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Narrative Resistance: A Socio-Pragmatic Post-Colonial Analysis of Refaat Alareer's Palestinian Internal Voice

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ABSTRACT

Palestinian narratives from Gaza occupy a crucial nexus of language, power, and resistance. This study investigates how the "internal voice of Palestine" emerges in selected works of Refaat Alareer – including a personal essay "The Story of My Brother, Martyr Mohammed Alareer", a short story "On a Drop of Rain" (from Gaza Writes Back), his essay in Light in Gaza, and the poem "If I Must Die" – through a socio-pragmatic post-colonial lens. Grounding our analysis in Grice's Cooperative Principle and its conversational maxims, alongside post-colonial theory (Edward Said's critique of Orientalism and Bill Ashcroft's concept of writing back), we examine how Alareer's texts communicate Palestinian experiences and agency. We employ close textual analysis of dialogue, narrative structure, and implied meanings (implicatures) within their social context of occupation and resistance. Quantitative counts of key thematic words and pragmatic features are combined with qualitative thematic analysis. Findings reveal a recurrent lexical triad— "story/stories/tale," "die/death," and, less frequently, "hope"—that anchors the texts' testimonial stance and underscores the stakes of memory under occupation. Pragmatic mapping shows that Alareer alternates between observance and strategic flouting of Quality and Quantity maxims (irony, repetition, purposeful omission) to produce implicatures that shift personal narrative into a collective discourse of resistance.

Keywords: *Palestinian literature (Gaza); internal narrative voice; Grice's Cooperative Principle; Orientalism; resistance literature; subaltern voice.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In contexts of enduring colonization and conflict, storytelling is more than art; it is an existential act of asserting identity and agency. Nowhere is this more evident than in Palestinian literature from Gaza, where writers endeavour to articulate an "internal voice" of Palestine against a backdrop of external silencing. As Achebe (1987, 141) observed, "Storytellers are a threat. They threaten all champions of control [and] frighten usurpers of the right to freedom of the human spirit." Achebe's words resonate in the Palestinian context: the simple act of narrating one's own reality becomes a defiant stand against forces that would control the narrative. For over seven decades, Palestinians have struggled not only for land and rights but also for the permission to narrate their story in a world that often marginalizes or filters their voice (Said 1984). The present study examines how that internal voice is communicated in the works of Refaat Alareer, a prominent Gazan writer, through the combined lenses of socio-pragmatics and post-colonial theory.

Alareer (1979–2023) emerged as a leading figure amplifying Gaza's narrative. As a professor and editor, Alareer devoted his career to "writing back" — enabling young Gazans to tell their stories in English to a global audience. He co-edited *Gaza Unsilenced* (2015) and edited *Gaza Writes Back* (2014a), anthologies that documented Gaza's experiences during Israeli assaults. Tragically killed in an Israeli airstrike in late 2023 (Bing 2023), Alareer has since been lauded by many of his mentees, including Aljamal (2023), who described him as "the giant of the Palestinian narrative coming out of Gaza." His works — spanning personal essays, fiction,

and poetry — collectively strive to unsilence Gaza by centring Palestinian voices and memories that would otherwise be lost under dominant narratives of the conflict. There is "a Palestine that dwells inside all of us… a Palestine that needs to be rescued," Alareer (2014b) wrote, underscoring the interdependence of storytelling and national identity.

1.1 *Research Problem*

Despite the rich testimonial and creative value of Alareer's writings, scholarly attention to the linguistic and pragmatic mechanisms by which they convey resistance remains limited. Prior studies on Palestinian literature often emphasize historical, symbolic, or thematic aspects — for example, exploring how narratives serve as resistance (Harlow 1987) or how post-Oslo writings foster empathy and memory (Green 2024). These analyses illuminate what is being said (the content and themes of resistance), but comparatively little has been written on how it is said — that is, the socio-pragmatic strategies Palestinian authors use to maximize impact and meaning within (and against) the constraints imposed by colonial contexts. In the case of Gaza, these constraints are acute: physical separation (walls and blockades), censorship, and an international arena where Palestinian voices historically have been muffled by prevailing Orientalist discourses (Said 1978; 1993). To be heard, Palestinian narrators often must navigate what linguist Paul Grice (1975; 1989) called the Cooperative Principle — the tacit norms that govern effective communication — in creative ways. They may flout conversational norms to generate implied meanings intelligible to a receptive audience, even as they abide by a deeper cooperative intent: bearing witness to truth (Gallien 2016).

This study addresses that gap by conducting a socio-pragmatic analysis of four works by Refaat Alareer, interpreted through post-colonial theory to show how the "internal voice of Palestine" is constructed. The corpus comprises (a) "The Story of My Brother, Martyr Mohammed Alareer" (Alareer 2014), a personal essay recounting his brother's death in an Israeli strike; (b) "On a Drop of Rain" (Alareer 2013), a short story in *Gaza Writes Back* that allegorizes the separation between a Palestinian farmer and an Israeli across the Wall; (c) "Gaza Asks: When Shall This Pass?" (Alareer 2022), an autobiographical chapter in *Light in Gaza: Writings Born of Fire* reflecting on life under occupation; and (d) "If I Must Die" (Alareer 2023), a poem that frames potential martyrdom as a call to continued witness.

These works were chosen as they encapsulate personal testimony, fictional narrative, and poetic expression, together offering a composite of Alareer's voice and technique. Using Grice's (1975) maxims of conversation (Quantity, Quality, Relevance, Manner) as an analytic toolkit, we examine how Alareer's texts adhere to or deliberately violate these maxims to create implicatures that give depth to the Palestinian voice. Simultaneously, we interpret these pragmatic moves via post-colonial theory — drawing on Edward Said's insights on narrative and power (Gallien 2016) and Bill Ashcroft's concept of linguistic appropriation in *The Empire Writes Back* (Ashcroft et al. 1989) — to situate Alareer's "internal voice" as a form of counter-discourse that challenges colonial silencing.

1.2 *Research Questions*

Therefore, this study tends to answer the following questions:

- **Primary Question:** How does Refaat Alareer pragmatically craft the internal Palestinian voice to "speak" to readers under conditions of imposed silence?

- **Secondary Question:** In what ways does Alareer's "internal voice" serve as a post-colonial counter-discourse that challenges colonial silencing (i.e., how do his narratives "write back" to hegemonic narratives)?

The first question guides the investigation into the linguistic and conversational strategies Alareer employs to convey a Palestinian perspective when direct expression is constrained by conflict and censorship; while the second question, inferred from the study's dual analytical lens, connects the pragmatic findings to the broader post-colonial aim of the texts. It examines how the subtle communicative acts in Alareer's stories function as forms of resistance and self-representation in the face of dominant Orientalist narratives.

1.3 *Significance of the Study*

The significance of this inquiry is multi-fold. Academically, it bridges linguistic pragmatics and post-colonial literary criticism, two fields that seldom intersect, thereby enriching both. By analysing pragmatic subtleties (such as irony, repetition, or code-switching) in a post-colonial text, we gain insight into how meaning is negotiated when direct expression is fraught with risk or cultural weight. Conversely, by applying post-colonial frameworks to pragmatics, we foreground how context — power relations, audience, and identity shape not just what is communicated but how it is communicated (Levinson 1983; Thomas 1995).

On a cultural level, this study illuminates the strategies a marginalized community uses to assert its narrative on the global stage. In Said's terms, Palestinians have often been denied the "permission to narrate" by dominant Zionist and Western discourses (Gallien 2016); here, we investigate how Alareer seizes that permission through cooperative and uncooperative communicative acts that force the reader to acknowledge an authentic Palestinian voice. Understanding these strategies can inform broader discussions of narrative sovereignty and the role of literature in resistance.

Finally, the study is significant in preserving and analysing the voices of Gaza's people. As Alareer (2014b) himself noted, "telling stories is resistance" — a means to "engrave in… memories… the atrocities or rare moments of hope" that define life in Gaza. Analysing his work helps ensure these stories, and the methods by which they're told, are recognized as intentional, artful acts of communication and not merely raw emotive outpourings.

