

Directions:

1. Demonstrate evidence of close reading.
2. Highlight your confusion.
3. Answer the two questions at the bottom of the page.
4. Write a 1+ page reflection in your WN.

Terrorism That's PersonalSource: *New York Times* 11/30/08

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan

Terrorism in this part of the world usually means bombs exploding or hotels burning, as the latest horrific scenes from Mumbai attest. Yet alongside the brutal public terrorism that fills the television screens, there is an equally cruel form of terrorism that gets almost no attention and thrives as a result: flinging acid on a woman's face to leave her hideously deformed.

Here in Pakistan, I've been investigating such acid attacks, which are commonly used to terrorize and subjugate women and girls in a swath of Asia from Afghanistan through Cambodia (men are almost never attacked with acid). Because women usually don't matter in this part of the world, their attackers are rarely prosecuted and acid sales are usually not controlled. It's a kind of terrorism that becomes accepted as part of the background noise in the region.

This month in Afghanistan, men on motorcycles threw acid on a group of girls who dared to attend school. One of the girls, a 17-year-old named Shamsia, told reporters from her hospital bed: "I will go to my school even if they kill me. My message for the enemies is that if they do this 100 times, I am still going to continue my studies."

When I met Naeema Azar, a Pakistani woman who had once been an attractive, self-confident real estate agent, she was wearing a black cloak that enveloped her head and face. Then she removed the covering, and I flinched.

Acid had burned away her left ear and most of her right ear. It had blinded her and burned away her eyelids and most of her face, leaving just bone.

Six skin grafts with flesh from her leg have helped, but she still cannot close her eyes or her mouth; she will not eat in front of others because it is too humiliating to have food slip out as she chews.

"Look at Naeema, she has lost her eyes," sighed Shahnaz Bukhari, a Pakistani activist who founded an organization to help such women, and who was beginning to tear up. "She makes me cry every time she comes in front of me."

Ms. Azar had earned a good income and was supporting her three small children when she decided to divorce her husband, Azar Jamsheed, a fruit seller who rarely brought money home. He agreed to end the (arranged) marriage because he had his eye on another woman.

After the divorce was final, Mr. Jamsheed came to say goodbye to the children, and then pulled out a bottle and poured acid on his wife's face, according to her account and that of their son.

"I screamed," Ms. Azar recalled. "The flesh of my cheeks was falling off. The bones on my face were showing, and all of my skin was falling off."

Neighbors came running, as smoke rose from her burning flesh and she ran about blindly, crashing into walls. Mr. Jamsheed was never arrested, and he has since disappeared. (I couldn't reach him for his side of the story.)

Ms. Azar has survived on the charity of friends and with support from Ms. Bukhari's group, the Progressive Women's Association (www.pwaisbd.org). Ms. Bukhari is raising money for a lawyer to push the police to prosecute Mr. Jamsheed, and to pay for eye surgery that — with a skilled surgeon — might be able to restore sight to one eye.

Bangladesh has imposed controls on acid sales to curb such attacks, but otherwise it is fairly easy in Asia to walk into a shop and buy sulfuric or hydrochloric acid suitable for destroying a human face.

Acid attacks and wife burnings are common in parts of Asia because the victims are the most voiceless in these societies: they are poor and female. The first step is simply for the world to take note, to give voice to these women.

Since 1994, Ms. Bukhari has documented 7,800 cases of women who were deliberately burned, scalded or subjected to acid attacks, just in the Islamabad area. In only 2 percent of those cases was anyone convicted.

For the last two years, Senators Joe Biden and Richard Lugar have co-sponsored an International Violence Against Women Act, which would adopt a range of measures to spotlight such brutality and nudge foreign governments to pay heed to it. Let's hope that with Mr. Biden's new influence the bill will pass in the next Congress.

That might help end the silence and culture of impunity surrounding this kind of terrorism.

The most haunting part of my visit with Ms. Azar, aside from seeing her face, was a remark by her 12-year-old son, Ahsan Shah, who lovingly leads her around everywhere. He told me that in one house where they stayed for a time after the attack, a man upstairs used to beat his wife every day and taunt her, saying: "You see the woman downstairs who was burned by her husband? I'll burn you just the same way."

What is the author's purpose?

Who is the intended audience?

Possible topics for reflections in your WNs:

- Your reaction to the topic?
- What can be done?
- What techniques did the writer use to make this an effective piece of writing?
- This reminds me of...
- Read other comments on the writer's blog: www.nytimes.com/ontheground and comment on the comments