

The Language of Siege: Samih al-Qasim and the Poetic Imagination of Trauma in Gaza

Associate. Prof. Khaled Masood

Languages Department, Al Istiqlal University

Jericho, Palestine

dr.khaled@pass.ps

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3242-0416>

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Abstract:

Poetry is a unique tool that allows people to go beyond documenting the history of a particular event and recovering the voices of those who have been silenced by history and the failure of grand narratives. The poetry of Samih al-Qasim allows him to testify to the conditions of the siege and to testify from them, raising his voice from the husks of the silence of Gaza. Postcolonial theory and the theories of trauma will be utilized in this study of al-Qasim's poetic creation. The work of al-Qasim masterfully creates a sense of the continuity of rhythm within a language that is fragmented by the experience of the siege and the archiving of the memory of Palestine. Selected poems from *All Faces but Mine* by Samih al-Qasim will be studied to demonstrate how al-Qasim transforms the siege into survival strategies, the void into the presence of metaphorical imagery, and silence into lines of poetry. Even past the mourning in his work, al-Qasim provides Gaza with a voice when all borders are closed down. In this mix of trauma and testimony embedded in al-Qasim's work is an archive of the culture of the people of Palestine, from the private to the public, the personal to the collective, and the metaphysical to the political. In these poems is the story of the lessons of the human spirit and the capacity for resilience in the face of siege.

Keywords: Gaza, Poetics of Siege, Resistance Literature, Samih Al-Qasim, Traumatic Occupation.



1- Introduction

Literature emerges where the authorized discourse fails. In the places ravaged by war, in exile, in erasure, poetry blossoms as an ornament and a lament for the land and its people. Poetry is a language that cannot otherwise be spoken (Gheytasi, 2024; Srámová, 2025; Smith, 2016). Within the colonized lands and among the nations that suffered wounds to their national imaginaries, verse has provided a means of giving voice to the voiceless (Nayrouz, 2021; Marshall, 2025). One of the most poignant examples of this power of verse exists in the land of Palestine (Cohen, 2021; Hasan and Bleibleh, 2023). The metaphor of siege appropriately defines the outer and inner landscapes of Palestinian

literature, from the physical besiegedness of Gaza to the psychological siege within the Palestinian people as a whole (Hesse, 2017; Talukder and Ali, 2025). The convergence of these two dimensions is what renders the work of Samih Al-Qasim especially pressing with regard to the plight of Gaza's people (Šramová, 2025; Dalal, 2017; Jayyusi, 1991). While much of the existing scholarship in the field has investigated the influence of nationalism and symbolism on Palestinian poetry, few studies have analysed the siege of Gaza as both a structural and psychological phenomenon, or investigated its development within the poetic language of the region. This study aims to handle this gap in the literature. To bridge the gap, one needs an overview of a poet who is constantly engaging with the realities of siege, dispossession, and resistance.

Palestinian resistance would find its voice in the poet Samih al-Qasim, who would become one of the most influential figures in modern Arabic poetry and the development of resistance poetry in Palestine (Harrison, 2016; Alhirthani, 2024). Al-Qasim was a Palestinian citizen of Israel who lived under military rule and was exiled from his own land (HATEM, 2023; Mohaghegh, 2012). His verses were plain and unapologetically coarse, focusing on the universalization of his own suffering (Masood, 2022; Alrawadieh, 2023). Some of al-Qasim's most notable poems describe the siege of Palestine and work to evoke a sense of desirability within his readers (Mohaghegh, 2012). While previous scholars have studied the works of al-Qasim, this study aims to contribute to the existing scholarship on al-Qasim by analysing his use of the metaphor of siege within his poetry. This focus allows for a deeper comprehension of how the language of poetry creates the political, rendering it a lasting form of cultural memory and resistance.

Through his literary writings, al-Qasim uses the motif of siege to not only represent the realities of the occupation of Palestine, but also to express the isolation and suffering that the Palestinian people endure (Zikrah et al., 2021). Through his use of collective testimony in his poetry, al-Qasim expresses his own poetic voice and his reaction to the trauma experienced by the Palestinian people as a collection. The development of siege poetry by al-Qasim explores survival, memory, and discourse. Furthermore, through exploring al-Qasim's complete literary works, connections can be made between his work and the conditions that exist in Gaza today. Through his poems that explore themes of siege and testimony, al-Qasim's work becomes deeply connected with the traumas and isolation that the Gaza region's residents experience, as his motifs perfectly express the blockade that exists in Gaza today. The current situation in Gaza is more than just a physical blockade. Al-Qasim's poetic imagination constantly articulates the dimensions of psychological confinement, cultural disruption, and

collective trauma. To teach an appropriate theoretical framework for the life experience of poetic representation.

Theoretically, this study draws on postcolonial and trauma theories. According to Edward Said, al-Qasim's poetry serves as a means of decolonizing literature after the violent acquisition of knowledge from the colonized nation (Said, 2012). Furthermore, trauma theorists such as Caruth and Felman analyse the lyrics from al-Qasim's song as testimonial literature that uncovers the trauma endured by the Palestinian people (Caruth, 2016; Felman, 1992). For al-Qasim, the siege of Palestinian cities becomes the catalyst for his entire creative work. Additionally, these theories aim to overcome the limitations of previous studies on Palestinian literature, specifically in the analysis of theme elements rather than survival testimonies and methodologies. From these frameworks, it is conceivable to view al-Qasim's poetry as an equally complex literary act of witnessing and survival.

There have been extensive evaluations of al-Qasim's work through the lens of national and exile. However, the current paper aims to investigate his work through the lens of the siege motif to examine the metaphorical, political, and psychological aspects of al-Qasim's work. Al-Qasim's poems serve as a testimony from the community regarding the current Gaza crisis and the remedies that a prophet provided for the situation. The poems will be examined to investigate the features of the siege, silence, and the prophetic discourse that creates a voice that transcends the limitations of those who live within these sealed locations.