In what follows, we first review the relevant literature and theory on pragmatics and post-colonial narration, delineating our conceptual framework. We then outline our methodology, describing how we selected and analysed textual data. The results section presents both quantitative patterns (e.g., frequencies of key terms and pragmatic features) and qualitative themes emerging from the texts. In the discussion, we interpret how these findings reveal the interplay of cooperative and resistant communication in Alareer's works, and we consider implications for our understanding of Palestinian narrative agency. The conclusion synthesizes these insights and suggests directions for future research into the voices of colonized communities and the pragmatics of resistance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *Palestinian Voice and Post-Colonial Narratives*

Edward Said (1978) famously argued that dominating powers not only occupy land but also narratives. In *Orientalism* (1978), Said demonstrated how Western discourse historically depicted colonized peoples as voiceless, requiring Western interlocutors to speak for them. Nowhere has this been more evident than in representations of Palestinians. Zionist narrative frameworks, often amplified uncritically in the West, have typically marginalized Palestinian experiences or filtered them through an Israeli lens (Said 1984). Said's essay "Permission to Narrate" contends that Palestinians have been systematically denied the agency to represent themselves directly on the "world stage," as others presume to speak on their behalf (Said 1984, 27–28). The result is what Sayigh (2019) terms a "blocking operation," wherein Palestinian voices are unheard or dismissed. Overcoming this narrative subalternity (Spivak 1988) has become a central concern in post-colonial resistance literature.

Resistance literature in the Palestinian context is thus charged with both representing lived reality and subverting imposed silences. Ghassan Kanafani (1966) was among the first to label Palestinian writings under occupation as "resistance literature," tying literary expression directly to political struggle (Harlow 1987). Harlow's seminal study, *Resistance Literature* (1987), further elaborated how literary texts from national liberation movements (including Palestine) serve as acts of political resistance and collective memory. These works often blur boundaries between the personal and the political, testimonial and fictional, precisely because they emerge from communities for whom survival and narration are intertwined.

Recent scholarship continues to reinforce that for Palestinians, telling one's story is reclaiming power. As Hasan (2024) notes in his study, the injustice against the Palestinians has always been carried out in the name of the West, and thus the Palestinian narrative "haunts" the conscience of global audiences once it finds an outlet. The "internal voice of Palestine" refers to narrative perspectives authored by Palestinians themselves, reflecting authentic self-understanding as opposed to external depictions. It carries the inflections of local idiom, memory, and cultural metaphor.

Importantly, it also carries the weight of an audience in exile and solidarity: as Ashcroft (2004) observes, "the secret of self-representation is the capture of the audience," meaning that colonized writers often write with a dual addressee in mind — their own people and the international community. In doing so, they appropriate the language and channels of the colonizer to "interpolate the dominant discourse" and transform it from within. Ashcroft et al.'s *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) encapsulates this phenomenon: formerly colonized authors writing in the imperial language (English) to "write back" to the empire, challenging its narratives (Ashcroft et al. 1989).

Alareer's editing of *Gaza Writes Back* (2014a, 2014b) explicitly invokes this tradition. In the introduction, he emphasizes the urgency for Palestinians to "present… a much-needed Palestinian youth narrative without… non-Palestinian voices," resisting attempts to "smother

[our] screams." This aligns with Ashcroft's assertion that genuine decolonization requires seizing the discourse itself (Ashcroft 2001).

Crucially, post-colonial theory reminds us that narrative form and literary techniques can be as politically significant as content. Said (1993) noted that imperialism was advanced not just by cannons but by canon — influential Western novels and histories that normalized colonization. By the same token, decolonization often begins in cultural imagination. In the same vein, Maccoby (2024) highlights…

In a 2014 essay, Alareer writes that, after Operation Cast Lead, while he was re-reading Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, he felt the need to tell the story of Crusoe's Black servant, Man Friday: "I thought there could have been a different story that Friday could have told, had he not been silenced" (Alareer 2014, 35). Alareer points out that Zionism began in poetry and literature: "Even the colonisation of Palestine came in the form of a poem and a story long before it became a reality. Hence, let a free Palestine materialize first in the form of a story or a poem" (Alareer 2014, 42).

By highlighting his conviction that imaginative literature prefigures political reality, Alareer explicitly echoes this idea, pointing out that Zionism itself "came in the form of a poem and a story long before it became a reality" (Maccoby 2024), and thus Palestinians must likewise assert their vision in narrative form as a precursor to liberation. The internal Palestinian voice in literature, then, is not merely descriptive — it is performative, enacting a claim to Palestine's past and future through words.

2.2 *Grice's Cooperative Principle and Conversational Maxims*

While post-colonial theory frames the *why* of Palestinian narrative strategies, pragmatics helps illuminate the *how*. Philosopher Grice proposed that effective communication is governed by a Cooperative Principle (CP): an assumption that speakers and listeners usually intend to cooperate to make themselves understood (Grice 1975). Under this broad principle, Grice identified four maxims — Quantity (give the right amount of information), Quality (be truthful and have evidence), Relation (be relevant), and Manner (be clear and orderly).

In ordinary conversations, these maxims describe expected norms; however, when speakers violate or flout them intentionally, the result can generate implicatures — implied meanings inferred by the listener (Grice 1975; Levinson 1983). For example, if asked a difficult question and one responds with a tangential story, one flouts Relation, prompting the listener to seek a hidden connection. Such pragmatic manoeuvres are common in literature and other non-conversational discourse as well (Thomas 1995). Fiction writers often have characters speak in ways that flout maxims to reveal subtext or to reflect social constraints. As Ceccaldi (2015) notes, even in fictional narratives, the dynamics of cooperative conversation can apply, especially in dialogue, and authors exploit readers' awareness of these norms to convey ironies or unspoken tensions.

In contexts of power asymmetry — such as colonizer vs. colonized — pragmatic strategies take on heightened significance. Subaltern speakers may not feel safe to express truths directly (violating Quality openly could invite punishment), so they resort to oblique expression. This could involve indirection, metaphor, or coded language understood by in-group members (Spivak 1988; Bhabha 1994; Fanon 2004). In a colonial setting, even silence can be a communicative act — a refusal to answer a question might flout the Maxim of Quantity, yet speak volumes about resistance or trauma (Canlı 2021).

In Alareer's Gaza, where surveillance and propaganda pressure individuals to conform to an imposed narrative, flouting a maxim becomes a subtle act of rebellion — a way to signal a truth to those who listen beneath the surface (Said 1993). For instance, humour and irony, common in Palestinian resilience culture, often rely on saying one thing and meaning another (a Quality violation yielding an implicature) — a tactic both to evade censors and to empower the oppressed by "speaking around" the oppressor (Ngũgĩ 1986; Spivak 1988).

2.3 *Socio-Pragmatics and Context*

While Grice's maxims were formulated for idealized conversation, later scholars emphasize the importance of sociopragmatics — how social and cultural contexts affect pragmatic norms (Leech 1983; Kasper and Blum-Kulka 1993). Sociopragmatic competence involves knowing what is appropriate to say in a given social situation (e.g., what may be left unsaid to save face or avoid danger). In literature emerging from conflict zones, the author's awareness of audience (both local and international) and of taboo or sensitive topics will shape the pragmatic choices in the text (Yule 1996).

Alareer, for example, writes in English to reach a global readership, but he often encodes local cultural

references or multilingual puns that resonate with Palestinian readers, thus operating on two pragmatic levels. One could view the author–reader relationship itself as a kind of conversation, wherein the author cooperatively provides enough information for the reader to infer deeper meanings (implicatures) about occupation, loss, or resistance that are not explicitly spelled out. As Ceccaldi (2015) argues, narrative texts "implicate" readers in cooperation: when a narrator omits key details or uses ambiguous language, the reader must fill the gap, effectively cooperating in constructing the story's full significance.

In post-colonial Palestinian texts, this reader cooperation often entails a politically charged understanding. The author may rely on readers to know certain realities — for example, that when a Gazan child speaks of the "big noise in the sky," it implies an Israeli bombing — thus the text may not explicitly mention the word "Israel" or "bomb" every time. This can be seen as adhering to the Maxim of Relation (staying relevant to those who know the context) while appearing under-informative to an uninformed reader (violating Quantity). The dual audience problem (local vs. global readers) creates a delicate balance to provide enough context so international readers grasp the message (Quantity), but not so much as to dilute the authentic voice or pace (this balance is noted by Gallien 2016).

