

COUNTER-HEGEMONIC RESISTANCE IN DIGITAL POETRY: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF REFAAT ALAREER'S *IF I MUST DIE*

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The ongoing struggle with Israel has had a significant impact on Palestinian literature, which reflects themes of resistance, war, and national identity. Research on the counter-hegemonic aspects of this literature, especially in poetry, is limited.

Theoretical Framework: This study attempts to bridge this gap by examining the Palestinian literary scholar and poet Refaat Alareer's digital poem *If I must die* as a counter-hegemonic literary artifact.

Method: Alareer's *If I must die* is studied through the critical discourse analytical framework of Norman Fairclough. This textual analysis is a three-dimensional one, taking into consideration the poem as a textual, discourse and social practice incorporating distinct theoretical perspectives for each level of investigation.

Results and Discussion: The poem's production, reception and dissemination on digital platforms, especially Instagram where it was originally published, is studied as a discursive event. This is done by examining the post-digital dimensions and cosmopolitan rhetoric that the poem deploys to transgress its immediate sociopolitical context to foster transnational solidarity and empathy. This is reinforced by the genre of self-elegy that the poem embraces to thematically represent personal struggles as a collective one, bringing local specificity and universal human experiences together.

Research Implications: The transformative potential of literature as a social practice is emphasized by the study by demonstrating how *If I must die* adopts counter-hegemonic measures by appropriating authoritarian discourse conventions to challenge the status quo.

Originality/Value: Ultimately, the study positions the widely-shared poem as a globally impactful digital poem that serves as an example of the inherent dynamism of literature in bringing truth to power, particularly in the face of conflict.

Keywords: Refaat Alareer, critical discourse analysis (CDA), Norman Fairclough; counterhegemonic discourse, transnationality, digital poetry, post-digital..

1 INTRODUCTION

Spanning from the 1947 UN Partition Plan to the Yom Kippur War in 1973 to the most recent Israel-Hamas war that began in October 2023, the Israel-Palestine conflict has persisted for almost a century now, deeply entrenched in contradictory national and international political standpoints with unprecedented violence, mass deaths and displacements, and regional instability on both sides. Ensuing literature in response to the growing tensions and warfare, warrants close inspection. As Edward Said argues in his work *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives*, the struggle for form in the literary

representation of the conflict reflects the writers' attempts to bring cohesiveness to an otherwise metaphysical hopelessness of illustrating the present (Said & Mohr, 1999). Said places importance on the ability of the literary form which is often overlooked on account of political and social analysis, to represent an exceedingly mystified present (Curthoys & Hesse, 2022).

Historically, the encounters between poetry and politics have been a recurringly significant theme. Poetry of post-Napoleonic England adopted the role of a pivotal medium of protest sought by poets from

diverse backgrounds to shed light on revolutionary events, thereby reducing the distinction between 'high' literature and popular forms (Gardner, 2011). Wordsworth, Byron and other prominent figures of the Romantic period were actively engaged with political issues through their application of political discourse (Dawson, 1993). The impact of war on literature has led to writers especially poets revising their forms to represent new ideologies amidst political conflicts (Brown & Corns, 1995). Therefore, poetry has played a vital role as a space for propagating political expression and contestation.

Scholarly articles on literature especially poetry that attempts to mobilize social change through deliberate textual production strategies are numbered. Recent examples include the articles written by Shirindzi and Maluleke (2025) and Elaref and Ahmed (2024) who employ Fairclough's Critical discourse analysis framework to highlight poetry's counterhegemonic capacity to resist and contest prevailing power relations. Shirindzi and Maluleke reveal how linguistic choices in Xitsonga poems expose and critique power structures and ideological stances regarding corruption. On the other hand, Elaref and Ahmed analyze how rhetorical strategies in Langston Hughes' poetry challenge dominant racial narratives and articulate resistance. Motinyane (2023) also demonstrates the interplay between language, power, and ideology in the counter-hegemonic discourse of Maphalla's poetry through Fairclough's framework. The post-digital state and its subsequent influence on poetic creation and dissemination on Instagram has been investigated by Soelseth (2023). The iterative turn of poetry in their variously mediated forms is discussed by Smailbegović (2022). Ramazani (2006) highlights the potential of poetry to transcend national boundaries, fostering cross-cultural exchange. The fluidity of transnational identity and its inclination towards multiple consciousness is discussed by Bauridl (2013).

Taking this milieu of research and historicity into consideration, this article aims to study the expression, contestation and the ensuing transgression of the poem *If I must die* by the Palestinian writer and literary scholar Refaat Alareer who taught English literature at Gaza's Islamic University. Alareer chose to stay in northern Gaza when Israeli operations began there. He died from an air strike in Gaza city on December 7, 2023 (BBC News, 2023). On October 14, 2023 he first posted the poem, *If I must die* on Instagram (Alareer, 2023) and then shared it on X formerly known as Twitter on November 1, 2023, garnering 36.4 million views, 136k reposts, 5.5k replies, 190k likes, and 13k bookmarks, as of the day it was retrieved (@itranslate123, 2023) spurring many translations (Serhan, 2023). The poem attained increased significance after his death becoming a self-elegy with its prophetic power

(Ramazani, 1994).

