

Speaking of Trauma...

by

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Certificate of Approval

This is to certify that the accompanying thesis by Christopher Warren Reimann has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with Honors in Politics.

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Abstract

How does narrative, in varied forms, help us understand subject formation in the wake of trauma? This essay explores how voices are heard and by whom through a comparison of the Jewish Holocaust and the modern phenomenon of drone warfare. It focuses on how people come to understand their experiences, specifically the ones that are not supposed to make sense. Do differences in the particularities of someone's experiences affect the ways they come to understand what happened to them? Do these particularities affect how others come to understand these experiences as well? And finally, who is allowed to "think" about those events, and who is not? Focusing specifically on personal testimony and its relationship to narrative, this is a discussion of the ways that distinct stories are reproduced and represented so as to make sense within western structures of common understanding. This essay suggests that the work of comparison may offer some possibilities political solidarity, as it goes against any notion of clear categorization.

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Introduction

“Are you a victim, survivor or thriver?”

Jay asked me this as we lay in our sleeping bags in Fourth of July Meadow below Arapahoe Peak in the Colorado Rockies. I whispered back, a little embarrassed that I didn't know, “what does that mean?” We were two days into a backpacking trip. He was a counselor at a weeklong summer camp based out of Estes Park, CO for children who had suffered burns from a variety of experiences.

“Well... you can kind of think of it as categories, or ways to think about your experiences. It's pretty hard not to be a victim of our experiences at first. Trauma is really hard. But with time we all become survivors. Our experience is no longer a burden, but something we can live with. Life goes back to normal... or at least more normal. The thriver part is a bit more complicated though. Traumatic thrivers make something of their experience. They don't just live with it, but turn it into a fuel for something.”

“How do you know when you've become a survivor, or a thriver?” I asked. It had been two years ago almost to the day since the plane crash, and I had never really thought of myself as victim to anything but a crazy mishap. Concepts of survivor and thriver had never crossed my mind.

“It's not cut and dry” Jay responded, “and we slip back and forth between them. When I'm here, I feel like I am thriving. But a lot of times when I'm home, I think I'm just surviving.”

“Ok... Then I think I’m a thriver. My experiences don’t have to be bad and they give me an interesting perspective on the world. Why be afraid of them?” I was pretty naïve when I said this.

This is an essay on trauma, which is a difficult topic to discuss in most circumstances. The Oxford English Dictionary defines trauma as, “a psychic injury, especially one caused by emotional shock the memory of which is repressed and remains unhealed.” (OED, “trauma” 2a). Sigmund Freud articulated a similar idea in “Mourning and Melancholia” when he described melancholia as a neurosis produced by loss (Freud 1959, 154-156). Unlike mourning, which Freud originally ties to the finality of death, melancholia “for the most part extend[s]... to include all those situations of being wounded, hurt, neglected, out of favour, or disappointed” (Freud 1959, 160). Melancholia breaks from mourning because it is a neurosis; it remains unhealed. From another viewpoint, it might be said that people generally don’t like rehashing their own or others’ traumatic experiences, and for good reason.

Living with trauma is never cut and dry. One does not become a thriver – nor a victim - and settle in. Even if traumatic experiences provide a perspective on the world, part of that perspective requires being unsettled. Thriving on trauma is difficult, so it happens briefly, in stops and starts. Like any major injury sustained, physical wounds do not simply heal. Scars ache randomly years after they are healed as reminders of the trauma that caused them, reminding us of past experiences. But no one refers to their wrist as the “victim” of traumatic fracture. One important goal of this essay is to erase

the term “victim” or at least its passive connotations. It is not that trauma is not a victimizing event. Instead, I hope to point out the constraining effects of the word.¹

Trauma is shocking, caused by experiencing something out of the ordinary. Because it is so unusual, the event is difficult to make sense of. The mental wound doesn’t heal. Though this may explain why someone might not want to talk about their trauma, I also find it a reductive understanding of the varied ways people may deal with their experiences. This essay explores how voices are heard and by whom through a comparison of the Jewish Holocaust and the modern phenomenon of drone warfare. I will attempt to compare articulations of the self in the face of trauma through reading Victor Frankl’s memoir of surviving the concentration camps, *Man’s Search For Meaning*, with the personal testimony Rafiq, Zubair, and Nabila Rehman - a family who survived a drone strike, but lost a grandmother. The Rehman’s provided testimony at a 2013 US Congressional briefing. I am interested in how people come to understand their experiences, specifically the ones that are not supposed to make sense. Do differences in the particularities of someone’s experiences affect the ways they come to understand what happened to them? Do these particularities affect how others come to

¹ Bonnie Honig, via a “close [re]reading” of Freud’s “Mourning and Melancholia,” suggests that “grief is not ended by mourning, per se, but rather by way of its *interruption by pleasure*, by hunger for food or sex.” This is a pleasure-based counter to the “work of proper mourning.” In *Antigone*, the interruption of food or sex is replaced by Creon “who says that if she is not stopped by force her dirge will go on forever.” In other words, unless someone interrupts her, she will go on mourning forever. But *Antigone* takes advantage of the space opened by the interruptions. She works “the interval between “phone,” sound, and “logos,” meaning, providing a new way to make sense of her death. Through working the interval, she takes back the “power of definition” from Creon, and works to defines the meaning of her own death. Bonnie Honig, “*Antigone’s Two Laws: Greek Tragedy and the Politics of Humanism*,” *New Literary History*, 41, no. 1 (Winter 2010), 9, 18-19.

understand these experiences as well?² And finally, who is allowed to “think” about those events, and who is not? As I was in part spurred on by my own experiences, the piece is also peppered with short vignettes that have helped frame my thoughts on the matter. Hopefully they will help the reader understand how I came to my conclusions.

² These questions are in part inspired by Judith Butler’s work in *Precarious Life*. Her formative question – “What makes for a grievable life” – is very similar to my own. The distinction in our projects lies largely in our primary sources, which is reflected in the formulations of our questions as well. Butler is attempting to understand what makes a grievable life, as in who defines a life as one worth mourning or not. Therefore she looks to the sources of power in attempting to understand who defines life. Her introduction only cites Western newspaper articles. She further relies on western philosophers of past and present to articulate her ideas. Occasionally, she looks to how power has interacted with individuals, and references how they articulated their experience. Early in the piece, she references a Palestinian man who tried to get the *San Francisco Chronicle* to publish obituaries for some family members who had died in Palestine. They refused on the grounds that these deaths could not be confirmed. She notes that he eventually got a short “memorial” published, and then relegates his words to a footnote in her own work. Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Varo, 2004), 20, 35-37, 153-154.

Comparing Testimony

What is the point of comparing these events? Some modern thinkers, like Hannah Arendt, think the concentration camps mark a stark break in Western morality. Because of this, Arendt believes there is no possibility of comparing anything with the camps, “for the very reason that [they] stand outside life and death.” Humans are in the world of the living, the camps are outside of it. As described in *Origins of Totalitarianism*, any attempt, even by survivors, to the camps understand is futile, as they are incomprehensible to the living (Arendt 2000, 125). Power within the camps is in wild excess, destroying the human so completely that their death was simply “the seal on the fact that [they] had never really existed” (Arendt 2000, 133). Inmates are dismembered through the three deaths of a person - the death of the juridical, moral, and individual person, all achieved as prisoners march themselves slowly towards the “holes of oblivion” that are the gas chambers (Arendt 200, 140).