Additionally, there is the issue of tone. An oppressed narrator might use an overly polite or factual tone to describe atrocities — a strategy aligning with Quality (truthfulness) and Manner (clarity) on the surface, yet the very neutrality implicates a deep grief or rage that is "between the lines." Such understatement can be more devastating than overt emotional language, a phenomenon observed in many survivor testimonies (e.g., Felman and Laub 1992; Caruth 1996).

2.4 *Prior Studies Bridging Pragmatics and Post-Colonial Texts*

Direct research integrating Gricean pragmatics with post-colonial literature is relatively scarce, but some analogous studies offer guidance. Canlı's (2021) analysis of Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go* (2005) demonstrated how violating Grice's maxims in characters' dialogue contributed to the novel's themes of withheld truth and social control. Although Ishiguro's context is different, the idea that narrative withholding (a Quantity violation) can reflect a broader condition of powerlessness is transferable to Gaza's context, where much is left unsaid in public for safety. Another relevant area is the study of implicit communication in war literature. Researchers have noted that writers from conflict zones often employ metaphor, allegory, and other tropes as pragmatic shields — saying X but meaning Y — to comment on political realities (Turner 1974; Scott 1990). For example, a short story might depict animals in cages to implicitly critique life in Gaza under a blockade (Orwell 1945; Zipes 2012). (Relation maxim: the story seems irrelevant on the literal level but highly relevant allegorically) (Grice 1975; Eagleton 2008).

An important study by Gallien (2016) looked at Gazan literature's treatment of borders and found that these texts function as "counter-narratives" to hegemonic media coverage. Gallien observed that Gazan writers often feel a moral imperative to document their reality, yet this imperative can risk over-explaining or being confined to reportage. She warns of the danger of "double marginalization" — Gazan literature being sequestered as conflict testimonial, not seen for its broader artistic value. This is pertinent to our study: in highlighting pragmatic artistry, we underscore that Alareer's works are not just sociological reports but carefully crafted communications. Additionally, Gallien notes instances where the narrator's voice slips into open activism, almost breaking the fourth wall with statements of resistance. These moments often correlate with a suspension of typical narrative "showing" in favor of direct "telling," arguably a flouting of the Relevance or Manner maxims for the sake of didactic clarity. Our analysis builds on such observations, examining how Alareer negotiates between showing and telling, implicit and explicit — effectively, between cooperation and deliberate violation of narrative expectations — to deliver his message.

In sum, the literature suggests that the internal Palestinian voice in literature is shaped by a need to reclaim narrative agency (Said; Ashcroft; Harlow), and that this voice often speaks in a layered, nuanced way that can be illuminated by pragmatics. What remains under-explored, and what this study targets, is the concrete interplay of these layers: how specific pragmatic choices in language serve the larger post-colonial goal of unsilencing Palestine. By connecting these two analytical strands, we aim to contribute a more holistic understanding of Alareer's texts — appreciating both their socio-political poignancy and their communicative craft.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 *Research Design*

This research adopts a qualitative textual analysis

design with a socio-pragmatic approach, complemented by a descriptive quantitative component. In line with methodologies in discourse analysis (Fairclough 1992) and literary pragmatics (Black 2006), we performed close readings of selected texts to identify pragmatic phenomena and interpret them within their social context. The design is inherently interdisciplinary, drawing methods from linguistics (pragmatics, conversation analysis) and literary criticism (thematic and narrative analysis). By integrating these, we could systematically parse how meaning is constructed at the micro-level of language use and connect those findings to macro-level themes of voice and power.

3.2 *Data Selection*

Our primary data consists of four works by Refaat Alareer, chosen to represent a range of genres and contexts in which the internal Palestinian voice is expressed:

(1) Personal Essay: "The Story of My Brother, Martyr Mohammed Alareer" (2014). A first-person narrative originally published in *Electronic Intifada* and later included in *Gaza Unsilenced*, this essay recounts the life and death of Alareer's brother, Mohammed (nicknamed Hamada), during the 2014 war. It offers rich material in terms of emotive storytelling, testimonial detail, and direct address about Israeli actions. This piece of writing is the longest of the texts, allowing for extensive pragmatic analysis of how trauma is narrated.

(2) Short Story: "On a Drop of Rain" (2013). A fictional short story (about 500 words) originally appearing in *Gaza Writes Back* (Alareer 2014). The story features two characters — Abu Samy, a Palestinian farmer, and an Israeli settler—soldier, sheltering from the same rainstorm on opposite sides of Israel's separation wall. The narrative's brevity and allegorical style make it ideal for analysing implicature, metaphor, and irony in conveying a political message. We accessed the full English text of this story via the anthology (*Gaza Writes Back*, Just (World Books 2014).

(3) Analytical/Autobiographical Essay: "Gaza Asks: When Shall This Pass?" (2022). This is Alareer's chapter in *Light in Gaza: Writings Born of Fire* (Abusalim et al. 2022), an anthology of Gazan writers. In it, Alareer reflects on growing up in Gaza, living through repeated wars, and choosing writing as resistance. The text blends memoir and analysis and was used in our study to observe how Alareer pragmatically frames his personal voice when speaking to a broad policy-minded audience. As the published book was not openly accessible, we relied on extended excerpts and quotations reported in secondary sources (e.g., Bing 2023).

(4) Poem: "If I Must Die" (2023). An 18-line free verse poem shared by Alareer on social media a month before his death was later widely circulated and translated. We used the bilingual text published by *In These Times* (Maccoby 2024), which presents the original English and Arabic translations. The poem is a poignant, compact piece explicitly addressing the transformation of the speaker's death into a story of hope. Analysing it allowed us to see how poetic form adheres to or breaks conversational expectations.

We acknowledge that these four texts do not encompass all of Alareer's work, but they were deliberately selected to capture different registers (the factual tone of journalism, the imaginative tone of fiction, the reflective analytical tone, and the lyrical poetic tone). This selection of primary texts is thus justified not merely by their availability or prominence, but by their strategic capacity to illustrate the breadth of Alareer's expressive repertoire. Each work serves as a distinct site for observing the interplay between genre conventions and pragmatic choices: the personal essay foregrounds narrative witness and testimonial assertion; the short story deploys fictionalisation and allegory to encode critique; the analytical essay situates individual experience within broader socio-political argumentation; and the poem distils affective resonance into a compact, highly intertextual form. By encompassing these diverse modes, the data set enables a robust comparative approach to identifying pragmatic patterns, whether these manifest as consistency—suggesting a coherent underlying communicative stance—or as contrast, illuminating how shifts in audience, form, and rhetorical aim invite adaptive strategies. In this way, the selection not only enhances the credibility of the analysis but also demonstrates an attentiveness to the multiplicity of voices through which Alareer articulated the internal Palestinian perspective across varying discursive contexts. This range strengthens the study's validity by showing consistency or contrast in pragmatic strategies across contexts.

3.3 *Analytic Framework*

This section examines how Refaat Alareer's prose, fiction, and poetry deploy pragmatic choices to voice Palestinian witness and resistance under occupation. Integrating Grice's conversational maxims with post-colonial thematic codes, the study argues that the author's calculated observance and violation of Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner operate as rhetorical strategies that humanise trauma, indict colonial

power, and project futurity. The discussion proceeds by outlining a combined socio-pragmatic/post-colonial framework, applying it to four genre-diverse texts, and triangulating close-reading insights with lexical counts and secondary commentary. In tracing patterns of irony, strategic silence, and maxim flouting across these works, the analysis illuminates how literary pragmatics can foreground subaltern agency and enrich applied-linguistic approaches to resistance narratives.

1.1.1. Qualitative Measures

We developed an analytic framework combining Grice's four maxims with relevant post-colonial thematic codes. First, a coding schema for pragmatics was established as follows:

- *Quantity:* Instances where the text provides more or less information than expected. We flagged ellipses (information gaps), repetitions, over-elaborations, and brevity in descriptions.

- *Quality:* Instances of potential non-literal or non-truthful statements. We marked obvious exaggerations, sarcasm, metaphors, or statements lacking evidence (within the narrative context) – all of which could signal an intentional flouting of literal truth for effect.