Alareer (2014) in the book *Gaza* writes back: *Short Stories from Young Writers in Gaza*, Palestine emphasizes remembering and relating memories in the form of narratives as an act of resistance to an occupation. In his TEDx Talk *Stories make us*, Alareer (2015) again reaffirms storytelling as an essential act of resistance, identity preservation and political legitimacy. This is, as we will see, reified in his poem *If I must die*. More than retaliation, poetry becomes restitution for the Palestinians for their lack of physical power. It is a means through which they strive to rebuild their homeland and make it "visible through such vivid and relatable language so anybody in the world could read that poetry and be somehow moved by it" (Syed, 2024). Alareer's use of language in relation to present-day discourse and society in *If I must die* is the focus of this study. This is explored through Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional method of critical discourse analysis. The poem is scrutinized at word level, text level and norm level as a means of dissent and resistance. The analytical undertaking can be considered to be a positive critique, that is this study is an analysis of how the poem seeks to remedy or mitigate social wrongs, and identifies possibilities for righting or mitigating them (Fairclough, 2013). By undertaking this nuanced study, this article sheds light on poetry's role in global literature, highlighting its capacity to compress and reshape materials from across time and space, and its ability to cultivate cross-cultural dialogue and understanding.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Rather than being singular and homogenous, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) encompasses a range of critical approaches to language. It is mainly associated with the works of Ruth Wodak, Tuen van Dijk and Norman Fairclough. The common premise of all their contributions is the social character of language, that it both constructs and is constructed by society. More than language itself, CDA is invested in the linguistic dimension of social and cultural processes. CDA asserts that power relations are exercised, that is transmitted and practiced, via discourse. (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional method of discourse analysis is used to study Alareer's work. According to Fairclough, discourse, and any specific instance of discursive practice, should be viewed as '(i) a language text, spoken or written, (ii) discourse practice (text production and text interpretation), (iii) sociocultural practice.' *If I must die* is studied as a discourse, a form of social practice rooted in various levels: 'in the immediate situation, in the wider institution or organization, and at a societal level.' This will include 'linguistic description of the language text, interpretation of the relationship between the (productive and interpretative) discursive processes and the text, and explanation of

the relationship between the discursive processes and the social processes.' (2013, p. 132) According to Fairclough, hegemonic struggle is both the struggle of the dominant forces, with regard to the reconstitution and naturalization of their hegemony, and the struggle of the dominated groups (1995). This study sees the struggle as ironic in the 'appropriative sense, wherein the function would be to 'target the system itself' (Hutcheon, 2003, p. 30) and the ironist, Alareer uses 'that system, with all the play the system allows, to produce different ends, that is, to change the products of the system' –even if the changes are only "local and sporadic" (Chambers, 1991, p. 21). Refaat Alareer's *If I must die* utilizes and subverts 'naturalized discourse conventions' of poetry. In this way his poem becomes a site for 'denaturalization of existing conventions' (Fairclough, 1995). Alareer appropriates the ideologically invested mediating system and by employing linguistic elements used by institutional authority he shifts power relations and the positionality of the subject which in this case are the Palestinians. Therefore, Alareer's discourse 'is itself mediated, and mediated by the same discourse of power it is "borrowing" for its own purposes' (Chambers, 1991, p. 22).

Alareer however employs a cosmopolitan discourse and sees the other as a human, rather than an enemy or entity with whom he is in continuous conflict (Athamneh, 2017). To use Fairclough's framework, at word-level, his text despite originating from singular history and culture is cosmopolitan in character. Alareer with his poem of world-traversing dimensions 'works on even the moment of death with a transhistorical toolkit' (Ramazani, 2020, p. 6) which this article attempts to scrutinize.

In terms of *If I must die*'s discourse practice, the production, reception and interpretation of the poem is studied from a post-digital perspective and through the lens of media ecologies. Post-digital

refers to the humanization of the digital through interaction between cyberspace and real space. In line with this is media ecologies which focusses on 'dynamic systems in which any one part is always multiply connected, acting by virtue of those connections' (Fuller, 2005, p. 4). Exhibitional approach (Hogan, 2010) and media ecologies is used to examine the circulation of *If I must die* in participatory-created exhibitions and how it is realised on different material surfaces by the audience of Instagram. Through the potential for the digital media to be transformed via participation, interaction, and collaboration, the role of the artist is redefined (Alexenberg, 2011). Utilizing cosmopolitan language, digitalization and post-digitalization, Alareer's self-elegy via its circulation and reception on digital platforms like Instagram becomes significant as a discursive event challenging existing conventional ideologies and social conventions.