Using postcolonial and trauma theories, al-Qasim's poetry will be explored to reveal how his work contains the trauma of the current situation in Gaza and his literary response to the present-day suffering of the people. These theories will establish a link with the literature review to deliver insights on the ethics of the siege that impacts the lives of the subjects within these poems and their environments. Through al-Qasim's poetry and the description of the political and physical restrictions facing the Gaza region today, this research will not only expand the legacy of al-Qasim's work but also explore the recognition that the Palestinians are worthy of as human beings.

2- Literature Review

2.1. Nationalism and Resistance in al-Qasim's Poetry

The poetic works of al-Qasim are recognized due to their connection with Palestinian national remembrance as both parties share the same fate of loss of homeland and displacement (Nayrouz, 2021; Marshall, 2021, 2025). The central focus area of research is on identity through the poetic expression of

Palestinian nationalism, which is a dominant theme in poetry (Hasan and Bleibleh, 2023).

Al-Qasim's place within resistance literature is clearly identified by Rashid Khalidi (1992), who emphasizes several characteristics of al-Qasim's poetry particularly those concerning commitment to an issue combined with poetic structure/simplicity which allow for al-Qasim to write extensive poetry that are essentially calls to action. While most analyses have been based upon themes found within al-Qasim's poetry, little formal/structural analysis has taken place, thus limiting the extent to which one can understand how al-Qasim embodies the experience of being under political siege (Mir, 2013). Al-Qasim's depiction of Gaza within his poetry demonstrates the reality of Gaza but also provides it as a symbol representing Palestinian suffering and empowerment and serves as a powerful literary/political icon (Talukder & Ali, 2025; Hesse, 2017). Through these studies, they establish that al-Qasim's poetry relies on themes of nationalism and resistance. They also highlight the need to explore how the text codes collective suffering and historical memory.

This study is an integration of post-colonial and trauma studies using al-Qasim's poetry as a medium for aesthetic and moral resistance to address politically charged issues and collectively remembered pasts. The research base utilizes Said's theories of cultural agency along with Caruth and Felman's definitions of trauma to demonstrate how poetic constructs represent political realities and psychological states. Al-Qasim uses his poetic forms, rhythms and imagery to acknowledge historic Palestine erasures, while he also acts as a witness to the events of the Gaza Crisis; utilizing silence as a method of survival and as a form of testimony (Equeiq 2019).

2.2. Trauma and Memory in al-Qasim's Poetics

Recent research on memory and trauma in the literature also views al-Qasim's poetry as an expressive voice remembering and representing the suffering of all Palestinian people. As Greene & Cushman (2016) and Rahman (2015) suggest al-Qasim's poetry employs techniques such as fragmentation, repetition, the use of both silence and spoken word to express the fractured experience of the Palestinian people. Expounding on al-Qasim are two important studies that enhance our understanding of the poet's testimonial poetics and memory's relationship with literature. Recent studies have focused primarily on memory and trauma, while failing to thoroughly explore the ways that the dimensions of the siege function metaphorically and spatially in al-Qasim's poetry. Since 2017, the siege has taken on a greater intensity in Gaza, which has also impacted the imagery used to show suffering for Palestinians (Hesse, 2017). There is a clear gap in scholarly knowledge in this area; with many studies covering thematic elements of al-Qasim's poetry, but very few have given

consideration to how the siege functions as an aesthetic framework providing cohesion to his overall body of poetry.

This study will fill one of the most significant gaps in scholarly knowledge of al-Qasim's poetry since much existing research focuses solely on themes present in his poetry. This means that little of the research provides a deep understanding of al-Qasim's poetry due to the lack of rigorous formal analysis. While the siege theme has been examined within his poetry, it is necessary to understand how the siege serves as an aesthetic construct giving form and coherence to al-Qasim's poetry. Similarly, it places al-Qasim's work within broader discussions of siege in the Palestinian literary production.

2.3. The Motif of the Siege in Palestinian Literature

The concept of literary siege in Palestine outlined above is challenging to understand since it simultaneously combines physical boundaries, psychological entrapment, and social struggle for dominance. (Hesse, 2017; Langley, 2012). Engagement with scholars such as Abu-Lughod (2007) and Harlow (2014) shows how siege imagery is not limited to military blockades, but represents a broader notion of the precariousness of Palestinian life. Gaza, a site of siege conditions and signifier in both physical form and literary representations, struggles to comprehend this more recent signification (Aliyu, 2024; Talukder & Ali, 2025). However, sieges are often treated as general metaphors rather than as structural interpretative categories. The research redirects its attention toward the artistic function of al-Qasim's poems, which utilize siege imagery to establish aesthetic resistance, thus creating an innovative understanding of Gaza's physical and symbolic siege conditions. Viewing siege in this way opens the possibility of examining not only what al-Qasim writes about, but also how poetic form itself becomes shaped by conditions of confinement and resistance.

This study expands existing research by focusing on how the metaphor of the siege is employed in al-Qasim's poetry. Rather than treating Gaza as one of many themes within which Al-Qasim writes, the paper posits that Gaza serves as an incubator for poetic languages and forms. The siege functions as both a structural and thematic force shaping Al-Qasim's poetics. While scholars apply trauma studies and testimony theory to Palestinian poetry, they have yet to examine the formal aspects of poetry that allow it to become an instrument of both resistance and testimony (Nasr & Merhi, 2025; Sayigh, 2013). Therefore, this study seeks to connect the theoretical frameworks of trauma and testimony with form-based analyses by investigating how the siege imagery disrupts the narrative flow and creates boundary and silence that parallels the historical and political realities of Gaza.

2.4. Postcolonial Theory, Trauma, and Testimony in al-Qasim's Work

On the wake of the analysis of nationalism, trauma, memory and siege, these theoretical perspectives offer the framework through which I examine how they operate in the poetry of al-Qasim. Existing studies fail to address the relationship between thematic features and stylistic elements that are present throughout the works of al-Qasim. Postcolonial analysis of Palestinian literature has been somewhat shallow; however, there is a lack of comprehensive research on the link between post-colonial theory and trauma theory as applied to the works of al-Qasim. This study will bridge this gap through an examination of both theoretical lenses to demonstrate how structural forms of poetry can be used to address both content and political concerns. The research will explore the role of poetic forms within the context of cultural independence and narrative resistance to the violence of a system that is based on the production of knowledge. Al-Qasim's lyrical poetry provides a political response to the crisis in Gaza at the same time as it contributes to the area of literature as an act of opposition.