- *Relation:* Instances that appear tangential or where the relevance is not immediately clear. This included sudden shift of topic, inclusion of seemingly extraneous anecdotes, or juxtaposition of disparate elements (e.g. a mundane detail amidst a war story) that force the reader to infer relevance.

- *Manner:* Instances of ambiguity, obscurity, or unusual phrasing. We highlighted metaphors (which require interpretation), coded language (e.g., local idioms or allusions that international readers must decipher), and disordered chronology or narrations that might be confusing on the surface.

Each text was carefully read and annotated for these features. For example, in the brother's story essay, we annotated the line *"While he was at home. While he was at home."* as a salient repetition (Quantity maxim usage) likely emphasizing an implicature of innocence, and the line *"the most brutally wild occupation the world has ever known"* as a potential hyperbole (Quality maxim, since it's arguable and emotive, meant to implicate Israel's cruelty).

Concurrently, we applied thematic codes drawn from post-colonial theory and Palestinian narrative studies:

- Silence/Voicelessness: moments where silence is described or utilized (e.g., a character not speaking, or the narrator falling silent on an issue).

- Witness/Memory: references to remembering, witnessing, or telling (e.g., use of words like "story," "tale," "witness," "remember").

- Resistance/Defiance: instances of refusal, subversion, or challenge (rhetorically or in content, e.g., a direct address to the oppressor, or a character defying expectation).

- Colonizer vs Colonized perspective: places where both Israeli and Palestinian perspectives appear or are contrasted (as in "On a Drop of Rain," where we coded segments describing the Israeli farmer versus those describing Abu Samy, noting differences in narrative treatment).

- Hope and Futurity: expressions of hope, visions of the future, or continuation (e.g., the poem's refrain "let it bring hope, let it be a tale", or the essay's line "in the hope that…apartheid will be abolished").

Coding was conducted manually by the researchers, with each text reviewed independently by two coders to ensure reliability. Differences in coding were discussed and resolved, leading to refined interpretations. For example, one coder initially saw the final line of "On a Drop of Rain" – "But who cares about Abu Samy's views. He is Palestinian." – purely as a thematic statement of voicelessness, while another also identified it as an ironic flouting of Quality (since the narrator does care, it's a sarcastic societal voice). We ultimately coded it under both Quality implicature and Silence/Voicelessness theme, reflecting its dual function.

1.1.2. Quantitative Measures

While the core analysis is qualitative, we incorporated simple quantitative measures to support and contextualize findings. We performed word frequency counts for selected lexical items related to voice and narrative (e.g., "story/stories," "voice," "die/death," "hope") in each text. We also counted the occurrences of identifiable maxim flouts in each category per text. For instance, we tallied how many times irony (a Quality flout) was detected, or how many instances of deliberate ambiguity (Manner flout) appeared. These frequency counts were used to create a summary table (see Results section) highlighting patterns (e.g., the poem had the highest rate of Quality flouts per 100 words, the essay had several purposeful Quantity omissions, etc.).

We caution that these counts are approximate, given that interpretation is involved in identifying a "flout," but they serve to quantify tendencies.

1.1.3. Validation and Triangulation

To validate interpretations, we triangulated between: (a) the texts themselves; (b) Alareer's own meta-commentary (e.g., his introduction to *Gaza Writes Back* and statements in interviews), which provides insight into his intentions; and (c) secondary scholarship or reviews of these works. For example, when we inferred that a passage in the brother's story essay was using understatement to convey trauma, we cross-referenced Alareer's remarks about reliving horrors in writing — "I recoil in horror… I am exposed, naked, and vulnerable" (Alareer 2022) — which confirmed that he consciously balances exposure with restraint in narrating trauma. We also compared our reading of "On a Drop of Rain" with Rosemary Sayigh's review (2019), which specifically notes the story's subtlety: "the telling difference between them [the characters] being that the Israeli's head is protected by a helmet." This external observation supported our pragmatic analysis of that detail as an implicature of unequal security.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 *Quantitative Findings*

The four analyzed texts comprised approximately 3,000 words in total (after excluding editorial matter), with the personal essay being the longest segment (almost 1,200 words) and the poem the shortest (about 100 words). Table 1 provides a summary of select word frequencies and identified maxim-flouting instances across the texts:

Table 1: Keyword frequencies and pragmatic features in the texts.

Text (Genre)	Length (words)	"story"/"tale"	"hope"	"die"/"death"	Quality Flouts (irony, etc.)	Quantity Flouts (omission, repetition)
Brother's Story (Essay)	~1,200 (full text)	3 occurrences (e.g., *"stories… will live to bear witness"*)	1	3 (incl. "death of 'Mohammed'")	2 clear ironies (hyperbolic *"most…occupation"* ; sarcastic "the killer…not brought to justice")	4 (notably repetitive emphasis *"While he was at home. While he was at home."* ; listing causes of death)
"On a Drop of Rain" (Short Story)	~500	1 (metanarrative *"the very same tale"*)	1 (*"see hope in the darkest of tunnels"*)	0 explicit (death implied)	1 strong irony (final line *"who cares about Abu Samy's views"*) + situational irony (raindrop choice)	2 (e.g., unexplained term *"Wall"* relying on the reader's knowledge; parallel heartbeats misattributed to thunder)
"Gaza Asks: When Shall This Pass?" (Essay)	~800 (excerpted)	2 (Alareer refers to telling his *"story"*)	0 (tone is bleak)	2 (ref. to *"horrors…brought on us"* and deaths)	1 (rhetorical question in title implies open-ended suffering)	1 (hesitation and self-questioning in text)
"If I Must Die" (Poem)	101	2 (*"story"*, *"tale"*)	1	2 (*"If I must die"* repeated)	0 glaring violations (tone is earnest, though imaginative)	1 (elliptical references – e.g., *"left in a blaze"* for killed by bombing

(Quality flouts = violations of truthfulness creating implicature; Quantity flouts = information withholding or repetition beyond necessity.)

As seen above, words related to storytelling (story, stories, tale) appear in all texts, underlining the self-referential focus on narrative. The brother's essay and poem each explicitly invoke the story/tale three times, often in the context of preserving memory or making meaning of death (e.g., "His tales…will live forever through us"; "let it be a tale"). The term "voice" itself was notably absent or very rare in the texts; instead, voice is invoked indirectly through concepts of story, speech, or witness. Hope is another recurring word (present in three of four works), concordant with the forward-looking resistance theme. Meanwhile, references to death or dying are frequent (especially in the poem and essay, as expected from their subject matter).

In pragmatic terms, each text exhibited purposeful maxim flouting, though the frequency and type varied by genre. The short story and essay had the clearest instances of irony and sarcasm (Quality maxim flouts). For example, the final line of "On a Drop of Rain" – "But who cares about Abu Samy's views. He is Palestinian." – is a striking ironic statement. Literally, it violates the Quality maxim (we suspect the author certainly cares about Abu Samy's views) to implicate the sad reality that society (or the world) disregards Palestinian voices. The personal essay contains a biting aside about the "killer…not even brought to justice because he is an Israeli soldier" – a statement that on its face is factual, yet dripping with irony aimed at international impunity.

The poem, conversely, sticks to a sincere tone with no overt irony; instead, it uses metaphor (the kite as the martyr's legacy), which is a mild Quality flout only in the literal sense.

Quantitative phenomena were abundant. Notably, Alareer's essay uses repetition for emphasis – repeating the circumstance "while he was at home" twice consecutively to underscore the innocent, mundane setting of his brother's death. This deliberate redundancy flouts the expectation that one would not repeat known information, thereby generating an implicature: the very absurdity and injustice of being killed in one's home. The same essay also lists possible causes of death in one long sentence ("bled for three days or…shockwaves or the sound, or the debris, or the shrapnel, or the fire or by them all"), arguably providing more information than necessary by piling on conjectures. This overload (Quantity surplus) conveys the chaos and multiple horrors of the bombing, implying that every aspect of the attack was lethal, an emotional truth beyond any single cause. In "On a Drop of Rain," a subtle Quantity flout is the omission of explicit political labels: the story never directly says "occupation" or "soldier," referring instead to "the Wall", a "farmer" with a helmet, etc. Only a reader with contextual knowledge will recognize that the "Wall" is the separation barrier and that the helmeted farmer is actually an Israeli soldier/settler. This under-information is a cooperative strategy in context – readers from or familiar with Palestine don't need it spelled out (the relevance is understood), while international readers are invited to discover the political meaning, engaging them actively. Gallien (2016) observed that such texts assume an "inside view" for the reader, which our analysis confirms pragmatically.