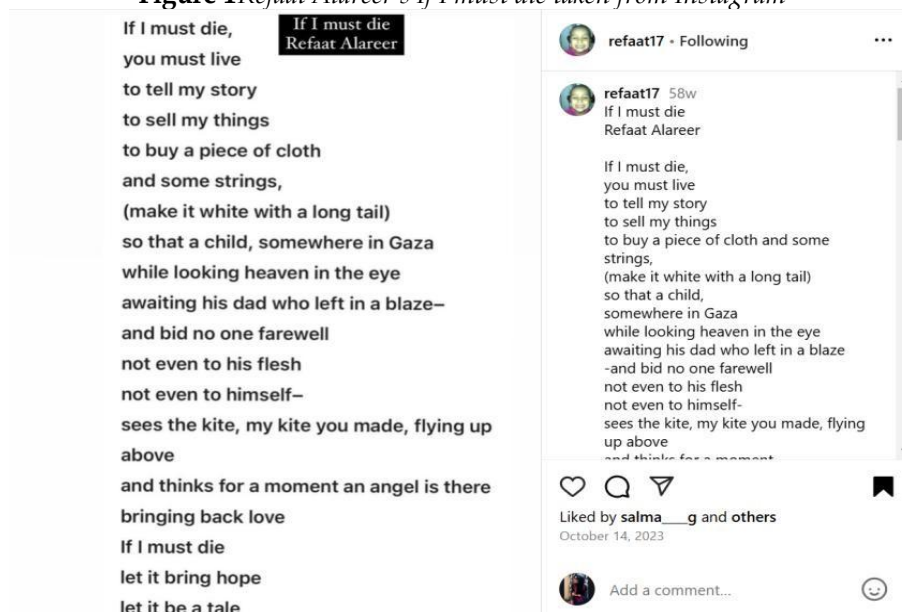
According to Fairclough an analysis of the hegemonic struggle must 'include analysis of discursive practices and of relationships (of dominance, or of opposition and confrontation between diverse discursive practices)' (1995). For the angle of the text as a social practice, this paper investigates how Alareer's poem adopts Gramscian counterhegemonic discourse conventions to sabotage dominant ideology by appropriating the tools of the master.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS - THE POEM AS TEXT

In his poem, Alareer uses a set of linguistic resources to signify associations that may not be overt. From a textual perspective, he appropriates 'vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and text structure' (Fairclough, 1993, p. 75). Below is the text of *If I must die* taken from Instagram where it was first posted by Alareer to negotiate and subvert power relations.

Figure 1 Refaat Alareer's *If I must die* taken from Instagram



The poem is written in free verse and can be considered a monostich, though it lacks an end-stopped line towards the end. The speaker, based on the socio-cultural and biographical context, can be assumed to be Alareer himself calling for peace and humanity. Punctuation is sparse and capitalization is used twice, in both cases for 'If'. The lack of breaks lends the poem, which is a call for action, a sense of urgency. The poem is premised on a conditional merged with an imperative. Alareer used deontic modality with the word 'must' to render the reader obligated to carry out the next course of action. The entire poem embodies a material process with its concrete verbs like die, live, tell, sell, buy, make, looking, awaiting, etc describing a process of doing. The participants in this process are the actor and the goal. As mentioned earlier the poem invites a role-reversal by paving way for action by the readers who are the goal (Machin & Mayr, 2012). The reader instead of being a passive reactant is invited to become the producer of action with the line 'you must live to tell my story'. Alareer appropriates 'ideological squaring strategy of positive self-presentation or face-keeping and its outgroup corollary, 'negative other-presentation' (Van Dijk, 1998, p. 267). This is done through oppositional concepts of life and

death built around the actor and the participant (the speaker and the reader), Alareer blurs the dichotomy between us and them through his inclusive discourse to make the cause of the Palestinians a global cause, their tragedy a transnational tragedy. His lexical choices 'child' and 'dad' have familial connotations. Instead of describing the collective suffering of a generic group, Alareer uses individualization by singling out the child and dad from Gaza thereby humanizing them to foster empathy in readers. The discourse signifies 'associated identities, values and likely sequences of action' (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 32). Alareer avoids any explicit depictions of violence and bloodshed and instead uses hedging as can be seen in 'his dad left in a blaze'. Alareer centers his discourse on his imminent demise and as Bruno Latour writes 'there is nothing more local, more brutal and more durable than' death (Latour & Venn, 2002). Instead of overhistoricizing or overlocalizing, Alareer achieves an intricate temporality and spatiality in his work thus making it translocal and polytemporal (Ramazani, 2020)

The poem is knit together with main clauses, subordinate clauses, embedded clause and phrases.