People are sent to the camps because they don't have a place; they are stateless (Arendt 2000, 128). This kills the juridical person. Once in the camps every decision is reduced to the decision between “murder and murder.” Moral choice is killed along with the moral person. No matter what anyone does in the camps - SS officer, prisoner, or otherwise - their actions are evil. Beyond that, the camps destroy the possibility of a prisoner's death meaning anything. There are no witnesses in the camps because, when perfected, there are no survivors (Arendt 2000, 133). Once the prisoners have marched themselves to the gas chambers en masse, everyone witnesses each other's deaths.

There is no one left to tell about it (Arendt 2000, 135). And if no one knows about the prisoner's death, how could it have any meaning?³

This analysis is daunting. Arendt correctly notes that the Jewish Holocaust – and broadly traumatic events - by its very nature, does not make any sense. It is difficult to compare things if one cannot make sense of them first. Arendt is right to call such actions “radical evil,” and to argue that there can never be an evil like the Nazi's. It would be an act of bad faith to attempt any sort of conflation between the Jewish Holocaust and any other sort of trauma. That being said, comparison is not conflation. Conflation makes comparison destructive; ironically, the two are often conflated. Any good comparison works to understand how the subjects of analysis are different as well as similar. Arendt is critiquing attempts to conflate the Jewish Holocaust to any other. Even claiming that something is beyond comparison takes some small act of comparison. Regardless of whether or not there are similarities between these stories, comparing them can provide a wealth of knowledge, both in how they are different and how they are similar. In other words, to properly conduct any sort of comparison, one must work to understand situations through their unique qualities.

Arendt is a theorist of events. She worked with documentary evidence from the Nazi and Stalinist regimes to understand *The Orgins of Totalitarianism*. Alongside the distinction between comparison and conflation, it is thus necessary to understand the

³ It is important to note that after hearing from multiple survivors of the camps during the trial of Adolf Eichmann, Arendt rethought some of the claims made in “Total Domination.” She concludes the chapter of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* entitled, “Evidences and Witnesses” with the famous statement, “the holes of oblivion do not exist. Nothing human is that perfect, and there are simply too many people in the world to make oblivion possible. One man will always be alive to tell the story.” See Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, New York: Penguin Classics, 1964, 232.

differences between events and experiences. This essay is an attempt to disrupt the idea that events in themselves are distinct from the experiences they produce. We tend to think of the event as objective because it happened, whereas responses to an event are subjective because we feel them. Things that have happened can be ordered any which way such that they adequately describe what happened.⁴ Only you can experience what you have experienced.

This, in itself, carries power. Testimonies speak to the experience of a specific event. Because I faced this, saw this, I can speak to it. Or at least that is the logic that tends to accompany a testimony. Stories become more concrete because they are lived, embodied experiences. We live in a world today where testimonies carry weight because they describe a senseless event, an understanding of trauma brought about by the Jewish Holocaust in many ways.⁵ How could those who lived through the concentration camps possibly lie about feeling traumatized? Their stories must hold

⁴ Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman trace the history of the term “trauma” from its first use by the “German psychiatrist Oppenheim,” who first developed a notion of “trauma neuroses” in the late 19th century through the creation and modern usage of the diagnostic tool, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (hereafter PTSD) in 1980. Where early understandings of “trauma neuroses” tied trauma to repressed memories reappearing, modern understandings of PTSD understood trauma in reference to experiencing a specific event. In other words, for a long time the west thought experiencing a shocking event was secondary to what it brought up in the individual who experienced it. By contrast, modern understandings place full weight on the traumatic event. Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman, *Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 31-32, 77.

⁵ Fassin and Rechtman argue that the Jewish Holocaust caused a revolution in general understandings of trauma and survivors of trauma. Those who survived, survived the impossible and unthinkable. Therefore their stories were repositioned as “testimony to the unspeakable” and provide some understanding as to how “in such extreme situations, some could survive.” Fassin and Rechtman, *Empire of Trauma*, 72-77.

some truth. They have seen what had previously remained un-thought.⁶ Their stories therefore provide new insights. Their words provide insight into the human condition; withholding their stories could be seen as selfish, even treasonous to humanity.

But the opposite can also be true. Because events are thought of as more concrete, any narrative describing them naturally falls short. Beyond that, because testimony generally refers to narratives of senseless events, testimonies are doubly flawed. Those who have experienced senseless events could not possibly articulate them accurately. They are tied to the event they describe, but the event is impossible to depict completely. As victims they are granted more agency as they become more and more trapped by the title that grants them that very agency.⁷

But this is also where the work of comparison may be its most potent. If those who have experienced trauma are walled in by the name “victim,” because no one else could possibly feel what they have felt, comparison may provide a way to break down these barriers. It may even provide some ground for solidarity, albeit a strange and unstable one.

⁶ Butler, who argues for a universal understanding of humanity framed by the “consideration of a vulnerability for others”, seems to rely on this logic to make her argument. She herself is writing against a political ethics where Jews monopolize the status of victim. Making a broader claim, “victim” becomes a term that can describe people on many sides of a conflict. Butler, *Precarious Life*, 30, 103. In this, Butler articulates a notion of universal victimhood. Following Honig, who deems Butler’s ethics a “moralist humanism”, I depart with Butler here. See Honig, “Antigone’s Two Laws,” 26. To be clear, Butler is not attempting to romanticize victims of violence, but looking to the conditions that allow us to see certain people as victims and not see others at all. But even if she is arguing that we find better ways to apprehend the violence already at hand in the world, it also confines those targeted by violence to the role of victim. There is nothing beyond seeing them as victims. Instead we should be looking to how one understands themselves in the aftermath of trauma. It may provide alternate avenues of thinking, and alternate solutions to the problems of today.

⁷ Fassin and Rechtman note that “the broad application of the concept of trauma makes it possible today to both recognize and go beyond the status of victim – something that was impossible within the Holocaust model,” which sounds like the goal of Butler’s work in *Precarious Life*. On the other hand, they are also careful to note that widening our understanding of victims means that both the perpetrator and target of an atrocity are seen as “victims” and given legal rights as such. See Fassin and Rechtman, *Empire of Trauma*, 278-279.

On Testimony

As I am using personal testimonies for my primary source material, it would be odd not to consider how a testimony's form informs our understanding of trauma. On the one hand, our understanding of trauma as an event frames the testimony. On the other hand, personal testimony has become a means for us to have some understanding of trauma, an event that is supposed to make no sense. Escaping this paradox requires considering how each testimony's form affects and is affected by the specific trauma it is speaking from, the speaker themselves, and the audience listening.