4.2 *Qualitative Themes*

From the interplay of these pragmatic features and word choices, several key themes emerged in how the internal voice of Palestine is expressed:

1. Voice through witness and testament: All works frame personal or communal experiences as witness narratives. Alareer's essay explicitly states, "The stories…will live to bear witness to the most brutally wild occupation the world has ever known." Here, a lexical pun on "stories" (meaning tales, but alluding to the floors of the destroyed house) reinforces that what remains after destruction are the voices – the memories turned into narrative. This positions the narrator as a custodian of collective memory. Pragmatically, the essay's straightforward, report-like listing of facts (who, what, when of Mohammed's death) initially follows the Cooperative Principle diligently (Quantity and Quality are adhered to as in a news report), establishing credibility. Then, once that trust is built, Alareer infuses subjective witness: "the killer will not even be brought to justice because he is an Israeli soldier". The matter-of-fact tone up to that point makes this sardonic conclusion all the more powerful – the narrator's voice breaks through the neutral facade to directly indict the structure of injustice (Relation maxim be damned; he ensures the point is not lost). In the poem "If I Must Die," witness is passed on to others: "you must live to tell my story". The internal voice recognizes its potential silencing (death) and pre-empts it by instructing another to narrate. This call-and-response structure (implied dialogue between the dying speaker and the survivor "you") is a socio-pragmatic strategy: it creates an interlocutor who cooperatively completes the tale, symbolizing how the Palestinian narrative survives through community. Notably, the poem uses imperative mood ("you must live…to tell my story") – an unusual directness that flouts typical polite discourse. This direct speech act is justified by the urgency of witness; it is as if the poetic voice refuses to be cooperative in a conventional sense because a higher cooperation-to truth and hope–is at stake. In short, the voice here is internally compelled to speak truth, even if it means imploring or commanding others across the boundary of life and death.

2. Silence, absence, and implied meanings: A striking theme is how the texts handle what cannot be directly said. Often, the absence of detail or the presence of silence speaks loudly. In the short story, Abu Samy and the Israeli are divided by the Wall; they do not exchange a single word. The only "dialogue" is between their heartbeats and the thunder. This evocative image – heartbeats mistaken for thunder – is a metaphorical bridging of their experiences, yet tragically not recognized by the characters. Pragmatically, it's a case of dramatic irony (the reader can infer a common humanity that the characters themselves do not realize). The silence between Palestinian and Israeli is the reality of the conflict (no communication, literal or figurative), and the narrative voice chooses not to break it with any miraculous conversation. Instead, by flouting the conventional narrative expectation that protagonists might interact or come to an understanding, Alareer holds up a mirror to political reality: separation and the

failure to recognize each other's heartbeat. Similarly, in the brother's essay, certain horrific details are actually omitted or only briefly alluded to – we are not given a graphic description of Mohammed's injuries, only the uncertainty and multiple possibilities. This omission (Quantity flout by understatement) creates a space of silence around the exact manner of death, which conveys the unspeakability of the violence and the dignity of not reducing the brother to gore. Instead, the focus shifts to the aftermath (children left without a father, a house reduced to rubble, and stories) . The internal voice chooses to highlight enduring elements (memories, children) rather than the moment of death. This is a pragmatic decision, too – it keeps the reader's attention on meaning rather than sensational detail, which is arguably a way of resisting the spectacle of Palestinian suffering that the media often fixates on. It also exemplifies the Manner maxim used humanely: be clear about what matters (the irreparable loss and its meaning), not the lurid specifics. Instances of direct silence or voicelessness appear in content as well. In the essay, when Alareer recounts how everyone called his brother "Mohammed" after his death instead of "Hamada," he says: "But I didn't shout at them. I…finally let go and let Hamada grow into Mohammed.". His silence (not protesting the name) signifies acceptance and a kind of surrender to reality. This narrative moment – refraining from correcting people – is a resignation that nonetheless communicates pain. On a pragmatic level, it's a case of opting out of the cooperative principle in society: he could have corrected them (to honor the nickname) but chooses not to, implying a deep recognition that the person has gone beyond names. Such subtle emotional communications abound in these texts, where what is not said (or not yelled, in this case) carries significance. The internal voice sometimes must fall silent to convey grief (a paradox: using silence as expression).

3. Flouting as resistance: Many of the maxim flouts we identified align with moments of resistance or critique in the texts. The most salient example is sarcasm/irony targeting the oppressor. When the narrator of the essay states the Israeli soldier will face no justice , the tone is almost bitterly humorous in its certainty – a dark irony. This is a classic case of using verbal irony (Quality maxim violation) to cope with and lampoon the asymmetry of power. In pragmatic terms, the narrator is speaking to two audiences at once: to a Palestinian or critical audience, conveying "we all know this injustice," and to any naive or uninformed readers, shocking them with a jarring truth (he can kill with impunity). The cooperative principle is subverted to serve a higher cooperation with truth and solidarity. Similarly, "On a Drop of Rain" flouts expectations by not giving any character dialogue or a moralizing narrator voice. Instead, the only explicit value judgment comes in that final narrative line of ironic commentary. The whole story had been quietly describing events without overt comment – adhering to Relevance (every detail was about the rain and situation) and Quality (nothing fantastical occurs). Only at the very end does the narrator "break the fourth wall" in a sense and deliver a stinging meta-comment. This structural fault (shifting from show to tell suddenly) is a resistance strategy in itself: it leaves the reader slightly unsettled, forced to reevaluate everything they read in light of the new overt message that the Palestinians' view was ignored. It's a bold move that sacrifices subtlety at the last moment for the sake of clarity about injustice, almost a reversal of Gallien's noted tendency for Gazan authors to slide into activism towards the end. Indeed, Alareer explicitly emphasizes remembering and resisting in textual form in the final lines of his works (often using future tense: "will live forever", "will remain forever"). This prophetic, unyielding tone breaks conventional cooperative storytelling (which might seek a neat resolution); instead, it asserts a continuing resistance beyond the story's end, essentially refusing narrative closure as a form of political refusal to acquiesce.

4. Humanization and relationality: Another theme is how the internal voice humanizes Palestinians through everyday relational language, even as it communicates a political message. Alareer often introduces intimate familial details – e.g., the brother's nickname Hamada, his humor and habits – that on the surface may seem tangential (a possible Relevance flout, when looking strictly at the "martyrdom" story). Yet these details are profoundly relevant to humanizing the victim and building empathy. The Cooperative Principle's Relevance maxim is stretched: the anecdote of four-year-old Refaat demanding his baby brother be named "Hamada" is not directly about Israeli occupation, but it's crucial to the personal narrative. By investing in such relational storytelling, Alareer's voice resists the reduction of Palestinians to faceless victims. In pragmatic terms, he expects the reader to cooperate by understanding that these personal flourishes are

the point – they make the political loss real. This interplay of personal and political is a hallmark of post-colonial narratives (Bernard 2013). In our analysis, these personal inserts did not violate Gricean maxims so much as enrich them: they satisfy Relation in a holistic sense (it's relevant to know Hamada's personality to grasp the depth of loss) and Quantity (giving sufficient background to care about the character). The poem likewise humanizes through a small, tender image: a child looking to the sky, thinking the kite is an angel bringing back love. This single mental picture implies an entire world of innocence and longing without spelling it out (a Manner maxim finesse – clearly expressed yet emotionally multi-layered). The internal voice here speaks softly, evocatively, rather than polemically, demonstrating versatility in pragmatics: one can sometimes follow all of Grice's maxims (the poem is quite clear, relevant, truthful in emotion, and economical) and still deliver a powerful socio-political punch.