Table 1 An illustration of the breakdown of the clauses

Clause	Type	Function
If I must die	Subordinate (Conditional)	Sets a hypothetical condition.
you must live	Main clause	States a necessity or obligation under the condition.
to tell my story	Subordinate (Infinitive)	Expresses obligation related to the main clause.
to sell my things	Subordinate (Infinitive)	Expresses obligation related to the main clause.
to buy a piece of cloth	Subordinate (Infinitive)	Expresses obligation related to the main clause.
and some strings	Phrase	Complements "to buy a piece of cloth".
(make it white with a long tail)	Main clause (Parenthetical)	Provides descriptive instruction related to "a piece of cloth."
so that a child, somewhere in Gaza	Subordinate (Purpose)	Indicates the purpose for the action.
while looking heaven in the eye	Subordinate (Adverbial)	Describes the child's action.
awaiting his dad	Subordinate (Participle)	Describes the child's situation.
who left in a blaze	Subordinate (Relative)	Provides additional information about the dad who passed away in a fire likely caused by explosives.
and bid no one farewell	Subordinate	Adds detail to the relative clause about the dad.
not even to his flesh	Subordinate	Expands on the main clause "and bid no one farewell" by emphasizing the suddenness of the dad's demise.

not even to himself	Subordinate	Expands on the main clause "and bid no one farewell" by reiterating the tragic nature of his death.
sees the kite,	Subordinate	Narrates the child's perception of the kite.
my kite you made	Subordinate (Relative)	Adds detail to "the kite."
flying up	Subordinate (Participle)	Describes the state or action of "my kite."
above	Adverbial phrase	Complements "flying up" by specifying direction.
and thinks for a moment an angel is there	Subordinate	Expresses the child's thought or imagination.
bringing back love	Subordinate (Participle)	Describes the imagined action of the angel.
If I must die	Subordinate (Conditional)	Repeats the hypothetical condition for emphasis.
let it bring hope	Main clause (Imperative)	States a wish or directive.
let it be a tale	Main clause (Imperative)	States a wish or directive.

In terms of grammatical positioning of actions, the discourse of the poem is circular with an indication of the speaker's impending death in the beginning and towards the end, expressed in subordinate conditional clauses. Greater emphasis is placed on the actions in main clauses (you must live, (make it white with a long tail), let it bring hope, let it be a tale). By strategically embedding subordinate clauses after the dominant clauses that express a plea for solidarity, the poem places prominence to both the speaker's inevitable end and the reader's responsibility to take action.

The poem uses the metaphor of the kite which has evolved into a potent symbol of resilience and resistance in Gaza (Black, 2025). The target domain of a metaphor is made up of the immediate subject matter, while the source domain is where significant metaphorical reasoning occurs and where the source concepts used in that reasoning are found (Lakoff & Johnson, 2008). In hegemonic discourses, metaphors are considered to have hidden ideological loadings due to the way they

can conceal and shape understandings, while giving the impression that they reveal them (Fairclough, 2013). Alareer's counter-hegemonic text appropriates this rhetorical trope by using the cultural symbol of kite-making and kite-flying which articulates its discrepant cosmopolitan agenda affiliated to an 'alternative notion of "cultural" identity' undermining 'the "naturalness" of ethnic absolutisms' (Clifford, 1998, p. 365). Therefore, Alareer evokes the metaphor of the kite in the source domain to reach the target domain that implies a return to pastoral peace and political redemption (Swedenburg, 1990). The kite's long tail signifies a wish to be remembered which is again emphasized through the homophone 'tale' in the later part of the poem.

3.2 TEXT AS A DISCURSIVE PRACTICE - PRODUCTION AND INTERPRETATION

In this section we will be linking the linguistic

description of *If I must die* to the text's production, distribution, and consumption. We analyse the nature of Alareer's counter-hegemonic discourse from a post-digital and transnational perspective. The poem's reception by the audience on the digital platform of Instagram is explored to examine the conflict between two aspects of language use, 'the socially shaped and the socially constitutive'. The use of language here 'is constitutive in both conventional, socially reproductive ways, and creative, socially transformative ways' (Fairclough, 2013, p. 92). There is a complex relationship between this poem as a discursive event and the underlying conventions or norms of language use on the digital domain of Instagram. The text has had a complex distribution on the platform and other digital spaces like X. The collective consumption that ensued lead to it being 'recorded, transcribed, preserved, re-read' (Fairclough, 1993). It has been reproduced, transformed and translated into 59 languages on the website <https://ifimustdie.net/>. With regard to context, the poem supports the Palestinian cause by directly invoking Gaza. In terms of its force, it uses imperative sentence forms to establish responsibility and agency on part of the readers. With its simple language, established context and via its force of utterance, it set up 'positions for interpreting subjects that are 'capable' of making sense of them; and 'capable' of making the connections and inferences, in accordance with relevant interpretative principles, necessary to generate coherent readings (Fairclough, 1993, p 84).

