**Night by Elie Wiesel**

I. Enlightened Society -- western society on its way to moral perfectibility

A.. Reason and technology were going to create a trajectory

of, not only material, but moral progress

B. OOOps! Late in 1941 to the end of war 1945 - Nazi

Germany engaged in the systematic destruction of

European Jews

C. Genocide - the systematic murder of racial and ethnic

populations "because" they are defined by the dominate

group (most powerful) as "different" "other" - less than

human, with no "right to exist"

D. we have had genocide before, Columbus and the Taino,

the United States and the Native Americans, but slave

trade est. 40 million

E. Never of this highly systematic way, in fact, the method

of organization, transportation, and extermination reflect

some of the highest values of western society, respect

for and unquestioning obedience to authority figures, efficiency, cooperation and coordination in bureaucratic organizations

II. Are there broad implications? Or is this just an event in the past?

A. Genocide has continued, Cambodia -- Killing Fields, 2 million, East Timor, Rwanda, Namibia, near genocide in

Guatemala - the Indians, and El Salvador

B. How did western society respond? How did it define itself

in its response? How did U. S. respond? How has it responded

to the above?

III. The nature of the Crime -- Elie Wiesel "At Auschwitz, not only man died but also the idea of man."

A. Born 1928 in Sighet, Hungary, on the border with Rumania

1) winner of the Nobel Prize for Peace

2) author of over fifteen novels and two books of

essays One Generation After, A Jew Today

B. The book is an account of his experience in 1944,

Ghetto-ization, deportation, and internment in the

"kingdom of night" - Auschwitz - he was fifteen

1) One of six extermination camps set up as an

institutionalization of the "Final Solution" in

Poland

2) Auschwitz - both death camp and factories

I. G. Farben, Krupps, Siemens

C. The type of book

1) personal memoir, autobiographical narrative,

of Wiesel's experience as young boy in Sighet, Hungary

(Nazis arrived in March of 1944 began transporting

Jews to Auschwitz one month later)

"Humanity has defined itself by its capacity for evil, not for its capacity to do good."

2) However, if read closely, the book is most like a

nightmare -- artistic creation

-- from familiar world of his childhood where

he studied the Talmud in the night

-- to a completely unknown world, a world of

radical evil

"The dark country presented to us is self-contained and self-structured, governed by its own criminal gods who have created laws based upon a death-dominated ideology." (11 Fine)

-- the hallucinatory journey to A in the cattle

car and Madame Schacters mad vision

-- time loses all meaning in one night, old and young

-- burning children alive

D. "Night" is not just the title of the book, but a metaphor in all of Wiesel's writing for these strange, unreal, and almost unimaginable "otherworld"

1. Auschwitz is the center of the kingdom of night

however, the kingdom exceeds the confines of

the concentration camps

2. Raises two questions, like a nightmare the journey

is isolated from the world -

Where is God? the child hanging

Where are those who might help?

E. What are the boundaries of the Kingdom of Night?

1. Nazis and the Crime

2. Hitler's "willing executioners"

3. neighbors who watched and did nothing, stole

possessions, took homes

4. neighbors to concentration camps who denied they

knew what was going on

5. spontaneous mob violence in Germany which exceeded

Nazis inspired norms

6. Polish peasants who hunted down those who escaped

7. cooperation of authorities and governments in other

countries except Denmark

8. U.S. abandonment of the Jews, no rescue plan, n-bombing, took less than the number of illegal immigrants, blocked aid to German-Jewish refugees

9. US corporations, ITT, Ford did business with Hitler

throughout the war

10. Failure of churches

11. U.S. after the war

D. The witness and the ambivalence

1) The central narrative motif in Wiesel's novels is the

witness, or the act of bearing witness to the experience

2) but there is a great deal of ambivalence in the witnessing because the victim knows that she was abandoned by the world -- David Wyman The Abandonment of the Jew