5. Dual audience and code-switching: Although subtle, we found evidence that Alareer's voice modulates for different audiences, often within the same text. This can be seen as a socio-pragmatic code-switching. For instance, in the essay, most of the text could be read as if addressed to a sympathetic international audience – it explains enough context (the children's ages, the fact he was at home, etc.) and even footnotes local pronunciations (Shujaiya as "Sajaiya") . But occasionally the voice shifts as if speaking to fellow Palestinians or Arabs who grasp nuances. An example is the line listing "the connections between people and people, and between people and land, and between people and memories" that Israel tries to sever. This almost poetic, repetitive construction echoes themes common in Palestinian discourse (the triad of people-land-memory). It's arguably not written to inform an outsider but to resonate emotionally with those who already understand the significance of those bonds – it has the cadence of a rallying speech or a lament. Pragmatically, the repetition of "between people and…" thrice is a Quantity deviation (could be said once), serving here a stylistic and mnemonic function for an audience that appreciates orality and parallelism (a feature of Arabic rhetoric). Thus, the internal voice toggles between explanatory mode and evocative mother-tongue mode, all in English text. We interpret this as Alareer ensuring the cooperative principle operates on two levels: on one level, he cooperates with international readers by providing context and clear narration; on another, he cooperates with local readers through cultural reference and emotional cadence. This dual cooperation is itself a post-colonial pragmatic strategy – a way of speaking to "us" and "them" at once without compromising the message to either.

Alareer's works deftly flout and obey Gricean maxims to generate poignant implicatures – for example, strategic silence and irony convey what cannot be stated overtly – thereby amplifying a subaltern voice. Post-colonially, these texts "write back" to hegemonic narratives, asserting Palestinian self-representation and resilience. The internal voice manifest is one of witness, memory, and hope amid colonial trauma. This fusion of socio-pragmatics and post-colonial insight reveals that Alareer's storytelling functions as both a communicative act and an act of resistance, unsilencing Gaza's voice on its own pragmatic and cultural terms. The article discusses implications for understanding literature as a vehicle of voice for colonized peoples and highlights potential limitations in generalizing from this case. We conclude that a socio-pragmatic post-colonial approach provides a nuanced understanding of how oppressed communities deploy language to reclaim narrative power. Recommendations for further research include broader analyses across Palestinian narratives and other contexts where literary voice intersects with political silence.

In summary, the results show that Gricean maxims are not only relevant but instrumental in dissecting how Alareer's voice operates. When he follows the maxims, it is often to build trust, set a scene, or humanize (cooperating with the reader's expectations of a sincere narrator). When he breaks them, it is usually a deliberate signal of irony, of unspeakable emotion, or of resistance to injustice, that invites the reader to infer a deeper truth. Table 1's quantitative snapshot bolsters these observations: e.g., the poem's lack of irony aligns with its straightforward hopeful tone, while the story's singular but weighty irony aligns with its overall subtle approach, punctuated by a final revelation. Each genre showed a distinct pattern: the personal essay mixed factual cooperation with pointed violation to indict injustice, the short story maintained implicit communication until an overt moral implicature at the end, the analytical essay was measured but introspective (few flouts, more direct questions), and the poem was earnest and implicative through imagery rather than overt pragmatic play. Despite these differences, a unifying thread is that all pieces leverage pragmatics to elevate the internal Palestinian voice, either by embedding the unsaid within the said or by breaking convention to ensure the

message of humanity and resistance is heard.

The next section discusses what these findings mean in the larger context of post-colonial discourse and the challenges of narrating Palestine, as well as the implications for literary pragmatics and potential limitations of this study.

4.3 *Discussion*

This socio-pragmatic analysis of Refaat Alareer's works reveals a dynamic interplay between communication principles and resistance principles. The internal voice of Palestine, as articulated in these texts, is not a monologue in a vacuum but a dialogic engagement with both the immediate audience and the forces of silencing. In discussing the implications, we focus on three major areas: (1) how pragmatic strategies bolster post-colonial objectives of reclaiming narrative; (2) the dual-layered communication – literal and metaphorical – that emerges as a necessity under occupation; and (3) the broader significance and limitations of these findings in understanding Palestinian literature and other contexts of constrained voice.

The patterns observed here may apply to other Palestinian writers and more broadly to authors in repressive contexts. Indeed, many of the same techniques – irony, allegory, personalizing the political – are found in Palestinian literature from Ghassan Kanafani's Men in the Sun (with its famous unspoken scream at the end) to contemporary Gazan bloggers (who often use humor and parody to critique conditions). Our analysis reinforces those patterns with a theoretical backbone: they are doing pragmatics, whether consciously or not. It also suggests an analytical framework that can be applied to other texts: looking at how adherence or deviation from conversational norms plays into narrative voice and audience engagement.

The Role of the Reader in these works emerges as active and morally engaged. Alareer's internal voice constructs a listener who is both trusted and tasked. Trusted to catch hints and tasked to carry the story onward (like the addressee in "If I Must Die" is tasked: "you must live to tell my story"). This is a powerful inversion of the typical power dynamic: while colonizers historically dictated who gets to speak, here the Palestinian narrator dictates to the audience a moral responsibility (especially explicit in the poem). It's a subtle but real shift of authority – the voiceless one now directs the narrative future. When readers respond, as evidenced by the poem's viral translations into dozens of languages , it indicates that the cooperative principle has been extended to a global, empathic scale. People heard the implicature "if I die without justice, you who survive must ensure my story is told," and they acted on it by spreading the poem. This pragmatics yields real-world speech acts of solidarity.

4.3.1. Pragmatics in the Service of Post-Colonial Voice:

One of the clearest findings is that Gricean maxims are deliberately navigated to serve the storyteller's political and human aims. Rather than view pragmatics and politics as separate facets, Alareer's usage suggests they are intimately connected. When he flouts a maxim, it is not due to incompetence or oversight, but a strategic choice deeply tied to the message of resistance. This aligns with Bill Ashcroft's observation that colonized writers often "speak in a way that may be heard" by wielding the oppressor's language tactically . In Alareer's case, irony (a Quality flout) becomes a weapon. Consider the statement from the brother's essay: "The killer will not even be brought to justice because he is an Israeli soldier."

This is a tragic truth stated so bluntly that it reads as bitter irony. The author violates the expected tone (perhaps readers expect sorrow or outrage, but he gives cold irony) to jolt the audience. Such irony forces Western readers, for instance, to confront their own legal and moral double standards – it echoes Said's critique that Western powers treat Israeli violence with impunity. Here, pragmatics (ironic tone) and post-colonial critique merge: the voice conveys what a straightforward assertion might not achieve. A direct slogan-like statement ("Israel is never punished internationally") might come off as polemical, but couching it as a resigned aside actually implicates the reader more effectively. The reader infers the injustice without feeling lectured, fulfilling Grice's idea of cooperative inference, but in a subversive context.

Similarly, Alareer's careful calibrations of Quantity (what to include or omit) reflect a post-colonial negotiation of representation. Too much graphic detail of Palestinian suffering can inadvertently feed an orientalist pity narrative or desensitize readers; too little detail can fail to convey reality. The essay's approach – give enough detail to humanize and evoke sympathy (children's ages, a domestic scene), but stop short of voyeurism – is a conscious balance. It is as if Alareer is aware of what Claire Gallien (2016) noted: that Gazan writers are compelled to report their reality "to reclaim what has been stolen…by other forms of coverage", yet they risk being confined to that role. By selecting which details to share, Alareer reclaims the narrative on his terms. For example, he chooses to detail his brother's nickname

story at length (seemingly a tender tangent) rather than detail the morgue scene or the destruction of the body. This choice flouts press-reportage conventions (which would focus on the violent event) but adheres to human storytelling conventions, privileging the cherished memory over the abject horror. It's a subtle resistance to the dehumanization of mere casualty statistics or gore. In doing so, he's effectively telling the colonizer's narrative machinery: I will not let you define my brother by the manner you killed him; I define him by how he lived and loved. This resonates strongly with Ashcroft's notion of "interpolation of the dominant discourse" – Alareer writes in a journalistic outlet, but he interjects a personal eulogy that transforms the piece from news into testimony, thus bending the genre (dominant discourse of media) to a colonized voice's purpose.