This is further strengthened by the post-digital turn in the circulation process of poetry that is the interlocking of new media cultural approaches to poetry with old media ways which has had a significant impact on the reception of *If I must die*. To get his discourse across, Alareer submitted his poem to exhibition spaces like Instagram wherein because of the reproducibility of his content it was swiftly adapted and shared by third party for

distribution (Hogan, 2010). This led to the circulation and the binding of the text in various ways to diverse materialities beyond the page (i.e. in banners, prints, etc) making the poem one of the transmedial starting points for pro-palestinian and pro-peace campaigns. The hybridization of “old” and “new” media that has been witnessed in the realization of *If I must die* is an indication of mutation of poetry and the result of a mutation of new power structures in what has been described as the post-digital state (Cramer, 2015).

Ethical Consideration. This study uses screenshots of Instagram posts that are publicly accessible. Recontextualizing posts from ordinary users for academic purpose must be pursued with caution and consent. Posts shared here are by business accounts and public profiles.

Examples of the remediated text that has been showcased on Instagram as image/video posts revealed by the archive #IfIMustDie and #RefaatAlareer are given below.

Figure 2 A print image featuring a line from 'If I must die' sold by @pollinatorproject with proceeds going for evacuation funds.



Figure 3 Embroidery of an excerpt from the poem sold by @generativeshop with proceeds going for aid for Palestine.



Figure 4 A progress post of a block print of the poem shared by the business account @transstamps



transstamps • Follow

transstamps Progress so far on a bit of a tribute piece to Refaat Aleereer and his family. His poem, "If I Must Die". I'm about halfway done with it.

Refaat was an incredible human. He was a writer, a poet, a university professor, and an outspoken activist. He wrote this poem to inspire hope in Palestinians for a brighter future.

#ifimustdie #refaatalareer #poem #ps #freepalestine

29w

kei_killer i had no clue u used erasers !! i def wanna make art like u <3 keep up the great art !!

26w Reply

flamefxg heard a reading of this on tabaret lawn arrangement and cried my eyes out. It's a beautiful piece

Liked by coffen.into.ashes and others

May 11

Add a comment...

Figure 5A framed cross-stitch of the poem by the artist @earthisdari



earthisdari • Follow

earthisdari "If I must die, let it bring hope, let it be a tale..." - Dr. Refaat Alareer (رحمة الله عليه) ❤️✂️

Poem by #refaatalareer

Audio excerpt (second slide) is from Dr. Alareer's #tedex talk from 2015

☐☐ #tatreez by my mother

#letitbeatale #ifimustdie #tatreezembroidery #artforpalestine #crossstitch #poetry #poetrycommunity #stitchersforpalestine

Edited · 39w

zena.darwazeh I can't get over how beautiful this is. ❤️✂️

39w 2 likes Reply

View replies (1)

avanbeautyounge Beautiful ❤️

Liked by mohammed_mofeed4 and others

March 2

Add a comment...

Figure 6A posca artwork by @chellustration with lines of the poem stuck on it.



chellustration • Follow

chellustration It has been AGES since I got a chance to do any proper art, I thought I'd start with some stickers 🍉🍉🍉

I've wanted to do some art to show solidarity with Palestine for ages and ages, but it seemed like such an insurmountable task. I decided to go with something simple, and honour the words of Dr. Refaat Alareer who was brutally murdered by IL. May the genocide come to an end and May Palestine be free, from the river to the sea! We will not stop fighting ❤️PSTEPS❤

#watermelon #watermelonart #watermelonillustration #sticker #stickers #stickerart #ifimustdie #drrefaatalareer #palestine #freepalestine #gaza #boycottisrael #stopgenocide #illustration #ireland #posca #poscart #keffiyeh #keffiyehart

41w

February 15

Add a comment...

Figure 7A ceramic bowl with lines from the poem engrained, shared by a user promoting a fundraising event.



Figure 8 An altoid scrollbox featuring the poem with the motif of the kite shared by the artist @somesmalltoken



Figure 9 A calligraphy of the poem by the artist @crescentcalligraphy raising funds for donation to a charity working for Palestine.



Figure 10 A post shared by @craic_magazine showcasing Free Derry Corner in Ireland papered over with lines from the poem.