3) Elie Wiesel's comment, "Some are guilty; all are responsible

II. The narrative itself is structure around "nights," especially first and last nights

A. First night

1) Jews were first ghettoized, then transported to

Auschwitz

Eichmann arrived in March 1944 and organized

the deportation of 850,000, this while the

war was ending

Allies which were bombing Germany refused

to bomb railroad lines to Auschwitz

2) Madame Schacter -- the mad prophet - fire as a

metaphor

the method of selection and extermination

Wiesel's mother and sister

killing children

"Never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp, which

B. Undermines the assumptions about what it means to be

human

1) the inmates are reduced to anonymity, numbers,

clothes,

"the ten year old boy and the sixty year old man, not only looked alike, felt alike and lived alike, but walked alike.

2) "dissolution of the self" a living death. "There remained only a shape that looked like me."

C. Part of the struggle to remain human was with his religion,

and part with his father

1) struggle reflected in his own relationship, where he

stood and watched his father be beaten, and was angry

at his father

2) and watched the two other father-son relationships,

the one abandon his father,

3) the other killing him for a crumb of bread

Some workers amuse themselves by throwing pieces of bread into the open wagons and watching the starved men kill each other for a crumb. K. sees an old man about to eat a bit of bread he was lucky enough to snatch from the crowd. Just as he brings the bread to his mouth, someone throw himself on top of him and beats him up. the old man cries out: "Meir, Meir, my boy! don't you recognize me? I'm your father . . . you're hurting me ... you’re killing your father! I've got some bread . . .for you too for you too." The son grabs the bread from the father, the father dies, and the son is fallen upon by two others. "When they withdrew, next to me were two corpses, side by side, the father and the son. I was fifteen years old. Fine 22.

D. the last night

"The first night in Buna. Yet another last night. the last night at home, the last night in the ghetto, the last night in the train, and, now, the last night in Bun. How much longer were our lives to be dragged out from one 'last night' to another?"

1) the death marches

The Oppression of black Americans

I. Main points

A. Historical view demonstrates that racism was just not

a glitch in an otherwise non-racist society

B. Political institutions that supposedly embodied the highest ideals of our society resisted to the last, with violence, indifference 1830s Abolitionist movement

1. Supreme Court - Dred Scott

a. blacks are non-persons, less than human

b. "property" that can be taken into new

territory

2. Congress - Fugitive Slave Law- 1850

a. Blacks had to prove they were not escaped

b. slave owner only needed affidavit from

friend

3. Lincoln

C. Racism is not just personal racism, racial hatred, stereotyping, but institutionalized

1. denying people their rights

2. differential access to social resources

3. institutionalized poverty is the main way racism

takes shape in our society

II. Post-civil war to the 1960s a different form of racial oppression took shape in American society: economic, political, violent