4.3.2. Dual-Layered (Explicit and Implicit) Communication:

Our analysis underscores that the internal Palestinian voice often operates on two levels: a surface level that appears cooperative, informative, even neutrally descriptive, and a subtextual level that carries the weight of grief, anger, or hope via implicature. This dual-layered communication is not unique to Alareer but is emblematic of literature under repression. As Gayatri Spivak (1988) explored in "Can the Subaltern Speak?", subaltern voices are frequently forced to "speak" in coded ways if the hegemonic discourse cannot directly accommodate them. In Alareer's works, we see that the subaltern can speak – but often obliquely.

For instance, "On a Drop of Rain" never once uses the word "occupation" or "oppression" – it doesn't need to. Every element (the Wall, land loss, the helmet vs bare head) conveys these realities implicitly. In pragmatic terms, the story strictly adheres to Grice's maxim of Relation for those "in the know" – every detail is relevant to a Palestinian reader who immediately recognizes the symbolism. To an unaware reader, some relevance might initially be missed (why mention a helmet?), but by the story's end, even they can piece together the implication: the Israeli is armed and protected, the Palestinian exposed. This show-not-tell technique is a hallmark of effective storytelling, but here it is also a political statement: it treats the reader as intelligent and morally capable of drawing the obvious conclusion, thus refusing to spoon-feed a possibly skeptical international audience. It respects the cooperative principle with readers by trusting them to cooperate in meaning-making. Notably, this aligns with a decolonial communication ethic – rejecting the need to validate pain with overt dramatization or didactic commentary, instead letting facts and small ironies speak (literally) for themselves. When the narrator finally intrudes with "who cares about Abu Samy's views", it almost breaks the literary spell to ensure no one misses the point. One could argue this is a moment of teaching the reader how to read Palestinian stories – it's as if Alareer is saying: In case you haven't realized, the silence you just witnessed is exactly the problem. Thus, the internal voice toggles from implicit to explicit to make sure its truth is grasped. This didactic flicker, used sparingly, ensures broad accessibility of the story's moral without compromising the artistry preceding it.

Moreover, we observed Alareer's voice moving between an insider register and an outsider register. For example, references to local geography or use of certain culturally loaded terms (like invoking "martyrs" or using a Quranic cadence in repetition) speak to Palestinian and Arab readers on a deeper level. Outsiders might simply read "martyr" as "victim," but for Palestinians, the term shahid carries honor and religious resonance. Alareer's usage of "martyr" in the title "Martyr Mohammed Alareer" already frames the brother's death within a Palestinian paradigm of sacrifice and resistance. This is a direct challenge to any narrative that might label him differently (e.g., as a "casualty" or worse, from an Israeli perspective, as a potential "militant"). By using martyr, Alareer asserts the internal narrative frame from the get-go. It is a post-colonial speech act: naming the terms of discourse. To the cooperative principle, an outsider might question quality ("martyr" assumes a value judgment), but within the Palestinian community, calling him a martyr is simply truthful and relevant – the cooperative norms of that speech community support it. This exemplifies how sociopragmatics comes into play: what is pragmatically appropriate or clear in one cultural context might differ in another (Thomas, 1983). Alareer seamlessly embeds the Palestinian sociopragmatic code into English text, expecting the reader to adjust. And largely, the context he provides allows even non-Palestinian readers to glean the meaning (the text itself shows he died unjustly, fulfilling the "martyr" archetype in context). This kind of code-switching implicature is a sophisticated internal voice technique, speaking to multiple audiences concurrently with minimal loss of meaning. It speaks to the dexterity of the internal voice: it is not monologic or monotonic; it modulates without losing authenticity.

4.3.3. Implications for Narratives of Conflict and the Role of the Reader:

Our findings carry implications beyond Alareer's work, suggesting a model for how oppressed voices navigate narrative constraints. Literature from other colonized or conflict settings (for example, prison writings,

indigenous autobiographies, or Holocaust memoirs) often shows similar pragmatic patterning – a tightrope walk between telling and suggesting. The internal voice of Palestine, as seen here, invites the reader to become an active participant in reconstructing meaning. This recalls D. Sperber and D. Wilson's Relevance Theory, where communication is seen as a matter of providing clues that the audience interprets to infer the speaker's meaning. Alareer's texts provide such clues in abundance – readers must infer, for example, that the raindrop's choice of landing spot is symbolic, or that a child imagining an angel from a kite is indicative of how children cope with loss. In doing so, the works foster empathy and solidarity. Cognitive linguist Rebekah Edwards (2020) suggests that when readers infer emotionally laden implicatures, they undergo a form of experiential learning, effectively "walking with" the narrator through the subtext. In our case, inferring the irony behind "who cares about his views" makes the reader momentarily inhabit the frustration of Palestinian invisibility. It is an empathetic bridge built through pragmatic inference rather than explicit explanation. This resonates with recent scholarship on narrative empathy in Palestinian literature, which argues that carefully crafted stories can engender understanding across political divides (Hartman 2018).

For Palestinian literature specifically, our study underscores why voice is not just about literal speaking but about pragmatic empowerment. Edward Said's call for Palestinians to achieve representation – to "speak truth to power" (Said 1994) – is realized in these texts at the granular level of language choices. The truth is often in the implicature: unsaid but strongly communicated. Importantly, this mode of speaking is less confrontational and more inviting. Instead of directly accusing the reader or the world, Alareer's voice often implicates the situation itself. The reader is left to conclude the accusation on their own (e.g., concluding that the world's indifference is condemnable, without the narrator explicitly saying "the world is indifferent and that's condemnable"). This can be more persuasive in some cases, aligning with the idea that self-discovered conclusions stick more firmly.

5. LIMITATIONS AND COUNTERPOINTS:

5.1 *Limitations of the Present Study*

It should be noted that our study focused on English texts (albeit by a non-native English speaker in a bilingual context). We did not analyse the Arabic side of Alareer's expression (though the poem had an Arabic version). A fuller picture of his internal voice could be examined by examining how he navigates pragmatics in Arabic writings or everyday social media posts. Additionally, our sample size is small; to strengthen generalizability, a larger corpus of Palestinian narratives (including those by other authors in Gaza Writes Back or Light in Gaza) could be examined with the same framework. We suspect many similar patterns would emerge, as hinted by cross-references (e.g., other Gaza Writes Back stories also use irony and imaginative twists).

Another limitation is interpretive bias: as sympathetic analysts, we might potentially "over-read" positive intent into all pragmatic choices. Not every repetition or silence necessarily carries profound meaning; some could be stylistic or coincidental. We mitigated this by cross-checking with context and authorial commentary as much as possible, but an element of subjective interpretation remains. Future studies might incorporate reader response research – asking actual readers (from various backgrounds) what they infer at key points – to see if the intended implicatures land consistently.

While our analysis celebrates the effectiveness of Alareer's strategies, it's worth considering potential limitations or challenges in this communicative approach. One limitation is that implicature and subtlety can be missed by readers not attuned to the context. If a reader lacks background knowledge (for instance, someone unaware of the situation in Gaza reading "On a Drop of Rain" with no clue about the wall or occupation), they might not fully grasp the stakes. Grice's maxims operate on shared understanding; when shared context is thin, implicatures can fail. Alareer partially mitigates this by writing in venues likely read by informed audiences (Electronic Intifada, etc.) and by inserting clarifications (like explaining Shujaiya's pronunciation, which shows an expectation of an outside reader). But still, there is a risk that the internal voice remains internal, resonant mainly for those already aware.

This raises a critical post-colonial question: can such texts truly breach the walls of ignorance and apathy? Bill Ashcroft (2004) would argue that transformation happens gradually, through "capture of the audience" by accumulating narratives. Our findings suggest Alareer's work is well-suited to engage a willing audience cooperatively, but perhaps less so to convince a hostile or completely uninformed one. A reader determined to dismiss Palestinian perspectives might gloss over implicatures or claim the text is biased anyway (especially if they pick up on the heavy irony or emotive cues).

In that sense, fully cooperative communication is inherently difficult across entrenched ideological divides. Alareer's internal voice, despite its nuance, may not convert those firmly situated in the opposing narrative (e.g., someone predisposed to view any Palestinian account as propaganda might view the absence of explicit Israeli names in "Drop of Rain" as deceptive, rather than as artistic subtlety).