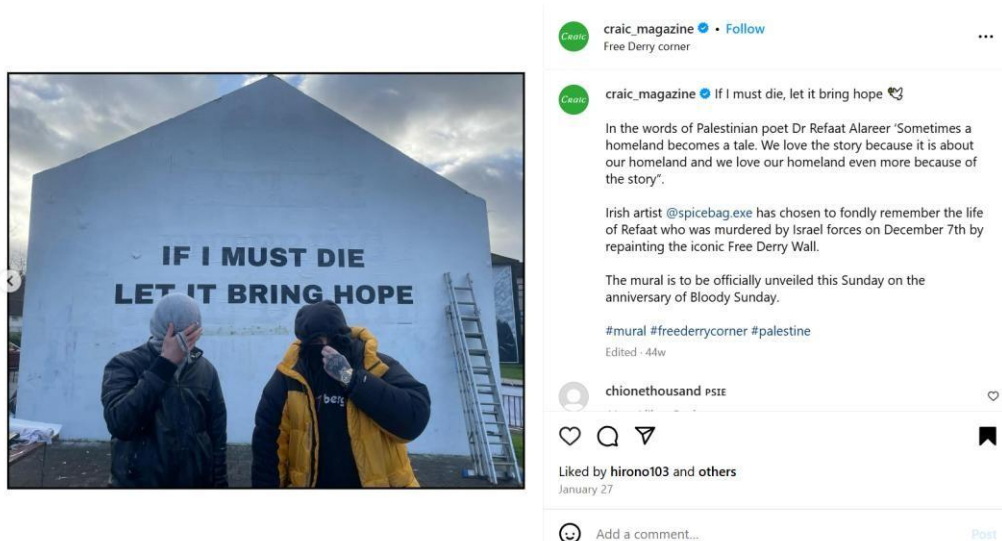


Figure 11 The first line of the poem with depictions of late Gazans in the form of a mural created by artists in Amsterdam reshared by an Instagram user.

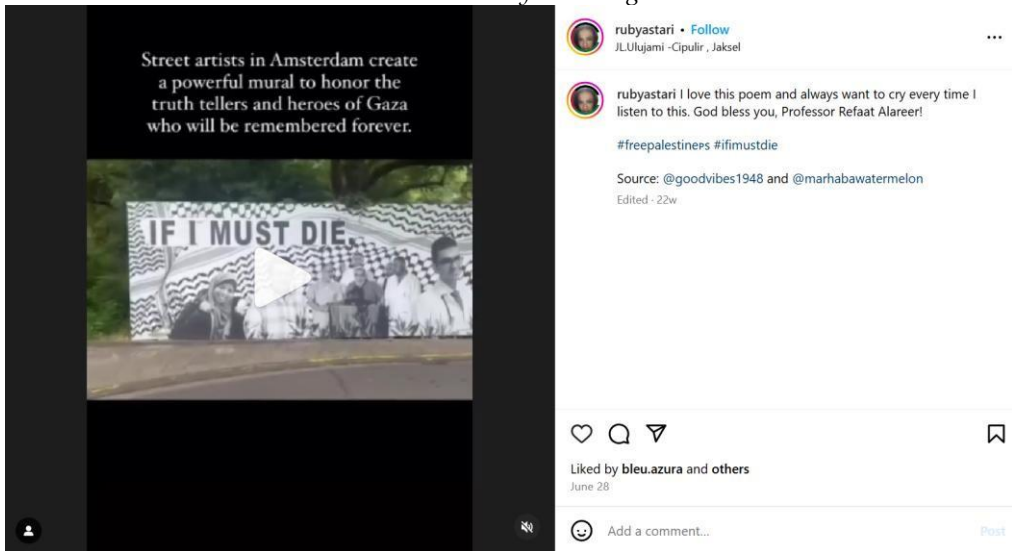
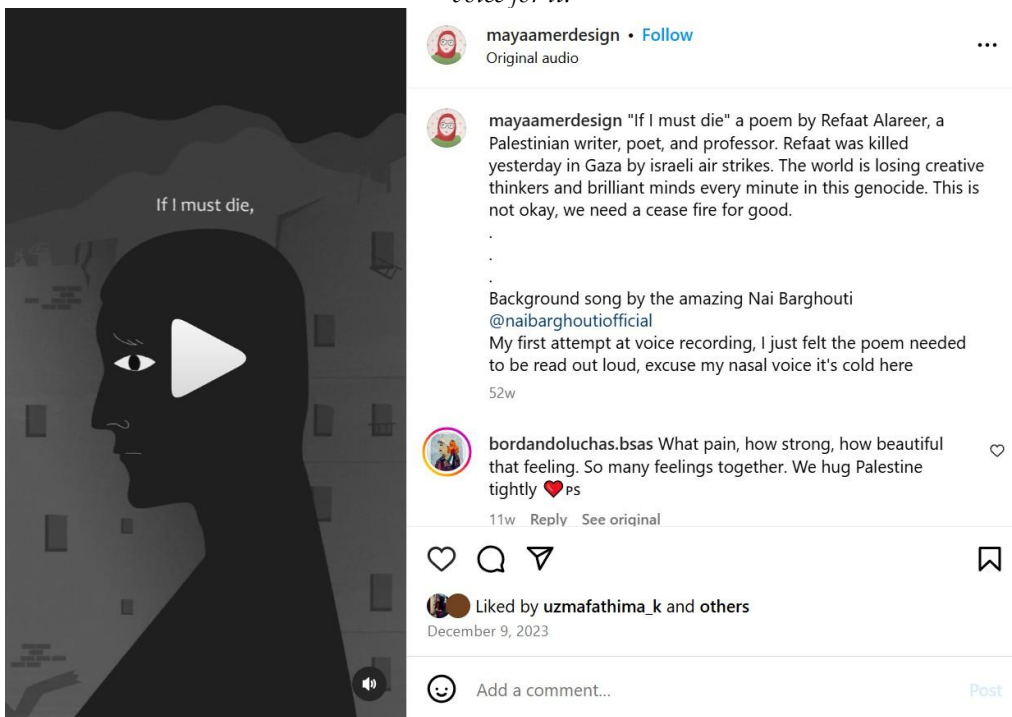


Figure 12 An animated rendition of the poem by the designer and illustrator @mayaamerdesign who has also lent her voice for it.