There is an abundance of material on the Jewish Holocaust. Even before it ended, people were publishing articles about the camps. Over time, Holocaust literature has developed into a genre of its own. Recently, Hilda Schiff compiled and published a work of *Holocaust Poetry*. Oxford continues to publish the Journal *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* three times a year. Others have engaged in their own studies of how Holocaust testimony has been archived and used.⁸

Of all this material, why use Victor Frankl? His book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, was one of a slew of works published by survivors in the years after

⁸ As I have noted already, Butler devotes a portion of *Precarious Life* to "The Charge of Anti-Semitism." She discusses how the charge of anti-Semitism has become a means to protect the state of Israel from any criticism. This is a pivotal point for her argument, which asks us to forgo "the narcissitic preoccupation of melancholia" and shift it to the Other. Butler, *Precarious Life*, 30, 112-113. Charles Mills' *The Racial Contract* also addresses "The Jewish Holocaust" in detail. Mills, following Cesaire indicates that what is commonly called "The Holocaust" should actually be referred to as "The Jewish Holocaust." The Jewish Holocaust "is by no means a bolt from the blue, an unfathomable anomaly in the development of the West, but unique only in that it represents use of the Racial Contract against Europeans." Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 102-103.

liberation.⁹ Frankl's work occupies a unique place between the fields of academia and popular culture. As of 1992, nearly 50 years after its original publication, *Man's Search for Meaning* had sold more than three million copies (Frankl 2006, XIII). The book is also a foundational text for what later became known as Logotherapy. But he did not write the book purely as a theoretical text. "To attempt a methodical presentation of the subject is very difficult, as psychology requires a certain scientific detachment" (Frankl 2006, 6). Instead it is a "story about [his] experience," which may one day be distilled "into dry theories" (Frankl 2006, 7). This is a prophecy thus far unfulfilled, as the piece is largely absent from academic literature on the Jewish Holocaust today.

In contrast, while information and articles are currently being published about drone warfare, few include testimonials of experiences from the ground. Most drone strikes occur in remote regions of the world, such as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (hereafter, FATA) on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. The Pakistani government, citing security concerns restricts movement between the FATA and the outside world (Cavallaro et al. 2012, 26). In 2013, Rafiq, Zubair, and Nabila ur Rehman travelled to the United States to provide testimony on experiencing a drone strike. Rafiq, the patriarch of the family, was a schoolteacher in the FATA before the strike, and spent part of his testimony describing how the strike affected his work. His son Zubair, 13, and daughter Nabila, 9, spoke about the strike itself, which injured them and killed their grandmother Mamana Bibi. The youngest daughter Asma, 7, did not make the trip. They spoke and answered questions in a Congressional briefing on

⁹ Other works include Primo Levi's *If this is a Man* (1947), Elie Wiesel's *Night* (1956), and Robert Antelme's *The Human Experience* (1947).

October 29, 2013 five days after the one-year anniversary of the strike. Nabila apparently spent the night before the briefing drawing pictures to represent the event (Greenhouse 2013). She barely spoke at the briefing, so the pictures make up the bulk of her testimony. Zubair spoke at length about being a boy growing up in a drone state.

By one reading, the briefing provided Rafiq, Nabila, and Zubair a space to tell their experiences. A new voice, the Rehman, was added to the fray of domestic debates over US drone policy – a voice that is generally ignored – which suggests that the US government might in some way change its policies. Drones have been known to attack large groups or gatherings of people before, even funerals for individuals who have been killed by other drone strikes (Friedersdorf, 2013). In the FATA, “many said that they were afraid even to congregate in groups or receive guests in their home” (Cavallaro et al. 2012, 96). “We used to play outside all the time. We loved to play all sorts of game in my village: Cricket, football, volleyball,” as Zubair said, “But now people are afraid to even leave their houses.”¹⁰ The testimonies are a response to these hardships. Rafiq himself said, “Though many people in my own tribe that I know are nearly ordinary tribesman, they have been killed. They have suffered just like I have. I wish they had such an opportunity as well to come tell their story. Until they can, I speak on their behalf as well” (Rehman 2013, 32:04).

One goal of drone surveillance is developing an “archive” of life. Recording everything a community does “ensure[s] the retrospective traceability of all past movements and all their past histories” (Chamayou 2015, 39). In telling their stories, Nabila, Rafiq, and Zubair are also rewriting the “archive,” which may be one of the reasons they reinforce the fact that they are not militants (Rehman 2013, 27:50,

¹⁰ For full testimony of Rafiq, Zubair, and Nabila Rehman, see Appendix A.

40:19). Most of the time, individuals like Rafiq, his children, and his mother make up the data of this archive. Their movements are pored over by analysts who make sense of what they do and construct for them an identity. When people in the FATA are often killed because they “bear certain signatures, or defining characteristics associated with terrorist activity” (Cavallaro et al. 2012, 12), appearing at a congressional hearing disrupts the narrative being established by the archive. Giving their own understanding of the strike - establishing the fact that they are not militants or terrorists - may help reform whatever methodology was used to mis-categorize Zubair, Nabila, and their grandmother Mamana Bibi. On a broader note, sitting together as a family and reflecting on the family members not there, the Rehman show their resilience against such violence while simultaneously showing the violence itself.

Violence and trauma are often linked in one way or another. Those who have experienced and been traumatized by violence are labeled as victims. To only understand individuals as witness to a senseless event is another way to relegate them to the role of victim. People become mere products of their experiences with no agency. Frantz Fanon, a psychoanalyst and central theorist of anti-colonial thought, worked with both Algerian and Frenchmen engaged in the Algerian War of Independence as a psychoanalyst. “Like any war,” Fanon says, “the war in Algeria has created its contingent cortico-visceral illnesses...” a conclusion developed directly from the material of his practice. And as he was studying “Colonial War and [its] mental disorders,” he focused on the unique characteristics produced by the situation producing his patients. In what might be considered the foundational chapter of *Wretched of the Earth*, titled “Colonial War and Mental Disorders,” Fanon found that a

disorder unique to the colonial situation was “systemic contraction, muscular stiffness” (Fanon, 1963, 217-218). Noting the unique characteristics of this “constant muscular tonus” specifically in colonized subjects, was essential to writing his famous chapter, “On Violence.” Instead of being mere witnesses, these individuals’ experiences, as they themselves describe the sensations, was integral to any theory that Fanon developed. And though describing these sensations as “disorders” is problematic, Fanon’s methodology in developing his theoretical framework is a perfect example of what this piece hopes to do. By comparing each patient to other examples of similar situations, and both finding similarities and distinctions was where Fanon’s thoughts seem to find fruition.

Just as Zubair, Nabila, and Rafiq’s testimonies all work to understand and communicate their experiences through the material they have been given, Victor Frankl does the same. As Frankl says in the opening of the book, “I had intended to write this book anonymously, using my prison number only. But when the manuscript was completed, I saw that as an anonymous publication it would lose half its value, and that I must have the courage to state my convictions openly” (Frankl 1959, 7). At first glance signing off on such a book with one’s prison number makes sense. But there is something eerie about a voice with no body behind it. A book authored by a number reminds of such ghosts. Unlike the modern drone conflict, which attempts to perfectly classify the individual, the Jewish Holocaust was an attempt to destroy them. In openly stating his convictions, Frankl stands against this oblivion. Furthermore, he claims his trauma, which in some ways negates the possibility of him becoming victim to it.