Scholarly gaps are addressed via this research because it examines the poetic representation of the state of being besieged, specifically in terms of siege themes reflecting Gaza's real-world conditions, and via an analysis of the connection between artistic form and political reality. The methodological approach in this research builds upon current debates about Palestinian literature, including how Gaza has become a place of both physical and symbolic siege. Research into future developments may be necessary in order for theoretical approaches to be integrated with structural aspects of poetry in order to develop a better understanding of al-Qasim's work; the same is true for assessing its cultural viability and political legitimacy.

3- Theoretical Framework

Reading al-Qasim's poems means entering a poetic world that rejects established standards of the past. Al-qasim uses historical, gestural, and lyric elements in his poetry to connect to silence and testimony. Al-Qasim poetry is greater than a cultural representation; it is an essential ontological resistance that continues to exist despite efforts to erase its existence. This research builds on prior research that acknowledges al-Qasim's poetry as an action of collective memory and resistance (Rahman, 2015; Greene & Cushman, 2016). While this research is also concerned with al-Qasim's poetry as a way to understand the collective memory and resistance through the theme of the siege, the primary focus of this research is on the ways that al-Qasim employs various formal techniques in his poetry to create the siege as both a structural and a poetically affective condition. Prior research has studied the siege and resistance, but none of these studies have examined the specific poetic strategies used by al-Qasim to

structure and signify these themes. The term used in this context essentially means how art works from occupied geographies become vessels for lost memories and expression of community voices. Edward Said's thoughts are crucial to this paradigm because he explains how literary creativity occurs within power relations (Said, 2012). The contrapuntal method, which Said describes as a valuable analytical tool to study al-Qasim's poetry. His literary works reveal fragmentation and fractures, according to Said's notion of delivering moral deeds that confront power through truth-telling in the face of colonial erasure. Though Said's schema elucidates how al-Qasim's verse operates in historical life as a mode of resisting colonial domination it does not account for the trauma of violence, displacement and loss which shapes the texture of his language. To tackle this aspect, the present study uses trauma theory as an additional lens through which it is possible to understand the emotional and psychological aspects of the siege.

The intersection of postcolonial theory and trauma studies is particularly fruitful when analysed through the motif of the siege. While earlier studies have treated the siege as context or content, this study treats the siege as a poetic form, one that possesses recursive, enclosing aesthetics. The conceptual framework of the siege in al-Qasim's poetry generates emotional structures that parallel the political conditions outside and the psychological reactions of siege survivors. The poetry's protective and survival methods are revealed by repeating verse construction, as well as circular motions that emphasize absences and the repetition of specific lines. The poet develops a syntax to express pressure and limitation through writing from inside the physical and psychological fortification that acts as the poem's walls.

However, al-Qasim's resistance extends beyond national struggle. Through his poetry, he explores the way memory and trauma function by examining events that transcend conventional storytelling patterns. The daily violence, together with banishment and erasure under the Israeli siege of Gaza, becomes a central element in his poetry about imprisonment. The research demonstrates how al-Qasim's poetry connects with the physical siege against Gaza by showing how his verses predict ongoing political violence, psychological containment, and dispossession. The research is mostly based on trauma theory, which has its origin in Caruth's (2016) and Felman & Laub's (1992) studies. According to Caruth's theory of "unclaimed experience," trauma develops outside of immediate perception to surface later through its indescribable traces (Caruth, 2016, p. 42).

Trauma serves as a fundamental organizing principle in the poetry of al-Qasim. Felman's theory of testimony is extended by the research for the purposes of examining trauma as a source of creative force through which al Qassim's repetition of fragmented experiences and silence are regulated throughout all of

his poetry. Felman's notion of testimonial function as both an ethically performative act and an attempt to gain acknowledgment of what cannot be historically documented by discourse (Felman, 1992). Al-qasim extends the concept of testimony from simply relating violent acts and turns the testimonial function of al Qasim's poetry into an articulation of shared memory that will not allow itself to be erased from the record. The witness thus becomes the architecture of the bridge that connects trauma to resistance by linking the first-person experience to the collective historical defeat, making it a second-person act of survival.

The siege motif serves as a convergence between postcolonial resistance and traumatic memory within this integrated theoretical framework. The siege, as a symbol for more than simply confinement to a physical area, is symbolic of the state of the colonized person; the fractured nature of language experienced by those with traumatic experiences; and the past history of survival (Said, 2012) al Qasim's poetry includes many examples of silence that represent meaningful content rather than empty space. Felman explained that the language of witness accepts the fact that there is a "lack" but at the same time insists upon its existence, and this is evident in al Qasim's use of silence in his work (Felman, 1992). Thus, through the use of silence in his poetry al Qasim conveys the unspoken/unknowable experience and uses this as an act of defiance.

When viewed alongside one another, the preceding theoretical perspectives show how poetic form acts as both a political intervention and a mode of witnessing. The analysis of al-Qasim's poetry identifies it as both Resistance Literature and Cultural Assertion. The Poetry creates a continuous collective memory of suffering and resists definitive interpretation. Al-Qasim's poems provide two functions: they document important moments in history for Gaza during the Nakba and Occupation periods; at the same time, they connect those historical moments to silence/enclosure & symbolic resistance. In that sense, the fugitive nature of the poems preserves the erasure of people while testifying to the silence intended to erase Palestinian voices and confirm the existence of the people.

Drawing on Said's cultural critique and Caruth's trauma theory, this research identifies al-Qasim as an example of a poet operating in the midst of disaster. Through a thorough analysis of al-Qasim's use of poetic technique, specifically repetition, fragmentation, and silence, the research demonstrates that these techniques are primary forms of resistance and testimony. Both testimony and siege are structural elements in the poetry, thus transforming them into important organizational components of the poetic structure. In line with this, the present analysis will not view form and content as isolated categories, but rather as dimensions of poetic resistance that sustain each other. The new understanding

of al-Qasim's writing is made possible through a theoretical lens for reading poetry as a site of political resistance and ethical testimony within post-trauma and erased communities.