Alareer's plea for his tale to be shared widely is accentuated by the post-digital inclination of the current-day social media he uses to share it. By extending beyond the digital medium the poem becomes not merely a reiteration but a reperformance with each user personalizing it and giving it a new avatar. The social function of the poem is therefore intensified. Iterative or copy poetry might appear to reinforce existing institutions and forms of authority, but it has the potential to undo these conditions of mastery (Edmond, 2019). Alareer's counter-discourse utilizes this iterative turn both in its content and intent to herald a conceptual shift wherein his poem born in one language, nation, and medium transitions to a multimedia, multiversion, multiauthor text appearing "simultaneously... in multiple languages" (Walkowitz, 2015, pp. 1-2). Therefore, the remediation of *I must Die* in its distribution entered what Fairclough calls an intertextual chain that resulted in a series of text types that are transformationally related to each other. As part of its hegemonic struggle, Alareer's discourse inadvertently utilizes the ambivalence and heterogeneity of complex intertextual chains to contest and restructure established orders of discourse (1993).

Intertextuality, according to Julia Kristeva, indicates "the insertion of history (society) into a text and of this text into history" (1986, p. 39) *If I must die*, is also inherently intertextual in the way that it is constructed from the texts from the past. The poems that it bears distinct similarities with are as follows: *If We Must Die* by the Jamaican- American writer Claude McKay published 1919 and *The Soldier* by the English poet Rupert Brooke published posthumously in 1915. Both the poems are given below:

"If We Must Die
By Claude McKay

*If we must die, let it not be like hogs Hunted and penned
in an inglorious spot,
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs, Making
their mock at our accursèd lot.
If we must die, O let us nobly die,
So that our precious blood may not be shed In vain; then
even the monsters we defy
Shall be constrained to honor us though dead! O kinsmen!
we must meet the common foe!
Though far outnumbered let us show us brave, And for
their thousand blows deal one death-blow! What though
before us lies the open grave?
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack, Pressed
to the wall, dying, but fighting back!" (1919)*

"The Soldier
By Rupert Brooke
If I should die, think only this of me: That there's some

*corner of a foreign field That is for ever England. There
shall be In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware, Gave,
once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam; A body of
England's, breathing English air,*

*Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home. And think,
this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given; Her
sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven." (1915)*

In addition to being self-elegies, *If We Must Die* is a defiant call for arms against oppression in the name of bravery and nobility while *The Soldier* glorifies sacrifice in the name of the country after being slain in war. *If I must die* can be considered a reworking of these texts in its historicity. Speakers in both poems predict their deaths. McKay emphasizes a shared spirit of resistance and the significance of an honourable death. In line with this, Alareer pens his desire for a death that is purposeful and transcends the limitations of the corporeal body to become a tale that symbolizes hope and harmony. Brooke's idealized version of death is echoed by Alareer but he veers its focus beyond the personal and the individual so that it has the potential to become a collective experience. While McKay and Brooke express the valor of facing death, Alareer articulates his desire for his death to serve as a symbol for peace and resilience by inviting the readers to become a part of the narrative as bearers of his story. All three poems depict the poets' ability to transform imminent destruction into 'a different, an explicable, an amenable circumstance' (Ramazani, 1994, p. 192) as mentioned by Wallace Stevens in his analysis of the psychology of self-elegy. *If I must die* as an anti-hegemonic rhetoric in this way realizes intertextuality which 'sees texts as historically transforming the past - existing conventions and prior texts - into the present' (Fairclough, 1993, p. 85). This completes the analytical discussion of the production of text, how it has been circulated and received by society, in addition to the study of the nature of order of discourse that was drawn upon for the production and interpretation (Fairclough, 1993).