Zubair concluded his speech with a reflection on the importance of his words in the face of such destruction. He specifically touched on the fact that his words may be unwelcome to our ears:

In the end, I have decided that welcome or not it is important for me to tell my story. I hope by telling you about my village and my grandmother I can convince you that drones are not the answer. More importantly though, I hope I can return home with a message. I hope I can tell my community that Americans listen; that America is not just drones that terrorize us from above, but a country that listens and is trying to help us solve the many problems that we face. And maybe, just maybe America may soon stop the drones. (Rehman 2013, 45:25)

Zubair mostly avoids speaking of his trauma. Instead he tells us about the person his grandmother was in his community: “she used to help the mothers in the village deliver their babies. In the evenings she would tell all of the children to gather around and she would tell us stories. Stories of her life, of her family, and of our community” (Rehman 2013, 37:45). While he does describe the drone strike and the aftermath, he ends his testimony with his village and grandmother.

Zubair, like Frankl, is trying to redefine himself as something other than a militant or victim, and again claim his experiences for his own uses. Victims are generally victims of something; a passive body shocked by an event. Zubair’s final words are far from passive. As he says, he made a decision to speak and tell his story. Instead of being the recipient of the events, he is now the teller of a story. Furthermore, his goal in speaking is not to tell his story, but instead to “return home with a message.” He would like to become a harbinger of peace and tell his community that they may soon again live in a world without constant surveillance and threat of a deadly attack. If this comes to pass, then the people in his community may change their feelings about America. They may come to see Americans as those who listen, as opposed to those who only watch and kill.

Thus far, this thesis has broadly touched on the material quality of these testimonies. I believe I have given a fairly clear picture of the importance of these testimonies in terms of their words. But the background of these pictures remains blurry. We have a book; we have a congressional briefing, and a letter. The context within which they present themselves remains blurry.

For instance, though Rafiq, Zubair, and Nabila were given the opportunity to speak at a congressional briefing, only 5 congressmen attended (Khan 2013). More important than that though, there is no official documentation of the event. By this I mean that the US government has no transcript, or video of the event. I have searched through all congressional records of that day I could find, and there is not even a mention of the briefing anywhere. The transcription of the briefing is my own, gathered from a shaky third-party video recording. Some sections are incomprehensible. Indeed, this testimony is filled with gaps. I have been able to fill a few by cross-referencing certain quotes with other sources – the difficult-to-hear name of the Rehman’s lawyer for instance, which I found in other articles (Sledge 2013). By contrast, Frankl’s book, as I mentioned earlier, has sold more than 3 million copies. The material differences between these two testimonies are vast, and it begs the reasonable question: Does the unique form each testimony takes cause problems when comparing the ideas each of them posits?

In researching the Calcutta jute mill industry for his book, *Rethinking Working Class Histories: Bengal 1890-1940*, Dipesh Chakrabarty found himself facing a similar roadblock. There was and still is a distinct lack of material information available regarding the “conditions of the jute-mill workers of Calcutta” (Chakrabarty 1989, 65).

Thus when trying to conduct a historiography of a non-European working class, he was left in the dark. In response, he developed a different form of reading, looking both to the documents themselves and the conditions that produced them, in his case colonialism. Like Chakrabarty with the Jute mill industry, I hope to read these testimonials, my own included, with an ear “for both what they say and their ‘silences’” (Chakrabarty 1989, 65). Though Chakrabarty was writing about the “silences” in colonial documentation of the Calcutta Jute Mill industry, the idea speaks well to these narratives as well. Chakrabarty’s used the materials provided by generations of colonialism to understand what animated the working classes of Calcutta. Where material sources were missing, Chakrabarty asked why there was silence.¹¹ Though this is not necessarily a methodology of comparison, it does show one important principle to keep in mind when comparing vastly different things. Where there are silences – which we might read here as impregnable or opaque differences – one should ask why and delve deeper.

Despite the important differences laid out above, both testimonies are disjointed and leave silences. Because of the differences, these silences appear uniquely and must each be understood in their own way. In Zubair, Nabila, and Rafiq’s case, the silences, at times, are literal. They are speaking through a translator, and because I do not speak Pashtun, I must rely on the translation. And the translator herself is somewhat controversial. Zubair commented on this when he said, “the US

¹¹ Honig sees interruptions as generative moments. In Antigone’s dirge, she is interrupted twice by Creon, each moment marking a turn in the lament. She looks specifically to the moments before and after each interruption in her analysis, and finds that after the second interruption people listen. Interruptions cause brief moments of silence after them, and draw stray ears back to the conversation. For Honig, these silences are generative moments where Antigone is given the opportunity to define the meaning of her own death. Honig, “Antigone’s Two Laws”, 10-11, 16-17. Understood this way, one might understand Chakrabarty’s silences as integral to Honig’s interruptive moment.

refused to let my lawyer Shahzad Akbar come with me. He used to visit the US all the time, but since he started helping people like me the US now says he isn't welcome" (Rehman 2013, 44:45). Akbar was supposed to translate for the family at the briefing, but the State Department barred his attempts to enter (Sledge 2013). All I could find in my research was that the family would find another translator to bring (Mohiudin 2013).

Hence, while there are always words being spoken at the briefing, in either English or Pashtun, there are silences in understanding. They appear in the breaks and white space and represent the times when Rafiq, Zubair, or Nabila actually spoke. Bracketed silences in the transcript mark moments when I could not understand the video's audio feed, or for instance when the translator breaks down and cries. Also, Nabila, Zubair and Rafiq experienced silences during the hearing, both when they were being translated to the congressmen and when different congressmen talked back and forth. No one translated the congressmen's banter.

When each of them wait to be translated, or wait for the congressmen to finish speaking, their silences mark a power structure in the room. The hearing takes place in Washington DC, in a US Congressional hearing room. Although it probably goes without saying, the congressmen needed no translation for their own conversations. Outside of the briefing, the Rehman's were guests of the United States. The fact that Shahzad Akbar, their lawyer and personal translator, was denied a visa by the State Department further suggests that their presence in the US was constrained in some ways. The other silences are better described as silences in material. White space between where the translator spoke and the bracketed spaces are distinct and represent

material silences in my own sources. Comparing the unique qualities of the material silences in the Rehman's testimony apparent in the transcript with those of Frankl's book may illuminate our understanding of both.

Frankl's fragmented moments - unlike the Rehman's testimonies - were forcibly disjointed by power structures - were a product of the form his testimony takes, weaving narrative and theory in a book. He teases himself, saying things like, "but I am telling things out of their turn" (Frankl 2005, 13). But there are also strange moments in his writing when he breaks from both of these narratives and addresses a comrade from the camps directly:

Otto, where are you now? Are you alive? What has happened to you since our last
your together? Did you find your wife again? And do you remember how I made you
learn my will by heart - word for word - in spite of your childlike tears? (55)

Frankl is writing an auto-narrative, which requires and allows for some poetic jumps. Calling to a friend directly when every other name in the book is either avoided or erased by a dash indicates something of import (Frankl 2005, 13, 19). Maybe Otto remains alive, or Frankl truly doesn't know. Maybe the others he mentions are either dead, or people whose names he would rather not give credence to, like capos or SS officers. Frankl leaves us with questions as a way to represent what the book is attempting to describe. There are no ways to clearly define the camps, no tool that can objectify what happened. Frankl fights facts with experience (Frankl 2005, 3).