A. Economic - free at last - south

1. 9/10ths of blacks lived in south which was still

an agrarian economy with emerging mining and mills

2. Bs excluded from new jobs, and given no land

after the war except Sherman

3. land given to slave owners, or sold in large sections

to land speculators

4. Blacks were contract labor, or tenant farmers

B. Economic - north -

1. discriminatory hiring practices, kept blacks in

specific low wage sectors

2. unions excluded Blacks, last hired first fired, scabs

3. Blacks were displace by newly arriving white immigrants

C. political -south

1. after 1877 Great Compromise 15Th not enforced

2. Blacks disenfranchised, no pres., congr., or sup. ct. 1965

3. 14th not enforced, Supreme Court ruled Civil Rights

Act of 1875 unconstitutional, states can define the

rights of their citizens

4. 1913 segregation in federal buildings

5. Plessy vs Ferguson 1896 "inequality is the law of the land

6. 1920s forced sterilization of Blacks

D. violence

1. after 1877 increased violence

2. thousands of Blacks hanged and burned from late

nineteenth to middle of 20th century

3. lynching not a crime, no pres, no congress

4. KKK not one person convicted of lynching until 80s

5. white race riots, E. St. Louis, Chicago, Detroit, LA

III. De facto segregation and poverty

A. US is highly segregated, minorities in pockets of poverty

in inner city urban areas, also in suburbs, when an area

gets to be more than 8% Black, whites moved out

1. 86% of whites live in suburbs that are less than

1% black

2. In Chicago 71% of Blacks live in areas 9/10th black

In Detroit 61%, in Philadelphia, same in most

major cities and becoming more concentrated 80s

to 90s

2. 3 out of 5 poor Blacks and Latinos live urban areas

3. Blacks and Latinos in "high poverty" 40%

4. increase in poor-poor

B. Power and poverty - social construction of the urban ghetto

1. not just wealth 3x thrifty diet = $15,000 for 4

2. excludes from social resources and opportunities

C. policies and programs send resources elsewhere, exclude

minorities and other poor, and show no regard for their

effect

1. black migration - white flite

a. government subsidy of white flight

b. despite law loans outside of urban areas to

suburbs - no reinvestment

3. federal abandonment

a. government spending lost 3/4 trillion from

1980-1995

b. continued to fund suburbanization

c. urban renewal

4. state and local tax abatements for urban renewal

a. ball parks and high rises

b. business exclusion

D. Declining quality of life

1. poverty

a. high poverty areas 40% increased total from

1970 3.7 million to 1990 10.4 million

b. Increase in poor-poor 39% of those in poverty

c. Children in poverty and minority children

a. 20% in poverty 1972-3.4 million to

1993 15.7 million

b. minority 1 in 2 under 3

4. decaying infrastructure

a. Germany and Japan spend 3 to 4x

the amount the US does on infrastructure

b. 7200 public works projects on hold because

of lack of funds

c. doing these projects would create 420,000

jobs in one year

d. 40% of bridges need to be reworked

5. Housing crisis - slumlording, gentrification, warehousing, so-called urban renewal

a. half of all tenants pay more than 30% of

their income for rent, that is above the

definition for affordable housing

b. since 1970 rents have 3x and incomes have

2x

c. 50s 2/3 could afford a house on less than one

quarter of their income, 90s 1/10

d. 19 million face threat of homelessness, 1/5

families

6. schools - property tax

7. health and health care

a. Disease - 5xto 6x the chance of dying of infectious

disease

b. Immunization - % is below some third world

countries, El Salvador, Uganda, North Korea, Cuba

i. NYc 40% compared to other Industrial

nations 100%

ii. tuberculosis coming back with resistant

strains

c. Infant Mortality rate - Bed Stuy same as Chile and Malaysia

d. hospitals shutting down, refusing treatment

e. 43 million uninsured

f. backroom clinics for treatment

g. doctors disproportionate

8. environmental racism

a. Chicago 162 toxic hot spots 60 % are in areas

predominantly African American

b. highest industrial toxic releases in minority area

c. same with illegal dumping and led poisoning

9. auto dependency and inadequate public transportation

a. freeways, garages, highways destroy inner

city areas

b. take up space air pollution - 86 million in areas

that don't meet standards

10. crimes, drugs, and gangs

D. continued discrimination

1. housing and insurance

2. police and violence

3. health care

Night - Elie Wiesel (b Sep 30, 1928 Sighet, Hungary) originally published While the World Remained Silent 800 pages