4- Methodology

Drawing from a qualitative interpretive research paradigm that is guided by a "close reading" approach, this article presents an analysis of the reading of al-Qasim's poetry through the lens of two interrelated conceptual frameworks (the concept of siege; and the concept of witness) in order to provide a critical understanding of how al-Qasim's poetry has formally structured, symbolically represented, and historically depicted the representation of traumatic events.

4.1. Poetic Form and Political Function

The methodology for this research uses the fundamental ideas from literary trauma studies (Felman & Laub, 1992), post-colonialism (Said, 1993), and language as an indexical performative text (Caruth, 2016) as its foundation. It is based on the idea that memory resistance and the use of one's voice are two key components of how we utilize these theoretical concepts. Through these theoretical models, we can analyze how the hidden or implied themes in al-Qasim's poetry were developed and shaped by the political context in which he wrote them. He used poetry throughout his lifetime to unite personal feelings and politics, but consistently addressed the issue of being under siege in every piece of writing that he produced.

4.2. Poetry as Testimonial and Traumatic Expression

Each poem is treated as a complex composite of cultural materials in which voice, silence, structure, form, and imagery are contested, enlivened, and shaped by tension and resonance into meaningful expressions. The method aligns with postcolonial poetics and Palestinian literary studies (Amireh, 2000; Harlow, 1987), which interpret literary texts not merely as illustrations of historical or political situations but as productive agents that actively engage with these conditions. This article analyses how al-Qasim's broken and repetitive language structure reflects the psychological and emotional breakdowns caused by trauma, which matches the postponed and continuous pain patterns described by Caruth (2016) in his trauma theory.

The study adopts Caruth (2016) and Felman & Laub (1992) for its framework to analyse al-Qasim's poetry as testimonial actions. His poetry is made up of broken pieces that fit with trauma theory's focus on delayed and repeated pain. For instance, the recurring theme of silence and ambiguity in his poetry show this. Poetry creates a space of remembrance and resistance because testimony is a never-ending and fractured discourse that illustrates both suffering and survival.

4.3. Method of Analysis

The following analysis of the poems takes a stance that the poetic form is indelible from the content of the work. The mechanical aspects of the poems, such as metaphor, fragmentation, repetition, and spacing work as structures of meaning within the context of survival and resistance within the postcolonial global world. Beyond the analysis of the content within the poems, the examination of the form also surpasses the thematic elements of the work to examine the ethical and theoretical foundations of the poems.

The focus of the poems will be upon the key stylistic elements, such as metaphor, fragmentation, rhythm, and syntax that contribute to the siege aesthetics of the work. These poems will be analyzed from the perspective of trauma and postcolonial theories to understand how these stylistic elements invoke elements of resistance within the readers in relation to the experiences of the Palestinians within the novel. An analysis of the poems will examine how these poems constructed in a siege fashion also encompass techniques relating to the inclusion of collective memory to encompass the concept of resistance within the context of survival of the Palestinians. These stylistic elements contribute to the definition of the nature of the resistance within these poems.

4.4. Poetic Testimony and the Specificity of Gaza

In the interpretation of al-Qasim's poetry, it is clear that his work is a response to the trauma he endured during his lifetime. The poetry embodies the subjectivity of the individual during a siege of the state designed to erase them from the land. As described by current testimony studies in the field of literary analysis, as described by Whitlock (2007) and Balaev (2008), the poetic texts from al-Qasim work to maintain the ability of the reader to remember the losses and the reasons for the resistance of the people of Gaza.

In discussing al-Qasim's poetry, it is important to remain faithful to the text as it was written. It is important to not ignore the ambiguities within the text and to not create meaning for the broken and interrupted lines within the poetry. The purpose of this investigation into his work is to discuss the broken parts of his text and the empty spaces within the literature created as a result of the trauma endured by the poet. For this discussion, Gaza will be placed within the framework of the poet to avoid the common practice of treating the city as a symbol for a greater cause. Poetry depicts Gaza as both a physical place in the world suffering devastation, and as an abstract space in the worlds of al-Qasim's poetry. Questioning the interpretation of poems means to show how it can deal with the two-fold nature of suffering, immediate pain, and metaphorical resonance.

5- Analysis and Discussion

5.1. The Poetics of Siege in al-Qasim's Poetry

Analysis of the aesthetics and themes of the poetry of al-Qasim is the analysis of certain images and phrases which recur in his poetry. Repetition extends beyond form and works to embody the Palestinian mental and political landscape. In the poem "Enemy of the Sun," al-Qasim employs this "wall" device, for the walls of Gaza and the wall of the self are both laden with meaning; both a physical wall and a wall of identity and soul, of meaning and importance. The statement:

*"You may build walls of hatred around me.
You may glue my eyes to humiliations,
O enemy of the sun,"* (Aruri & Ghareeb, 1970, p. 63).

Here, the wall acts as a direct allusion to the physical wall that Gaza faces on a day-to-day basis, but also acts as a representational metaphor for the psychological wall that the citizens of Gaza live behind. The wall is not only the physical military walls around Gaza, but the internal military walls that prevent the Palestinian people from taking action in response to the situation. In that other sense, the wall isn't only the physical wall of the Gaza Strip, but also the psychological walls that have accumulated over years of occupation, blockades, and trauma. In the poem "Enemy of the Sun", al-Qasim's image of the wall serves not only as a reference to the physical division of Gaza, but also to create a double reference to the psychological wall erected by years of occupation. The line that talks about gluing one's eyes constitutes the reality imposed by the siege on the collective mind. As a result, the image both functions as a political symbol and a representation of the effects of confinement.