These material differences (putting power dynamics aside for the moment) might be boiled down in two ways. Spoken words carry different weight than written ones and a transcript can never truly represent that. This essay draws on Rafiq, Zubair, and Nabila's individual stories, but the Rehman family is also discussed as a whole. In comparison, when Frankl is discussed, only Frankl is discussed. So while Frankl's

book is dense in the sense that it gives a deeper understanding of an individual's experience, The Rehman's individual testimonies are also tied to a broader understanding of a family's experience.

The differences here are neither "good" nor "bad," but important to keep in mind nonetheless. Although Frankl's testimony lacks the clear silences of the Rehman's, this does not mean it requires less scrutiny. On the contrary, this indicates that both texts require just as rigorous a reading. Frankl's book lends itself to being read as auto-narrative, but why should that form of reading only apply to a book? Who's to say that that Zubair, Nabila, and Rafiq are not theorizing about their experiences, and/or also wielding them as tools against facts? This leads to questions such as: Why does one testimony appear in a book while the others are actively being erased from any documented history? What does it mean that Amazon can send me a copy of *Man's Search for Meaning* overnight, but the US government still has not provided any documentary evidence of Rafiq, Zubair, and Nabila's? Answering these questions requires reading both texts doubly. First, it is important to read them for their "silences," as Chakrabarty might. Second, as a way to get at the first reading, both pieces must also be read as poetic.

Power (Silences)

I'd driven this stretch of road between Gearhart and Astoria, Oregon plenty of times, but never staring at the ribbed metal ceiling of an ambulance. I could tell we were moving fast because I was being jostled around. In Astoria, I got a glimpse of the still-grey sky between the ceiling of the van and the hospital as they rushed me inside. A doctor had me state my name and birthday. I guess they wanted to make sure I was really me. I just asked them if I could go to sleep. Once knocked out I was apparently helicoptered to Emmanuel Hospital in Portland. Most of my family was from the city or had grown up there, so for the next month - while my mother, sister, and I were recovering - we were surrounded by family and loved ones.

A decade passes and I am sitting on a couch in my basement recovering from shoulder surgery, still surrounded by family. It is July, and wandering around outside sweating in my sling doesn't sound enjoyable. Instead, I pick up a piece entitled, "Living Under Drones" that John Oliver had used for a segment on drones I had watched. The study analyzed interviews of drone strike victims and their families. Interviewees tell vivid disturbing stories, forcing me to engage with drones from the ground instead of the sky. Reading accounts of family members "collecting [the] body pieces and bones [of their loved ones] and then bury[ing] them" brought to mind a rainy November morning, and lowering the urn of my sister's ashes into the ground (Cavallaro et al. 2012, 60). Reading of children in the FATA who "scream and drop like something bad is going to happen" at the sound of a slammed door reminded me of my mother who jumped at almost anything and whose temper was short for some time

after the accident. But it seemed strange considering that the stories were so different.

Upon returning to school in the fall of my junior year I asked a professor to read a short piece I had put together on the comparison. When I told her the basic idea, she suggested I write my senior thesis on this topic. The idea stuck.

What creates silence in a testimony? Many things. Silence creates testimonies, in the sense that one cannot testify without quiet listeners. Narrators themselves may allow for silence as a storytelling device that adds suspense, and gives space for thought. They can signal important moments as when a statement or testimony silences a room. And it almost goes without saying that something or someone can silence a testimony. Generally, some form or another of power seems to cause these silences. Being at an institution like Whitman College gives me the power and resources to write this piece. The power of a book, alongside the power provided by a traditional Western education, at least partially, gives Frankl his ability to testify to his experience. At the very least it lends his voice authority for many. The same is true of the form that Nabila, Zubair or Rafiq's testimonies take. They would not be heard if not for the government that provided them a briefing room, microphones, and likely a translator. Each of these testimonies and trauma's particularities lends them their strengths. Seeing them, or hearing their testimonies, as victims constrains them.

But even before any individual can tell their story, they must have a story to tell. Before looking to silences in the story, it is essential to understand the stories themselves, and what created them. On the one hand this is an impossible task, considering that traumatic events are nonsensical. On the other hand, this does not

mean that they are impossible to understand. It simply requires that we do not make sense of the situation. In other words, if what we define as making sense does not match the situation at hand, then it is incumbent upon us as viewers to redefine our sense of nonsense. Understanding does not come by smashing a rectangle into a circular hole; instead we must round our rectangle. It is safe to assume that there is at least some common ground between these stories in that all three describe something shocking. A plane falling from the sky is shocking and random. This is not true of those moments that forever changed Frankl's or the Rehman's lives. In *Man's Search for Meaning*, Victor Frankl describes shuffling by an SS officer:

his right hand was lifted, and with the forefinger of that hand he pointed very leisurely to the right or to the left. None of us had the slightest idea of the sinister meaning behind that movement of a man's finger, pointing now to the right and now to the left, but far more frequently to the left (Frankl 2006, 12).

The motion indicating the action is so mundane that in the moment, even the prisoners themselves do not quite understand what is happening. The fact that the officer is "leisurely" pointing people to their death or their life, playing god as if it was nothing, indicates that they are not random events. Someone decided who would live and who would die. The guard showed Frankl and his fellow prisoners that their lives were worthless.

The testimony of Zubair ur Rehman offers a similar story. He describes helping his mother prepare for the Islamic holiday of Eid: "As I helped my grandmother in the field, I could see and hear the drone hovering overhead. But I did not worry. Why would I worry? Neither my grandmother nor I were militants" (40:19). Zubair reasonably assumed that the drone above his head was not there for him or his grandmother. Similarly, as Frankl passed the officer who gave him his "first verdict" in

Auschwitz (Frankl 2006,12), he made the reasonable assumption that such a nonchalant process of sorting was for literally anything but its actual purpose. For both, these assumptions proved false.

While a plane falling from the sky could be described as random in the sense that no one planned it, Frankl's and the Rehman's experiences might better be described as arbitrary – at least from the eyes of power. Someone planned their deaths. Someone saw a name, or a number, a few minutes of video, or a few seconds of someone shuffling by, and chose whether they deserved to live or die based off that information. Someone classified their life as arbitrary, “collateral damage.”¹² There was a point to their death being arbitrary, which was to show these individuals, and the world exactly how much they were worth (Arendt 2000, 131). When the guard flicks his finger this way or that, he is pointing out – literally - to all that can see just how worthless these lives are to the power that be. The fact that the US is crating an archive to “anthologize” these lives, indicates that the Rehman's are at least worth something to the United States.

Where there was no real methodology behind the guard pointing, the US made a point of shooting a missile at Zubair, Nabila, Asma, or their grandmother. The Rehman's were likely the product of a “signature strike,” where a terrorist is labeled based on a “pattern of life analysis” (Cavallaro et al. 2012, 12), what Gregoire Chamayou describes as “strikes authorized on the basis of traces, indicates, or defining

¹² The Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms defines collateral Damage as “unintentional or incidental injury or damage to persons or objects that would not be lawful military targets in the circumstances ruling at the time. Such damage is not unlawful so long as it is not excessive in light of the overall military advantage anticipated from the attack.” “Collateral Damage,” Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, Wikileaks, Last updated September 2007, [https://www.wikileaks.org/wiki/Collateral_damage_\(military\)](https://www.wikileaks.org/wiki/Collateral_damage_(military))

characteristics” (Chamayou 2013, 47). Mamana Bibi and her grandchildren became terrorists because the US had been watching them, most likely, for days before the strike. They theoretically studied their movements. Once all information was gathered, a grandmother, and her three grandchildren became “threats” to the United States of America.