3.3 TEXT AS SOCIAL PRACTICE

According to Antonio Gramsci, counterhegemony 'is a philosophical exercise of challenging the hegemonic position of bourgeois' (Henry Cox & Schilthuis, 2012, p. 1). It is accomplished with the critical awareness and understanding of how cultural hegemonies reproduce and reaffirm the dominant socio-economic status quo. It is an attempt to dismantle existing hierarchies by dissemination of alternative values and principles. *If I must die*, as a

discursive event cannot be said be inclined towards globalization which counterhegemonic discourses assail owing to its neoliberal ideals and inclination for technology which leads to the depersonalization and displacement of human experience. In its transgressiveness, the discourse can be considered transnational which 'necessitates a crossing of borders, both literal and epistemological (Mitchell, 1997, p. 115). Alareer's counterhegemonic discourse with its transnational agenda embodies the movement for a global civil society, a left-wing alternative to neoliberalism that promotes greater global integration while highlighting the universality of human experience and calling for a global order that upholds fundamental human rights. This can be seen in the way it uses technology to bridge cultural and social divides, emphasizing glocal (global and local) solutions to issues (Henry Cox & Schilthuis, 2012). The publication of Alareer's poem on the public domain of Instagram followed by twitter and his consecutive death mobilized an audience who participated in the transformation and transmission of his discourse. By utilizing and exploiting communication media that is conventionally prone to manipulation by cultural hegemony, his discourse employs a war of position to disseminate information that undermines the authority of the hegemon (Henry Cox & Schilthuis, 2012).

More than the metaphysics of human equality, the poem's discourse is grounded on a seemingly insignificant but concrete object: the white kite of remembrance in the wake of the speaker's death, inspiring the birth and extension of a transnational solidarity. This is also owing to its 'ability to see more and more traditional differences (of tribe, religion, race, customs, and the like) as unimportant when compared with similarities... – the ability to think of people wildly different from ourselves as included in the range of 'us'' (Rorty, 1989, p. 58) Alareer's text becomes a site or event for interaction and iterative poetics that utilizes digital media to promote the illusion that the same data or text can be endlessly reproduced without change, in order to encourage an open-endedness to both textual practice and cultural identity (Edmond, 2019). With its mimetic force and desire, the text questions hierarchies. It imitates western literary conventions and literature like *The Soldier* by Brooke to make his work legible and therefore conceivable to the west, "to speak in the other's language in order to be recognized by the other" (Chow, 2006, p. 83).

Therefore, with the help of social media, Alareer works intimately with long established tools of the master's discourse to subvert it, converting the instruments of colonialism into tools for transgression (Dhawan, 2014), functioning as a force of resistance and transformation.

4 CONCLUSION

Given its history and the present political context, it is impossible to consider Palestine without relating it to Israel or Zionism. It is the 'present absentee' whose geography and identity is overshadowed and displaced by non-identity (Lloyd, 2012). The mass violence and political turmoil have been exacerbated in the wake of Hamas-led resistance against Israel. The people of Gaza strip now face the grim and imminent prospect of becoming a people without land after the seizure and control of Palestinian territory by Israel. In the midst of this Refaat Alareer penned his powerful counterhegemonic discourse that highlights the enduring Palestinian struggle, offering a profound exploration and evolution of resistance and identity.

Here Alareer's poem is taken as a discourse that is studied in a socio-theoretically informed way, in forms of textual, discursive and social practices (Fairclough, 1995). Alareer deploys irony as a tool for resistance by exploiting the linguistic and socio-cultural systems of authoritative discourse and practice, creating a new political counter-culture (Cunningham, 2007). In his confrontational text which serves as a critique of warfare and separatist agenda he uses linguistic strategies to challenge norms. CDA is conventionally used to demystify the propagation of ideology via language. Power is not derived from language but rather exercised through it. Therefore, language can be utilized to resist and 'challenge power, to subvert it, to alter distributions of power in the short and long term' (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 11). *If I must die*, is a text that can be seen as a site of struggle that resists established norms of authoritarian language and discursivity by subverting and appropriating them with the help of creativity.

As a discourse practice, 'If I must die' is an instapoem that demonstrates the post-digital state of cultural production and circulation intersecting with traditional media in its representation of expression and dissemination (Soelseth, 2023). By undergoing continuous change through iteration on digital media, it challenges traditional notions of textual stability and cultural identity. Owing to its cosmopolitan linguistic competency coupled with the digital framework that it is a part of; the poem has proved its ability to transcend digital and literal borders and cross narrow identities to lend itself to a widespread public discourse. As a self-elegy *If I must die* demonstrates how poetic discourse can transform experiences of oppression, war, and death into powerful narratives of resistance, identity, and self-sacrifice, while also highlighting the potential for these narratives to be contested and reinterpreted by individuals and communities.

When studied as a social practice, the poem uses counterhegemonic discourse as a critical tool for challenging dominant narratives and power

structures. It explores the internet's potential as a platform for counterhegemonic activism, highlighting its capacity to facilitate local issues to gain global significance by fostering transnational perspectives.

In conclusion, the poem exemplifies the transformative potential of literature in the midst of war and destruction. Enhanced by its digital reception, Refaat Alareer's poem can be seen as a counter-hegemonic literary artifact that reinforces

language's ability to resist, reclaim, and reimagine. The poem is proof of the ability of literature to express underrepresented realities while creating international bonds by envisaging new pathways toward compassion and justice. Alareer's writing continues to serve as a potent reminder of the critical role that literature, particularly poetry, plays in promoting hope and fending off erasure in the face of the war which in this case is the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict.

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