5.2.1. Fragmentation and the Fractured Psyche

Al-Qasim's repetitive use of the wall image creates a rhythm that interferes with the natural flow of language. That rhythm forces the reader to constantly face the reality of confinement. To the inhabitants of Gaza, who have had their lives compartmentalized through checkpoints, military green lines, and closed borders, al-Qasim's poetic image represents the unfortunate reality of life that they currently experience. As Bhabha states, "In the colonial context, repetition is not simply a reproduction of the power relations; repetition is an act of resistance, a counter-discourse that can interrupt and discontinue the colonial discourse" (Bhabha, 2012, p. 78). The confines of Gaza trap the voices of those being occupied under the control of the occupation. However, al-Qasim's poetic repetition resists this and serves to keep the traumatic effects of the siege alive. By repeatedly using wall images in his works, al-Qasim continues to draw attention to the continued siege affecting body and mind. Instead, al-Qasim has used the wall to symbolize survival, and an identity that will continue to exist regardless of whether or not it was attempted to be removed. This re-

establishment of identity is one that has occurred over and over again much like the Palestinian spirit, which has persisted despite decades of occupation and erasure. This identity continues to assert itself, and in doing so asserts the demands of freedom, dignity and justice.

The repetitive illustration of the prison cell is seen throughout the book as the constant representation of the never-ending siege of Gaza by the Israeli Military. Similar to each attack on Gaza. There are similar patterns of destruction created with each military operation in Gaza. Gaza's population continues to show defiance against ongoing military assaults. The following lines depict the reality of the current lives of the people in Gaza:

*"You may take the last strip of my land,
Feed my youth to prison cells.
You may plunder my heritage.
You may burn my books, my poems
Or feed my flesh to the dogs.
You may spread a web of terror
On the roofs of my village,
O enemy of the sun,
But
I shall not compromise
And to the last pulse in my veins
I shall resist.
O enemy of the sun"* (Aruri & Ghareeb, 1970, p. 63).

The cyclical nature of the siege in Gaza is most powerfully expressed in al-Qasim's poetry through the motif of repetition. The author employs repetition as a mechanism to disclose more than merely chronological patterns because it reveals a constant state of siege. Trauma in Gaza does not follow a repeating pattern. The never-ending cycle of trauma remains unbroken in Gaza because it does not resolve. Al-Qasim uses repetition to replicate the continuous suffering of Gaza, which persists without end. In this way, poetic form reflects the temporality of siege, with each repetition rehashing previous rounds of violence while never resolving.

The structure of the poem by al-Qasim functions to represent the psychological and political imprisonment of the Palestinian people through its performative nature. The prison cells serve as confinement walls as central symbols that actively enact the process of confinement. Al Qasim uses of prison cells as symbols to illustrate how the repeated cycles of trauma from historical violent events have been passed down through generations of people in Gaza and are still being experienced today, as interpreted by Caruth (1996), an American

literary critic who interprets trauma. This poetic repetition also illustrates the confinement experience as a performance for the theatrical siege, creating a form of visual theatre through the structure of the poetry itself.

Through its constant repetition, siege manifests unending psychological effects, which are trauma as unfinished business, as they repeat without resolution in fragmented and agonising form. The disjointed syntax and interrupted narrative sequences in the poem reflect the conflict-induced mental fragmentation and the disruption. The segmentation of the syntax in "Enemy of the Sun" is not merely aesthetic since it encodes a collective wound of the Palestinian people. The broken syntax demonstrates the psychological damage of collective suffering, of being forced out of their homes, or being made to suffer by someone in military control. The repetition argument leads automatically to fragmentation, as both techniques reproduce the disrupted experience of trauma within the poem itself.

5.2.2. Fragmentation and Syntax: A Poetic Reworking of Trauma

Al-Qasim uses prose-like broken syntax with a fragmented narrative structure in his poetry to depict the psychological and emotional breakdown caused by occupation. The broken syntax of "The Pronoun of the Speaker" is consonant with the broken identity of the Palestinians which seeks to communicate the depth of pain after suffering prolonged violence and displacement. The broken language represents the trauma taking shape in Gaza as the words fail to capture the layers of grief and strength. For example, in the lines:

*"One year falls upon another
and my face falls in the dust
One year falls upon another
And my dialogue continues.
My words are strong like an unbroken mare.
My voice is like an unpolished bell
In the imprisoned halls,
The halls of delegations, of neckties,
Of whiskey
And I do not meet refined gentlemen
Who carries this earthly planet in their briefcases
From the gates of one airport to another.
My words are like an unbroken mare.
My voice is like an unpolished bell"* (Aruri & Ghareeb, 1970, p. 76).

The phrase "one-year falls upon another" illustrates a continuous pattern of time that reflects Gaza's perpetual state of confinement. The passing of years does

not bring advancement nor freedom because time repeats itself endlessly while the siege continues. Through its broken structure, the poem simultaneously represents the personal emotional damage of the individual and the collective disintegration of the Palestinian people, who face continuous identity and narrative and self-understanding challenges because of the occupation. Caruth (1996) explains that trauma produces an "unspoken quality" which manifests as broken language when people attempt to describe their occupational trauma but fail to understand or articulate it fully.

The symbolic power of "unbroken mare" together with "unpolished bell" presents a strong opposition to the restrictions of language, which reveals the struggle between persistent determination to oppose and ongoing repressive controls of communication. The images show how Palestinians maintain their strength when faced with powerful external forces, yet they also show how difficult it is to create clear communication under continuous oppression. The opposition between power and suppression reflects how Gazans maintain their resistance while facing a lack of meaningful representation in both international political discussions and global media coverage. As a result, the imageries bring out the fact that it is a poetic function as well as reflection of tension between visibility and silencing.

According to Felman and Laub (1992), trauma defies the closure of narrative. Al-Qasim's work reflects this in its very form. The fragmented structure not only conveys distress but also acts as a live representation of exposure and witnessing trauma. The stylistic approach is more than an artistic technique. It fully represents the collapse of language and thought faced by Palestinians. The poem's fragmented sentence structure underscores how coherent communication breaks down, just as Gaza's social and political structures are deteriorated by unceasing conditions of war and siege. When considered together, we see how the repetition, fragmentation, and disrupted syntax show how al-Qasim makes poetic form a mode of testimony that witnesses the materiality and psychological consequences of a siege.