And they are not the only victims of these analyses. As Rafiq says, “many people in my own tribe that I know are nearly ordinary tribesman have been killed” (32:04). Military analysis is supposed to make sense of a situation, but this obsession with “archiving” life (Chamayou 2013, 39) seems to have mostly produced nonsense. People living under drones are reasonably afraid of being mistaken for militants. After all if some children and an older woman fall under the categorization of militant, even if mistakenly for a moment, it doesn’t really make a difference for those the decision affects. No matter what, they are forced to stay inside where the drones have less of a chance of misunderstanding them.

Frankl describes how the prisoners bodily existence is literally reduced: “While we were waiting for the shower, our nakedness was brought home to us: we really had nothing now except our bare bodies – even minus hair; all we possessed, literally, was our naked existence” (Frankl 2006, 15). The camps scientifically stripped people of everything, reducing them entirely to their bodies. Power in the camps was so complete, that even the bodies were reduced to smoke. This is distinct from power in a drone state, where individuals are useful as data points. In the modern context drones create distance, whereas the concentration camps were immediate. Whoever pulled the trigger on Mamana Bibi and her grandchildren was likely in a storage unit at some Air

Force base in the United States. This is different from the SS guards Frankl describes hurling rocks and insults at him, and the distinction is important (Frankl 2006, 24-25). The immediacy of the camps relegated those in them to oblivion. If the US is truly attempting to establish a military archive, this is impossible. Who would act as the data for the growing “militant” identification system the US is building? They are references, so analysts can come to label terrorists or militants, and find them from the sky.

Succinctly, drones are about accumulation, whereas the camps were more interested in degradation. It takes time to both accumulate data and degrade a life. In the camps, cigarettes marked those who had “given up faith in [their] strength to carry on, and, once lost, [their] will to live seldom returned.” Cigarettes were currency for food (Frankl 2006, 8). The choice to “enjoy” one’s final moments marked a shift in the prisoner’s decision making; where before – albeit in a very limited sense – the prisoner had been inclined towards survival and therefore the future, they gave that up for the present in choosing smoke. The concentration camps attempted to control and distort time by creating a “provisional existence of unknown limit” for the prisoners (Frankl 2006, 70). The camps exerted power by destroying the possibility of a future. According to Frankl, the camps succeeded only after the individual began to believe they had no future themselves.

Time in the camps could be distorted in the way that it was because the camps were completely removed from the world. At best, the prisoners got a brief glimpse of the world through the slats of train cars as they passed by (Frankl 2006, 44-45). Arendt describes the “real horror of the concentration and extermination camps” as “the fact

that the inmates, even if they happen to keep alive, are more effectively cut off from the world of the living than if they had died, because terror enforces oblivion” (Arendt 2000, 125). Drones distort time differently. They do not cut off regions or places from the rest of the world. Instead, in a strange way they do the opposite. Without drones, there would be no information about hard-to-reach places in the world, at least not the kind useful to those in power. Analysts “learn” faster recording one’s every movement. Drones are in part so horrifying because they observe and/or strike people in their most private moments - in their homes, or their village gatherings, or even their funerals. There is no need to see for yourself when a drone can do it for you.

Narrative and Testimony

In high school, I escaped on backpacking, climbing, and skiing trips. They were a way for me to run away from the insanity of life at home, a way to feel free from all the emotions that came with that place. One leader of these escapes, a man named Peter, used to end trips by asking us, “what are the three or four images, single frames, that pop into your head when you think about this trip?” When I got home, my parents would ask me, “How was the trip?” This inevitably led to a boring recounting of event after event: “well first we did this, then that, then we camped...” and so on and so forth. Peter’s question gave me the space to narrate my experiences, describe everything about the image and what made it special. Today, whenever I look back on the trips I have taken in my life, I do not remember them in any linear fashion but in those important moments where the experience coalesced. Time never appears in this way. Yes, I was born at 7:06am on January 11, 1995, but my life did not simply unfold after that. There are moments that weigh heavier than others, ones that have affected my life more.

These moments act as the chapters to my life, or the narrative I am actively constructing in my head as a way to anthologize or remember my life. In 1998’s, “Speaking in Tenses: Narrative, Politics, and Historical Writing,” Kirsti McClure begins with Walter Benjamin’s “The Storyteller,” before moving to a comparison between Paul Ricœur and Hannah Arendt’s perspectives on the relationship between narrative and politics. Noting that both Ricœur and Arendt agree that historical writing

is also a narrative practice, McClure works to understand the distinctions in their thinking. For Arendt, the job of the historian is “like the fiction writer,” and “closely akin to the poet’s transfiguration of grief into lamentation or of jubilation into praise... Whether as historian or novelist, ‘the political function of the storyteller is to teach acceptance of things as they are,’” which is the “wellspring of ‘the faculty for judgment.’” (McClure 1998, 243).

In *Time and Narrative*, Paul Ricœur argues “Time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative achieves its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence” (Ricœur 1983, 51). While it is clear that time is always unfolding in front of me, I can only make sense of it once I start to narrate its progression for myself. Events unfold regardless. We use “narrative [to] render such things humanly meaningful” (McClure 1998, 242). According to McClure, Ricœur sees “three distinct moments in the course of narrative,” those being prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration. Prefiguration is everything we bring to an experience with us, what is “culturally sedimented differentia, semantic, symbolic, and temporal.” We then configure a narrative from the things we carry and the things we experience. Finally, after telling a story it is refigured by listeners and readers. Unlike Arendt, “the circularity of these moments, on Ricœur’s account, is productive rather than vicious.” Both of these readings of narrative, specifically Arendt’s notion of judgment and Ricœur’s notion of reconfiguration “opens a site of contingent possibility” (McClure 1998, 243). As such “narratives can incite both identification and an orientation towards praxis,” but they can never truly determine action (McClure 1998, 247).

