regarding his Jewish heritage, that his father fails to mention. Lastly, we can see the effect that certain behaviors have on the survivors, an example of this is “To your father you yell this way?. . . even to your friends you should never yell this way!” (*Maus*, Spiegelman. A, pg. 161).

We can understand his fragility that has grown regarding family as well as friendships. Moreover, Vladek tends to use a lot of loaded statements showing how the memories have scared him internally. Even though both of these biographies presence of masculinity throughout, the separation that they felt from their mothers are evidently sad. In *Night*, after the family was separated, Wiesel quickly 'forgets' about his mother and sisters, by excluding them from the book and focusing on his father. The scene that they separated from his family and sets off to his new life, is heartbreaking. "I glimpsed my mother and my sisters moving away to the right... And I did not know that in that place, at that moment, I was parting from my mother and Tzipora forever" (*Night*, Wiesel. E, pg. 27). It is evident to say that Weisel is consumed with thoughts of his family and he is highly concerned about his family's suffering. In addition to this, Wiesel is unsure how to react to situations such as this one due to the fact that his family has always been close.

On the other hand, in *Maus*, Spiegelman doesn't only have a massive amount of respect for his step-mother, however constantly wonders why his mother committed suicide. He idolized his mother and anguished over her death. Firstly, we can see the grief that he still has from his mother's suicide, this can be seen from the "Prisoners on the Plant" (*Maus*, Spiegelman. A, pg. 100-104). Spiegelman is in a very dark place, this is due to the fact that he has just returned from a sanitarium when his mother's suicide throws him into another nervous breakdown. It is clear to say that even though many years have passed ever since his mother passed, it is still a memory that he can not let go. In addition to this, his father still sees the resemblance between his mother, suggesting that he is continuing her work, this is due to the fact that even though Vladek has lost Spiegelman's mothers diaries, he wants to continue to record the memories of the Holocaust. This is seen through "Always artie is nervous-so like his mother- she also was nervous" (*Maus*, Spiegelman. A, pg. 180).

Overall, both of the novels show that family is one of the most important aspects of survival. Even though their familial relationships are very different, when they are put in a situation when they have to talk about their past, they help the reader understand that even though the authors are dehumanised, the core and importance of family is always present and will even put you in situations where you would risk your life for a loved one.