5.3. Al-Qasim's Poetics of Silence as Resistance: A Reading in Light of Gaza

Samih al-Qasim expresses his poetry through silence, which serves as a conscious technique for conveying a powerful message without uttering a word. Al-Qasim's direction casts the long subservient nature of silence as a form of obstinacy that enables people to dismantle their identity from institution-structured violence. Al-Qasim's poem, "The Children of Rafah," utilizes strategic silence, so the speaker is able to express multiple kinds of resistances against the controlling occupation. The lines,

"The sun was on a conqueror's bayonet

*A naked, hated corpse
bred silence on angry Muslim beds
flustered faces around it
An occupier with legendary features cried:
You will not speak?
fine—curfew
from this hour—
And from Aladdin's voice came
The birth of the birds of prey: -
I threw stones at the military vehicle
I distributed pamphlets
and gave the signal” (Aruri & Ghareeb, 1970, p. 99).*

The statements show how controlling through enforced silence has been and yet how people retaliate with a vigorous protest. Al-Qasim's transformation of his opposition against the occupier's enforced surrender speaks volumes in an active protest form that exists beyond discourse and tackles what is left unsaid. In this sense, silence a language of resistance, through which the exercise of political agency persists when speech is curtailed.

Palestinians are unable to narrate their own stories due to obstacles such as occupation and siege operations on the Gazans. The poem “The Children of Rafah,” which envisions the curfew and its organized rhythms as its main representative, symbolizes the thorough means with which attempts are made to destroy Palestinian cultural traditions and historical memory. Speech suppression is the universal mechanism for erasing whole communities by robbing them of their stories. People of Gaza adopt silence to counter their external oppressors as well as executing strategic resistance. Al-Qasim exploits his words as a primary tool to resist the occupation through this quiet state. As a result, it shows the manner in which silence preserves memory when official narratives attempt to erase it.

Shoshana Felman (1992) argues that testimony must contain what is present and what is not; this condition describes how silence operates in al-Qasim's poetry. The refusal of speech acts as a counter presence to dominant speech acts. In Palestine, silence grows the loudest as a form of defiance against oppression and refusal to let Palestinian existence disappear. The silence shows that the Palestinians persist on and demand to be noticed regardless of the military's effort to erase them. Paraphrasing Felman's conception of testimony also helps clarify why silence in al-Qasim's poetry is not absence but witness.

The study of Edward Said's (2012) cultural theory of resistance sheds light on the silence of al-Qasim's poems. The idea of cultural resistance Said refers to

originates from two things endless resistance to external control and experts to identity. Through silence in al-Qasim's poetry, the poet opposes the attempts of marginalizing his cultural and national stories, to erase him. Despite the oppression they face, Palestinians show their ability to make a difference in Gaza's political circumstances. The silence that is an act demands people to prevent being forgotten by the world as well as to be heard by international discourses. Said shows that silence can also be a cultural and political act, while Felman clarifies the testimony dimension of silence.

The poem shows how closely silence and survival are related since both physical survival under occupation and cultural survival of identity and memory depend on silence. The cultural resistance becomes a choice of silence when the occupiers resort to violent actions to murder culture and silence the voices. The poet, through silence, shields their identity in an environment that engaged in cultural sabotage. Silence thus serves both as a protective mechanism and as an instrument for guarding identities against erasure.

The silence in Gaza is an unspoken yet universal reality of all Palestinian people. Throughout the area, the quiet streets during curfew, the media's censorship, and the destruction of Palestinian cultural heritage symbols transform into the same silent force that exists within al-Qasim's poetry. The silence is not submission but life-affirming resistance, an ongoing struggle. It is this silence that the Palestinian employ to demonstrate that they exist, and, in fact, are here. The use of silences in "The Children of Rafah" poetry by al-Qasim is understood as a declaration of political defiance as well as cultural identity. The poetry of Al-Qasim is not simply a record of Palestinians who have been muted by oppression, but rather a revolutionary message capable of enlivening culture and politics. Therefore, silence may be conceived as one of the most important mechanisms through which al-Qasim transforms suffering into a resistance.

5.4. Siege as Metaphor: Political and Psychological Confinement

Al-Qasim's use of siege metaphors creates a context for oppression that opens a dialogue that elevates the act of an individual. The siege metaphor engulfs four kinds of oppression. The poetry of al-Qasim employs metaphors to depict the reality of the life of the Palestinians under military occupation in Gaza. The army's occupation of Gaza is present in the land every single day, but also affects the mentality of the Palestinian people living in the occupied land. al-Qasim's work displays how the physical restrictions of Gaza continually coincide with the psychological oppression affecting the minds of the Palestinians in the occupied land. "Departure Poem" by al-Qasim illustrates the physical and emotional imprisonment of the Palestinians in Gaza through the representation of the exile's gardens. Al-Qasim expressed his perspective on the captivity of the Palestinians through the following words:

*“They recalled the sparrows in their orchards,
In the orange groves of their neighbours,
And recalled their bleeding, love legends.
Whenever, in their exile gardens,
A rose opened,
The dormant stab in their ribs opened”* (Samih Al-Qasim, 2015, p. 107).

Palestinian identity is reflected in the use of the garden as a symbol of the strength that the nation puts forth in the face of the threat that the current siege puts upon the Palestinian people. The physical barriers that contain the garden are a representation of the reality of the nation, yet they are unable to eliminate the features of the land itself or the people that live within it. The spirit of the Palestinians maintains its existence despite the restrictions that their land imposes upon them. Thus, the garden also has a metaphorical meaning that reflects the Palestinian identity and the way that it manifests itself despite the suffocating influence of the siege of Palestine by Israel. Thus, the image of the garden extends the discussion of resistance it demonstrates how life and memory continue to flourish in spaces of confinement.

The imagery presented in this passage directly relates to the previous discussion of the poetry that was written by Al-Qasim and the way in which the poetry helped to share memories of those traumatic experiences. The siege itself is both a depiction of the events that took place in the lives of Palestinians in Gaza, as well as the trauma that those events created for the people of that region. Al-Qasim's poetry helps to reveal the way in which the occupation of the land by the Israelis has marked the land itself, as well as the way in which the Palestinians of Gaza have marked the land within their own minds. Beyond the region of Gaza itself, then, the siege has created an emotional mark upon every individual that has been affected by the siege and its continuing impact. Overall, then, the siege is an effective means of analyzing the Palestinian conflict and the way in which the region and its people have been marked by the trauma of those generations of individuals in the area of Gaza. As a result, the metaphor is simultaneously a political reality, a psychological condition, and a poetic structure through which the articulation of collective trauma and resistance takes place.