Until this point, my essay has only engaged with testimony, which begs the question, what is the distinction between testimony and narrative? If narrative is the human means of making sense of time, or history, testimony is more tied to a specific event. Nabila, Zubair, and Rafiq provided testimonial about a drone strike to Congress. Victor Frankl provided a testimonial of the Jewish Holocaust in *Man's Search for Meaning*. Their voices are amplified by their experiences, making their narratives testimonies. Testimony, in other words, is a category of narrative. It describes those stories that explain – or at least attempt to – something out of the ordinary.¹³

Both Victor Frankl and the Rehman's testimonies are in narrative form. They are not describing the specific event of the drone strike. While it does play a role in their stories, they describe life before and after the event as well. None of traumatic events discussed in this essay are restricted to a single event. On the contrary, the fact that these experiences are drawn out is an integral part of the traumatic experience. Frankl's story begins with the writing process, and ends after liberation from the camps. Similarly, Rafiq and Zubair both describe life before the strike, as well as coming to the US. If we take Paul Ricœur at his word, that narrative is in fact how we make time "humanly meaningful," then these testimonies are not actually testimonies, but narratives. And as Ricœur says, narrative is tied to meaning, or at least making things "meaningful," which suggest that those who have experienced trauma do in fact understand their experiences in some capacity. But while explaining the distinction

¹³ Fassin and Rechtman are reasonably wary that testimony only carries weight because of the experiences being described. They see "trauma today [as] more a feature of the moral landscape serving to identify legitimate victims than it is a diagnostic category which at most reinforces that legitimacy... Ultimately, it defines the empirical way in which contemporary societies problematize the meaning of their moral responsibility in relation to the distress of the world." Fassin and Rechtman, *Empire of Trauma*, 284.

between testimony and narrative, another question has been created. A good portion of this essay has been devoted to the distinction between sense and nonsense as it relates to understanding. Insofar as Ricoeur refers to meaning, we have yet to distinguish meaning from sense.

We find meaning in our experiences through narrative, whereas something makes sense when it is put into context, when it is understood in reference to something else. This is why trauma never makes sense. It is the product of such a shocking or unusual event that there is no reference point to it. But things can hold a lot of meaning without making any sense. Narratives always mean something to those configuring them. Often the task of narration is showing that meaning to others. From there it is incumbent upon the reader to understand the story in the context the narrator presents it in.

While the Rehman's testimony to congress should carry the same weight as Victor Frankl's book, the material reality of the situation seems to point in another direction. The fact that only five congressmen attended the briefing, and that there is no transcription of the event indicates that while these stories meant something to the narrators, and even to those in the room, it is not likely that they will not be remembered in the same way that Frankl's memoir will.¹⁴ Narrative is often confined to the written or spoken word. But people also write poems, paint murals, go on walks, run away, or even go to war to try to understand themselves and even articulate

¹⁴ This initial conclusion is similar to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's in her iconic piece, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" The fact that one of these narratives is more legible because it is in book form indicates that certain types of stories are doomed to misunderstanding. Her piece concludes with an analysis of an Indian woman's suicide, which remained misunderstood for years, leading her to state that "the subaltern as female cannot be heard or read." Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana, IL: U of Illinois Press, 1988), 271-313.

themselves to others. Using alternative narratives, outside of the forms we are accustomed to, provides new material to better understand history.

Fanon describes over and over again how his patients come to him when their mental stresses are reaching a breaking point.¹⁵ In the case of the ALN fighter, Fanon stated, “as unscientific as it may seem, we believe only time may heal the dislocated personality of this young man” (Fanon 2004, 194). As Fanon’s case studies suggest, those who have experienced trauma might be waiting and finding the right way to speak or make sense of whatever plagues them. Even controlling one’s emotions, especially in the close aftermath of their own traumatic experience, can be difficult. Being asked why people feel the way they do can seem like a ridiculous question, if only for the simple reason that they hadn’t even considered why yet. This is not to say that all individuals feel this way, but the point is not to prescribe what people should or should not think. They are not unhealed. They are healing. It is other’s inability to understand whatever work they do as healing that forecloses becoming whole again.

We may conclude with Nabila ur Rehman’s testimony. I haven’t engaged with her story yet because honestly, I did not know how to. She barely spoke. She was 9 when she testified which may provide some explanation for her few words. But just because Nabila was so young does not mean that she cannot articulate her experiences. After all, Zubair was only 13. One of the most striking photos of the Rehman’s testimony is of Nabila, sitting and gnawing at her fingernails. Next to her are a stack of and a picture of her grandparents.

¹⁵ Various patients he saw arrived at his clinic with their hands tied (Series A, Case 2), after torturing their children and wives (Series A Case 5), or emaciated and “in a state of confusion” (Series B, Case 2). Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, (New York: Grove, 2004), 185-201.



Figure 1 (News Desk 2013)

Nabila was articulating herself, coming to understand herself, in an unusual way considering the circumstances. The halls of Congress are a place of serious reasoned debate, not a child's drawings. Except, for a girl of 9 in any other circumstance, drawing the images in her head isn't all that strange. My house is filled with drawings similar to the one's Nabila did in form, if not in content.

Instead of trying to understand her on our terms, we should try to understand her on her own, in pictures as opposed to words.



Figure 2 (Knefel 2013)

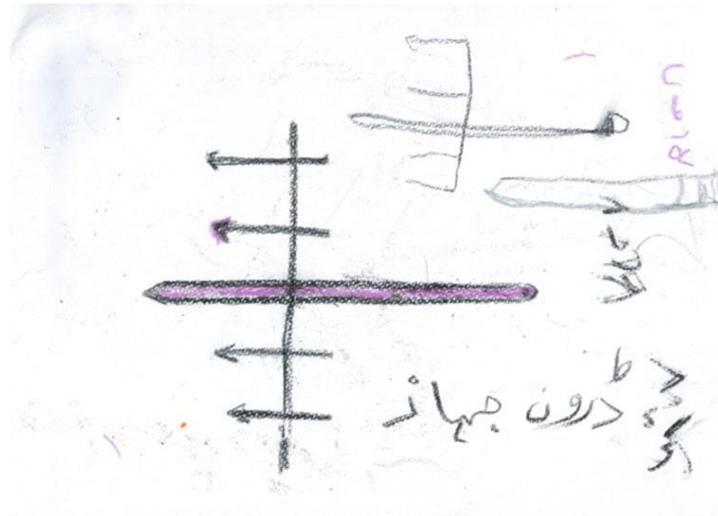


Figure 3 (Knefel 2013)

She draws her home, with windows and a door, and a tree in front of it. There are clouds in the sky, along with birds. So far, this is no different than any of the drawings I did as a kid. It portrays an idyllic landscape, with sun and birds. But she also draws strange specters that look oddly like flying tridents. This is where her drawings take on a unique meaning. If I had drawn that as a child, people would likely say I had a strange if not slightly dark imagination. They might wonder where I got such an idea, or worry about what that meant for my development. These are not

questions Nabila has, nor do we when we look at her drawings. Those specters are clearly real, and they are drones. Her drawings provide a perfect site to understand why something that I might find “nonsensical” or out of the ordinary is something that Nabila is and has dealt with. In reference to the particularity of her situation, her drawings indicate that she knows what I am only coming to understand.

