

Publication

Trauma and Utopia: Benjamin, Adorno, and Elie Wiesel's Night

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This essay draws on the work of Walter Benjamin and Theodor W. Adorno to explore the relations between two notions that seem opposed to one another at first sight: trauma and utopia. Writing against the background of the First World War, the Second World War, and the Holocaust, both Frankfurt School theorists insist on the difficulty of thinking utopia in times of trauma. For both, utopia must not be depicted from within a radically debased world. At the same time, they join Elie Wiesel, who in his radically dark Holocaust memoir *Night* asserts that the utopian imagination is needed in a world that has seen the Shoah because utopias promise to liberate the individual and open the present up to that which may transcend it.

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