5.5.1. Trauma and Testimony: Bearing Witness Through Poetry

Al-Qasim's poetry acts as documentation of the sufferings of the Palestinians. According to the theories of Cathy Caruth (1996), Al-Qasim's work demonstrates the temporal nature of trauma for the Palestinians, capturing the inability of the Palestinian people to fully understand their sufferings at the time of occurrence, yet the return of such sufferings over time. The poetic language

used by Al-Qasim establishes tools of observation that only partially disclose pain while presenting it through fragmented expressions. In the poem "Departure Poem", al-Qasim states:

*“The siege is two sieges:
The military barrier has two directions,
Two deaths for despair,
Two faces for death;
The violated homeland has but one face”* (Samih Al-Qasim, 2015, p. 102).

This line represents what Caruth (2016) has described as the nature of trauma: the wound exists not in a moment of total recognition but as a "fragment, a temporal echo." The poet reflects through his words the severe impacts of violence that strike beyond physical harm to generate enduring psychological wounds. The nostalgic nature of these poems reveals the poet's recognition of loss, which opposes historicism's mission to provide immediate understanding and political action for all moments. For these poems, history remains in the past, even as their artful devastation allows it to intrude upon the present. Testimonial evidence maintains its resistance to narrative closure, so inhibiting the incorporation of historical narratives into streamlined chronological speech (Felman and Laub 1992). The poetic resistance that Al-Qasim produce creates an influential voice against the oppression of the Palestinians, using their verses to convert their sufferings into performances that require recognition from others.

If trauma comes back through fragments and times, the formal features of al-Qasim's poetry will be important for our understanding of the remembrance of such and transmission of them. Testimony is emergent, we see, not only in what the poems say, but in the structures that memory build to hold itself against erasure. Al-Qasim plays with language by using repetition and fragmented phrases in his poetry to create gaps in the memory of Palestinians that prevent the assimilation of their history. Al-Qasim's poetry is resistant to the attempts of the oppressors to silence the Palestinians and to erase their identity. His poetry expresses the pain that the Palestinians feel while also resisting the oppression that is directed at them. In "A Palestinian Love Song," he writes:

*“Desire of greenery in the fields;
Oh, pain of the camps,
Discerned, in the burst of the veiled.
Oh, lilies' smile in the garden of tears,
Pining, I am pining,
Yearning in your eyes kills me”* (Samih Al-Qasim, 2015, p. 95).

Al-Qasim employs the garden symbol as an extended metonym to represent Palestinian identity, which continues to thrive even after being physically restricted by the Gaza siege. The remembrance of flowers serves as a reflection of Palestinian endurance since they keep fighting against occupation and siege despite being separated from their historical heritage and national identity. The line establishes the repetitive nature of Palestinian suffering in the Gaza Strip through constant remembrance and resistance to past events and ancestral roots.

While the garden imagery celebrates endurance, attachment and continuity, al-Qasim also explores a more direct language of confinement and silencing. This shift shows that testimony is about preserving memory as well as opposing those who would suppress it. Al-Qasim is both a witness and a recorder of the Palestinian struggle. The verses of his poetry stand as evidence for the pain that affects today's generation and every generation that has vanished. Through his poetry, he creates a survival mechanism that functions as a documentary witnessing the Palestinian experience, which assures that oppressed voices will remain heard. From "Shylock," al-Qasim writes:

*"Speaks in every tongue,
Sure, of every direction, He besieges me . . . my hand is too weak.
My silence is detained,
My voice is too detained.
He seeks my death"* (Samih Al-Qasim, 2015, p. 398).

This stark image of breaking and cutting silence by language represents the oppressive nature of occupation and siege. Current Gaza conditions demonstrate this truth since the population's expressions become divided as ongoing violence suppresses many voices, which remain unheard in their quest for acknowledgment. The division in both physical form and abstract meaning reflect the shattered Palestinian voices that persist throughout history to secure both acknowledgement and survival.

5.5.2. Thematic Synthesis: Siege, Trauma, and Testimony

The previous discussion has shown how repetition, fragmentation and silence function as formal resistant strategies in the poetry of al-Qasim. When these techniques are considered together, they reveal a more expansive poetic vision through which siege, trauma, and testimony become interconnected. The repetition of the imagery of the siege work in Al-Qasim's poetry depicts the siege that the Gaza are enduring at the hands of the Israeli government while also depicting the siege that the Palestinians are enduring at the hands of the oppression of the world's unjust regimes. In "A Flock Poem," al-Qasim writes:

*"Blocked the last door.
The rubble of your soul besieged the last breath.*

*Here destiny flings you from destiny to destiny.
No doubt . . . you miscalculated.
You miscalculated. . . . You did.
A king . . . a slave . . . in the fetters of dream,
In disappointments . . . in destructive anger . . .
Master . . . slave. . . . Then, sir
You miscalculated . . . You did.
Around you are numbers . . . arid sand . . . blind”*

(Samih Al-Qasim, 2015, p. 145).

The Gaza siege includes two elements: the physical and the determination of the people in the region to overcome those imposed limitations. The Gaza siege includes elements of both physical and psychological confinement, elements that are utilized throughout much of al-Qasim's poetry. The structure of the poem indicates the Gaza siege as an act of resistance and survival in the face of adversity. The author utilizes a structural approach to transcend the depiction of misery in their work. Overall, the Gaza siege has developed into an existential reality that dominates the lives of the people in Gaza due to the enduring nature of the occupation by Israelis.