I. Narrative structure

A. told through the eyes of fifteen year old Eliezer

1. Eliezer "my god is strength (help)

2. "Eli" - "my god", first two words of Psalm 22

3. Eleazar transformed to Lazarus

B. Story is deportation of Jews in Hungary in 1944

1. largest remaining population

2. Nazis came in 1944 March, one month later 15,000

from Sighet

3. 75% of Hungarian Jews gassed immediately

4. used open pits because of backlog

5. called the holocaust which means burnt offering,

shoah in Hebrew or hurbn in Yiddisn

C. Temoiginage or first-hand account of concentration camp

experience for those

1. associated with the word witness temoin

2. Witness is ambivalent

3. Wiesel waited 10 years to write

4. 1954 meeting with Francois Mauriac

D. The book is not just a straight narrative

1. mise en scene - nightmare

a. Eliezer is moved from taken for granted world

i. fervent belief in God's relationship to

Jewish people - Covenant

ii. God acts in history

iii. "natural" relationships of family, friends,

and communities - these are the ways human

beings act

iv. moral order

2. night is a metaphor for the universe of the

concentration camp

a. where human beings define themselves by their

capacity to do evil

George Steiner: "the camp embodies, often down to minutiae, the images and chronicles of Hell in European art and thought from the twelfth to the eighteenth centuries . . .The concentration and death camps of the twentieth century, wherever they exist under whatever regime, are Hell made immanent. The are the transference of Hell from below the earth to its surface. They are the deliberate enactment of a long, precise imagining."

b. no rational or moral order

3. animal metaphors

4. the Kingdom of Night doesn't kill Eliezer, the survivors,

however, or it delays killing, Simone Weil on delayed forms of killing

"From the power to transform him into a thing by killing there proceeds another power, and much more prodigious, that which makes a thing of him while he still lives. He is living, he has a soul, yet he is a thing."

5. Corpse in the mirror

II. The themes of Night

A. Religious

1. Eliezer is the embodiment of a particular religious attitude

a. he is deeply religious

b. so religious is father is worried because he is

studying the cabbala

2. Eliezer not faith (pisitis) but trust (emunah) relationship where God is present in history

3. Eliezer like other Jews of Sighet do not believe Moche's

warning

4. New fascist government in 1944 Nazis move in, life

is normal

5. Eichmann and the SS (Sondereinsatzkommando) or Special Action Unit with the cooperation

a. Hungarian government

b. Hungarian police

c. Jewish councils

6. "Night fell." Story interrupted (taken for granted world) and never finished, or Night is the finish

7. Deportation and Auschwitz

a. Madame Schacter

b. open pits, children being burned alive

c. never will I forget that night

8. Reduction to a thing

a. naked, shaving, clothes, number

b. defaite du moi "dissolution of the self"

9. Rosh Hashanah "I was the accuser . . ."

10. the young child hanging, there is your God

L. Langer: "The ritual of death ungraced by the possibility of resurrection."

11. "From the depths of the mirror, a corpse gazed back

at me. The look in his eyes. " Dead self will always be

with him

B. Elie Wiesel and God

1. Maurice Friedman calls him the Job of Auschwitz

2. Wiesel and Job

a. Job is model of questioning and contending

b. Abraham, Jeremiah

3. God's silence has violated the covenant

a. if God is involved in man's destiny, esp. the destiny of the Jews

b. Ivan and Fr Pantaleaux "the suffering of the

innocent" undermines the idea of justness of

God's kingdom

c. stands in relation of contention and questioning,

wrote a play "The Trial of God"

C. Father - Son

1. Only humanity in the Kingdom of Night is this relationship of mutual caring and support

a. "My hand shifted . . . not to lose him"

b. even after operation runs into snow "I did not want to lose him

2. Father saves Eliezer

a. early he lets Eliezer have his bread

b. in march through snow

i. "My father's presence is the only thing

that stopped me"

ii. vow to keep each other from sleeping

iii. fathers voice as life line (100)

c. on the train from Gleiwitz to Buchenwald

i. someone is choking Eliezer

ii. father saves him through surrogate Meir

Katz

3. Eliezer saves Father

a. causes disturbance when father is selected in

Gleiwitz

b. train to Buchenwald when father is mistaken for

dead, wakes him

D. Goal of Nazis is deconstruction of self, reducing men to less

than human, incl. making enemies and strangers

1. Eliezer is afraid he will abandon his father

2. Bela Katz Sonderkommando put owns father's body into crematorium

3. Pipel beats own father for not making his bed properly

4. Rabbi Eliahou and his son (97) and terrible thought

5. "Meir, Meir"

E. Eliezer's abandonment

1. Kapo hits father who crawls like an animal

"I did not move . . ."

2.Buna Idek beats father with iron bar "anger against father"

3. After alert hoping not to find father 'all my strength

for my own survival

4. drinks father's soup after rejecting it

F. Eliezer judges himself guilty