My inability to understand her properly is structured by the fact that I was looking to the wrong source of comparison. She was young, and spoke little, so the drone must have struck her innocent mouth dumb. But while I was taken by her knowing at her fingernails, a clear sign of anxiety or distress, I forgot to look to what she had offered other than words. Through that comparative moment we can relate to her choice to draw by remembering when that might have been our chosen form of expression given a traumatic experience. But we can also understand how absolutely unique her experience is as well. And though this thesis has only dealt with comparison as it relates to notions of victimhood, it may also work to reveal and upend other constraining and silencing representations of distinct people.¹⁶

¹⁶ Spivak critiques a conversation between Foucault and Deleuze’s framed by two “monolithic and anonymous subjects-in-revolution: ‘A maoist’ and ‘the worker’s struggle.’” When intellectuals are referenced, their full names are used. The other they build is silent, as Foucault and Deleuze speak well enough for them. Spivak’s claim here is spurred by a reading of Bhubaneswari Bhaduri’s suicide in 1926, which she reads as a political act. Though Bhaduri was thinking politically, Spivak concludes that her message was not received - that “the subaltern as female cannot be heard or read.” Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Appendix: Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Can the Subaltern Speak?: Reflections on the History of an Idea*, ed. Rosalind C. Morris (New York: Columbia UP, 2010), 238, 282. In 2010, she wrote a piece, “In Response,” her reflection to the formative essay delivered 20 years previously, and the responses it elicited. She opens the response with “an act of private piety.” “The woman to whom Bhubaneswari wrote the letter that was forgotten was my mother’s mother.” “In Response” in *Can the Subaltern Speak?: Reflections on the History of an Idea*, ed. Rosalind C. Morris (New York: Columbia UP, 2010), 228. Spivak’s positionality led her to her conclusions and the same is true of Rafiq, Zubair, Nabila, and Frankl.

Appendix A – Rehman Family Testimony

Rafiq

Congressman Greyson. Thank for you inviting me to speak. Thank you also for everything you did to try to help our lawyer [____] obtain a visa. While in the end we did not succeed it was reassuring to me that some members of the US government were trying to shed light on the terrifying US practice. (25:40-26:00)

My name is Rafiq ur Rehman. On October 24, 2012, a CIA drone killed my 67-year-old mother and injured my children and those of my brothers. (26:25-26:35)

Nobody had ever told me why my mother was targeted that day. Some media outlets reported that the attack was on a car, but there is no car beside my mother's house. Others reported that the attack was on a house. But the missiles hit a nearby field, not a house. All of them reported that 3, 4, 5 militants were killed. (27:15-27:40)

But only one person was killed that day was [____]. A grandmother. A midwife, who was preparing to celebrate the Islamic holiday of Eid. Not a militant, but my mother. (27:50)

In Urdu we have a saying. Literally translated it means, "the string that holds the pearls together." That is what my mother was; she was the string that holds the family together. Since her death, the string has been broken and life has not been the same. We feel alone, and we feel lost. (28:40)

Four of my children were injured that day, and four of my brother's children. We have had to borrow money and sell land to pay for the children's medical treatment. There has been no compensation to help with these bills. The Pakistani government accepted my claim and confirmed the details, but has said it is not responsible, the US is. (29:25)

I am a primary schoolteacher in my community. I come from a family of teachers. Both of my brothers are teachers, and my father is a retired headmaster. (30:00)

Congressman Grayson, as a teacher, my job is to educate. But how do I teach something like this? How do I explain what I myself do not understand? How can I [____] or the children, that the drone will not come back and kill them too, if I do not understand what killed my mother and injured my children? (30:40)

My mother is not the first innocent victim of US drones. Numerous families in my community and the surrounding area have also lost loved ones [____] women and children in strikes over the years. (31:30)

Though many people in my own tribe that I know are nearly ordinary tribesman, they have been killed. They have suffered just like I have. I wish they had such an

opportunity as well to come tell their story. Until they can I speak on their behalf as well. [____]. In the end I would just like to ask the American public to treat us as peoples. Make sure the government gives us the same status as a human with basic rights as they do to their own citizens. (32:04)

This indiscriminate killing has to end. And justice must be delivered to those who have suffered at the hands of the unjust. Thank you. (33:10)

Zubair

Thank you congressman Greyson for inviting me to submit evidence today. (36:40)

My name is Zubair ur Rehmann. I am 13 years old. On October 24, 2012 I watched a US drone kill my Grandmother. I myself was injured in this [____].(37:02)

My grandmother was nobody's enemy. [____]. She used to help the mothers in my village deliver their babies. In the evenings she would tell all of the children to gather around and she would tell us stories. Stories of her life, of her family, of our community. She would tell so many stories that I can't pick a favorite. I miss all of them.(37:45)

My grandmother and I used to share a love of bright blue skies. We have many of them in the village where I live. The sky in [____] was particularly blue on October 24th 2012. I was excited. (38:20)

The next day was the start of Eid. I know that Americans do not what is Eid is. I have been told it is like Christmas. Since I do not know what Christmas is like, I cannot say. (38:53)

I can only tell you that it is a magical time filled with joy. It is a holiday every child including myself gets excited about. Just before the drone strike, my grandmother promised me that as soon as we finished our chores we could start celebrating. The night before we had helped her make sweets. I couldn't wait to try one. (39:35)

As I helped my grandmother in the field, I could see and hear the drone hovering overhead. But I didn't worry. Why would I worry? Neither my grandmother nor I were militants. When the drone fired for the first time, the whole ground shook and blast smoke rose up. (40:19)

We ran. But several minutes later the drone fired again. People from the village came to our aid and took us to hospital. We spent the night in great agony at the hospital and the next morning I was operated on. That is how we spent our Eid. (40:50)

Unfortunately my initial operation was unsuccessful and a few days later I was taken to Islamabad for treatment. The doctors examined my injured leg and said that drone

shrapnel was stuck in a very bad place. It could only be removed with a laser operation, which was very expensive. (41:25)

We did not have the money for my operation. So I had to return home with the shrapnel still in my leg. (41:55)

When we returned home my father spent months borrowing money from relatives and neighbors. It took him months but he was able to secure enough money for me to have the surgery. (42:15)

Congressman Grayson, I no longer love blue skies. In fact, I now prefer gray skies. The drones do not fly when the skies are grey and for a short period of time the mental tension and fear eases. (42:40)

But when the sky brightens the drones return and so does the fear. I know Americans think drones are the answer but I wish they could understand how I, and others in my community, see drones. (43:15)

We used to play outside all the time. We loved to play all sorts of game in my village: Cricket, football, volleyball. But now people are afraid to even leave their houses, much less travel great distances so we don't play very often. (43:40)

There are few schools in my community. But now many children have stopped going to the few that exist. This is a big problem in my community as what everyone really wants and needs is education. But education isn't possible as long as the drones circle overhead. (44:12)

I almost decided not to tell American and Mr. Grayson all of this. The US refused to let my lawyer [_____] come with me. He used to visit the US all the time, but since he started helping people lime me the US now says he isn't welcome. (44:45)

In the end, I have decided that welcome or not it is important for me to tell my story. I hope by telling you about my village and my grandmother I can convince you that drones are not the answer. More importantly though, I hope I can return home with a message. I hope I can tell my community that Americans listen; that America is not just drones that terrorize us from above, but a country that listens and is trying to help us solve the many problems that we face. And maybe, just maybe America may soon stop the drones. Thank you. (45:25)

Nabila

It was the day before Eid and my grandmother had asked me to come help her outside. As we were collecting ochre – vegetables – and then I heard from the sky a drone and a thump thump noise. (46:55)

Everything was dark and I couldn't see anything, but I heard a scream. I don't know if it was grandmother, but I couldn't see her. I was very scared and all I could think of doing was just run. I kept running but I felt something in my hand, and I looked in my hand and there was blood. I tried to bandage my hand but the blood kept coming, the blood wouldn't stop. (47:30)

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