While repetition shows the cyclical and enduring aspect of siege, silence shows its ethical and psychological aspect. The interaction between speech and silence in the work of al-Qasim casts poetry as a form of cultural resistance and historical remembrance. Postcolonialism and trauma studies merge in al-Qasim's poetry to dismantle colonialism while establishing opportunities for memory preservation and resistance. His silence works as a purposeful opposition to the destructive force that aims to obliterate the Palestinian narrative. The poem "A Migration Poem " expresses, through his writing:

*“You see your house in my voice glare
I hear your voice in the silence of my house.
“One may have a brother. . . .”
I thought of you because I love my homeland.
You thought of me because of the homeland
—Let alone poetry—does not think of the exiles,
And does not think of the oppressed
—Let alone poetry—how can rock and clay think?
—Let alone poetry—we are the wreckage of songs,
The massacre of wheat and jasmine.
Our children's enemies hit,
Our friends are liars”* (Samih Al-Qasim, 2015, p. 164).

The concept of silence as a subversive political action emerges as a radical assertion through this statement. The people of Gaza employ silence as their ultimate safeguard mechanism to protect their voices from violent suppression and to safeguard their historical memory. The current circumstances reveal how silence is used as a means of restoring authority in the face of voice suppression and historical neglect by those who are voiceless and historically neglected. Al-Qasim uses silence as a means of resisting the suppression of the Palestinian narrative, while citizens of Gaza struggle hard to ratify worldwide awareness of their situation. By employing disrupted language patterns and sporadic visual repetitions, Al-Qasim gains supremacy while safeguarding the resilience of Palestinian discourses. His poetry depicts both suffering and resistance to show that the Palestinian voice will remain audible no matter how many attempts are made to suppress its existence.

Al-Qasim's construction of the besieged self demonstrates an even deeper relationship between silence and resistance. In this sense, silence is transformed, in their article, from absence to testimony. Silence is transformed into a testimony that exposes the violence of erasure itself. Within this silence, within his fractured syntax and colour/image repetition, al-Qasim reclaims agency; he writes from within the quietude of the siege. His poetry exceeds the articulation of pain. It is a counterattack on an erasure that would bury the Palestinian voice in silence. In "Shylock," al-Qasim writes:

*"Speaks in every tongue,
Sure, of every direction,
He besieges me . . . my hand is too weak.
My silence is detained,
My voice is too detached.
He seeks my death"* (Samih Al-Qasim, 2015, p. 398).

In his poetry, Al-Qasim demonstrates the land's ability to retain lasting memories of human pain that endures beyond the time when invaders suppress individual expressions. The Palestinian experience of existence becomes evident through the stones of resistance and the land itself because violence has taken away their ability to speak. The recurring terms demonstrate how the siege persists endlessly and simultaneously reveal the psychological tension that emerges from fighting against it. These lines represent the permanent disintegration of Palestinian voices who persist in defending their existence and identity against nonstop oppression.

The Palestinian people maintain their unshakable spirit along with eternal remembrance and enduring strength through the challenging conditions of occupation and blockades. The combination of post-colonial and trauma theories

shows that al-Qasim's poetry is both an indicator of history and a contemporary micro-history. It is vital that people combine the artistic and resistance efforts to fulfil their moral responsibility to protect the memory of the oppressed.

6- Conclusion

Samih al-Qasim developed his distinctive poetic style to document the Palestinian fight against unchanging adversity that stems from historical conflict. Through his poetry, Samih al-Qasim constructs his poetry using repeated patterns together with broken structures and moments of deep silence to express the Palestinian people's struggle against trauma and resistance. Through his poetry, Al-Qasim goes beyond political matters to connect personal human events, which allow readers to understand ordinary daily existence within Gaza. The silence in al-Qasim's poetry creates an environment that enables unspoken words to narrate historical events when spoken language fails to describe grief.

Viewed from this perspective, the documentation of al-Qasim's relentless poetic siege reveals vital insights into Palestinian literary resistance that are universally applicable to human oppression. Poetry serves as a unique channel for recording suffering and safeguarding memories from decay, as explored through the study of al-Qasim's formal elements and thematic content in this investigation. The analysis of al-Qasim's poetry through its artistic presentation and thematic content demonstrates the simultaneous depiction of Palestinian enduring pain and human defiance towards oppressive institutions.

Within the theoretical framework adopted for this research, post-colonial and trauma theories, this research shows that al-Qasim's writings extend beyond political repression to provide evidence of it. His poetry functions beyond artistic resistance since it functions as a survival record to depict the daily existential realities faced by Palestinian refugees, displaced peoples, and colonized populations, particularly in Gaza. The actual and conceptual siege generates powerful psychological and political confinement images that al-Qasim transforms into resistance poetry to challenge and break the systems that attempt to trap it.

In this regard, Al-Qasim established a literary foundation that stands as an extremist form of protest. In his initiatives against the erasure of history, he directly addresses the unending struggle for human rights of Gazans and all Palestinians around the world. The silence, repetition and fragmentation in the poetry of al-Qasim are a reflection of the daily life of people in Gaza. They also show how there is new energy that is created to counter the repetitive processes of suffering, suppression and opposition in the area. The poet uses fragmentation of the lines and repetitive motifs to struggle against the physical barriers of Gaza and the mental confines of Palestinian thought.

More importantly, an in-depth analysis of al-Qasim's poetry shows us what he thinks about the Gaza conflict in his poems. The poetry of al-Qasim retains great historical importance across different eras and geographies. Al-Qasim's poetry makes links between the present Palestinian resistance in Gaza and any collective pain and memory felt by humans everywhere. Further, there remains the steadfast resistance of humans everywhere.

Taken together, this research paper moves in the field between postcolonial studies and trauma theory while pushing forward the current discussion about the ways in which literature works as historical violence. This study indicates poetry's opportunity to question its form and subject as it shows the collapse of collective memories who will build political resistance with an ethical dimension. Through his poetry, Samih al-Qasim performs an essential cultural function; he protects Palestinian identity and works against the institutional erasure of differentiated voices. Through his employ of fragmentary language and repeated phrases in the poetry he produces, al-Qasim establishes lasting traces of survival which show how poetry documents survival and resistance under greatly traumatic conditions.

The results of this study have far reached implications, beyond those of the current study and including future studies. In future studies, it would be intriguing to see how Palestinian poets and poets from other contexts of conflict, displacement, and contested geography engage silence, fragmentation and testimony as aesthetic strategies of resistance, memory-preserving and cultural survival. This research will help understand how poetic form translates into trauma as well as recovery in cases of historical and political crisis due to marginalisation.

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