

Thesis statement: “And we will not understand what Auschwitz is if we do not first understand who or what the Muselmann is—if we do not learn to gaze with him upon the Gorgon.” (52)

I. “The Witness”

*”tacit confusion of ethical categories and juridical categories” (18)

--“Eichmann feels guilty before God, not before the law” (23; *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 21)

--“the tacit assumption of moral guilt attempts to compensate for legal guilt” (24)

*the testimony containing a “lacuna” (33) and the impossibility of bearing witness

--the “complete witnesses” and the “pseudo-witnesses” (34)

--”...the drowned would not have testified because their death had begun before that of their body. Weeks and months before being snuffed out, they had already lost the ability to observe, to remember, to compare and express themselves. We speak in their stead, by proxy. (34; Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, 83-4)

II. “The Muselmann”

*”...the Muselmann’s “third realm” is the perfect cipher of the camp, the non-place in which all disciplinary barriers are destroyed and all embankments flooded” (48)

*”the impossibility of gazing upon *Muselmann*” (50)

--“...the sight of *Muselmänner* is an absolutely new phenomenon, unbearable to human eyes” (51)

--“The Gorgon and he who has seen her and the *Muselmann* and he who bears witness to him are one gaze; they are a single impossibility of seeing” (54)

*legal *dignitas* and its moral transposition (66-69; cf. 22)

--“...dignity is something autonomous with respect to the existence of its bearer, an interior model or an external image to which he must conform and which must be preserved at all costs” (69)

--“the slightest distance between real person and model, between life and norm” collapses in “extreme situations.”(69)

--“ultimate sentiment of belongs to the species” (69; cf. 58, “an almost biological claim of belonging to the human species,” Robert Antelme)

--“their death is not death” (70): “the fabrication of corpse” (71-72)

--“...is there truly any sense at Auschwitz in distinguishing a proper death from an improper death?” (74)

--“The appropriation of the improper is no longer possible because the improper has completely assumed the function of the proper...” (76)

--“If in Being-towards-death, it was a matter of creating the possible through the experience of the impossible (the experience of death), here the impossible (mass death) is produced through the full experience of the possible, through the exhaustion of its infinity.” (77)

*”biopolitics coincides immediately with thanatopolitics” (83)

--“The fundamental caesura that divides the biopolitical domain is that between people and population, which consists in bringing to light a population in the very bosom of a people, that is, in transforming an essentially political body into an essentially biological body, which birth and death, health and illness, must then be regulated. With the emergence of biopower, every people is doubled by a population; every *democratic* people is, at the same time, a *demographic* people” (84)

--*Muselmann* as “an absolute biological substance” (85); hence “the complete witness” “who can survive the human being” (82)