Another consideration is the emotional toll that such communication entails on the narrator. Alareer writes, "I recoil in horror…exposed, naked, and vulnerable" when narrating his life . The pragmatic choices he makes – how much to bare, how much to withhold – are part of an internal struggle of how to represent trauma. We gleaned that he leans toward dignified restraint rather than graphic detail. This might sometimes under-communicate the sheer horror to outsiders. For example, he doesn't explicitly describe what finding his brother's body was like. While we (as readers sensitive to subtext) infer the horror, some might not register just how awful the scene truly was. Thus, there is a tension between dignity and vividness. This is a common issue in testimony: too graphic can traumatize or alienate the reader; too restrained can fail to convey urgency. Alareer's balance is largely masterful, but as an implication for narrative strategy, it indicates the fine line writers tread.

Despite these considerations, the overarching finding stands: the internal voice of Palestine in Alareer's works is a carefully orchestrated act of communication that leverages both overt and covert language features to reclaim agency. It is simultaneously adhering to a cooperative ethos – inviting understanding and empathy – and breaking cooperative norms to underscore the very experience of being silenced and subjugated. This voice is not monolithic; it is adaptive, nuanced, and deeply conscious of the power of words. Edward Said's terms exemplify *"narrative resistance"* – the use of narrative to resist erasure (Said 1986). Each maxim flouted is a small rebellion; each maxim observed is a bridge built.

For practitioners and scholars, this suggests that analysing conflict literature through a pragmatic lens can yield rich insights. It helps decode the "how" behind the emotional impact many readers report. It also illuminates the skill with which writers like Alareer fulfil a dual role: truth-teller and diplomat, speaking bitterness but in a way that others can swallow. For the field of pragmatics, it extends the application beyond polite conversations into the realm of trauma and resistance narratives, demonstrating that Grice's framework (often applied to mundane dialogue) can elucidate even the most charged literary texts (Ceccaldi 2015). For post-colonial studies, it provides a micro-level look at how "writing back" is executed line by line, not just in grand thematic strokes.

Ultimately, Alareer's internal voice exemplifies the mantra that "to narrate is to exist." Through cooperative and uncooperative language alike, he asserts Palestinian existence. The discussion above affirms that this voice does more than describe reality – it actively engages in shaping reality by affecting readers. It turns the abstract right to speak into the concrete act of speaking, and ensures someone, somewhere, listens. As the poem enjoins: "If I must die, let it bring hope, let it be a tale." In Alareer's deft hands, and through his socio-pragmatic artistry, the tale is indeed told – and hope, quietly but defiantly, is brought.

5.2 Recommendations

Considering our findings, several avenues for further inquiry emerge. Future research could expand the corpus to include more Palestinian authors (for instance, comparing Alareer's pragmatic techniques with those of other contributors in *Gaza Writes Back* or poets like Mahmoud Darwish) to see if a distinctive socio-pragmatic style characterizes modern Palestinian literature. Comparative studies with other post-colonial literatures (e.g., Irish, South African, Kashmiri) might illuminate common patterns or unique differences in how internal voices leverage language against power. Additionally, interdisciplinary research involving psycholinguistics could examine readers' cognitive and emotional responses to pragmatic cues in these narratives, lending empirical weight to claims about empathy-building.

On a practical level, those working in cross-cultural communication and conflict resolution might harness the lessons of Alareer's storytelling – notably, the power of narrative implicature – to foster dialogue. For instance, workshops could train participants to identify and respect the unsaid in personal testimonies, ensuring more respectful listening to trauma narratives.

In concluding, we return to the central notion of the internal voice of Palestine. It is, as Alareer and others have shown, a voice that refuses to be silenced. If it cannot speak in one register, it will speak in another – shifting from loud to soft, direct to indirect, as the situation requires, but always carrying its truth. The socio-pragmatic lens reveals the craft behind what might seem like pure passion: it shows that there is strategy in sorrow, and eloquence in understatement.

Refaat Alareer's internal voice is ultimately a voice of resilience. It abides by the cooperative principle not just linguistically but morally – cooperating in the shared human project of seeking understanding, justice, and connection. And when the world's conversation breaks down or plays false, that voice is unafraid to flout the expected rules and speak in its own key. In doing so, it ensures that the story of Gaza – and by extension, the story of all who endure oppression – is not lost in the noise of dominant narratives, but continues to be told, heard, and lived.

In the closing lines of "If I Must Die," Alareer writes: "If I must die, let it bring hope, let it be a tale." Through his masterful weaving of socio-pragmatic cues and post-colonial vision, he has indeed turned pain into hope and history into tale. It now falls to us – readers, scholars, fellow humans – to carry that tale forward, ensuring that the internal voice of Palestine resounds until a just future renders its pleas answered.

5.3 *Ethical Considerations*

The study deals with texts about real human suffering and highly politicized content. We approached the analysis with sensitivity to context, avoiding any dehumanizing quantification of trauma. All texts analysed are publicly available works; nonetheless, we treated them with respect for the author's voice and intent. We also remained aware of our positionality as researchers, potentially outside the lived experience of Gaza, striving to interpret implicatures accurately without imposing external meaning. To mitigate bias, we relied on established theory and, whenever possible, the author's own guidance (e.g., his editorial commentary) for understanding the cultural context of communication. Therefore, our methodology merges systematic linguistic analysis with interpretive cultural criticism. By coding pragmatic features and post-colonial themes in tandem, we created a rich dataset to answer our central question: How does Refaat Alareer pragmatically craft the internal Palestinian voice to "speak" to readers under conditions of imposed silence?

6. CONCLUSION

Refaat Alareer's works demonstrate with remarkable clarity that the internal voice of Palestine – the authentic narrative emanating from lived experience in Gaza – is communicated through a deliberate fusion of linguistic subtlety and bold testimonial fervour. By examining Alareer's personal essay, short story, analytical chapter, and poem, this study set out to understand *how* a Palestinian author conveys the depth of his people's reality under oppressive conditions, not only *what* he conveys. Through a socio-pragmatic post-colonial analysis, we found that Alareer employs the pragmatics of language as a toolkit of resistance: Grice's conversational maxims are observed when they serve understanding and flouted when they serve meaning beyond words. In doing so, his voice maintains a cooperative connection with readers of diverse backgrounds, while simultaneously challenging the cooperative norms that have historically favoured the colonizer's perspective.

Across the texts, we saw common strategies: irony that undercuts official narratives, silences that speak volumes about trauma, intimate details that humanize where others might dehumanize, and appeals that implicate the reader in the act of remembrance and solidarity. These strategies align closely with post-colonial objectives. Alareer's voice "writes back" to power – not with a single confrontational shout, but with a chorus of nuanced speech acts: a brother's loving eulogy doubling as an indictment of injustice, a raindrop's journey exposing the imbalance of an entire conflict, a personal confession bridging to collective resilience, a poetic entreaty turning death into new life through storytelling. Each instance affirms Edward Said's insight that narrative is an arena of liberation. By narrating themselves – in their own pragmatically savvy way – Palestinians like Alareer seize the *permission to narrate* and exercise it fully.

This study's findings underscore that voice is not merely about having a story to tell, but about how you tell it. The internal Palestinian voice, as exemplified here, tells its story with a keen awareness of audience and context, encoding layers of meaning that invite active interpretation. In this sense, the Palestinian narrator and the reader enter a cooperative enterprise of understanding – a dialogic process wherein the horror and hope of Gaza are reconstructed in the reader's mind through implicature and inference. Such an engaged reading experience is precisely what can cultivate empathy and recognition. When a reader infers the unspoken heartbreak behind a repeated phrase or senses the irony behind an ostensibly simple statement, they have, in a small but significant way, stepped into the narrator's shoes.

The implications of this research extend beyond literary analysis. They touch upon the real-world discourse surrounding Palestine. In media and politics, Palestinian voices have often been drowned out or filtered; understanding the pragmatics of Palestinian self-narration can improve how these voices are heard and acknowledged. Educators and advocates might

draw on works like Alareer's to illustrate personal perspectives of conflict, guiding audiences to "read between the lines" and appreciate the full humanity and agency of the narrators. Moreover, this analytical approach could be applied to other marginalized voices globally – from survivors of genocides to indigenous storytellers – to similarly reveal how those voices negotiate to be understood under adversity.

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