

Gaza Theory: Writing from Beneath the Rubble

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ABSTRACT

In a global context where suffering is often reduced to fleeting headlines and the voice of the oppressed is increasingly marginalized, Gaza Theory: Writing from Beneath the Rubble emerges as a contemporary literary and critical framework for reading texts produced under siege, occupation, and destruction. While rooted in the Palestinian experience, the theory transcends geography, proposing a universal lens through which literature written from within human catastrophe can be interpreted. Gaza, in this theory, is not merely a location—it is a symbolic and existential condition. The theory introduces key concepts such as "emergency language," "the besieged self," and "explosive realism," redefining aesthetics not as ornamentation, but as the act of persisting in language amid collapse. It affirms that resistance literature is not propaganda but a profound human and artistic expression of survival, identity, and dignity. The theory also deliberately avoids rigid methodologies, leaving space for interpretive multiplicity and encouraging readers and scholars to engage literature from within lived experience and ethical responsibility.

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1. Introduction

Gaza Theory: Writing from Beneath the Rubble arises in an Arab and global reality where words are increasingly emptied of their meaning, and where tragedy is reduced to a passing headline, Gaza — the place, the people, the symbol — stands as an extraordinary case that forces language to reclaim its original sincerity. From here, Gaza Theory emerges as an attempt to redefine the role of literature when it is written under siege, under bombardment, and in the shadow of meaninglessness — not as incidental or exceptional literature, but as a central literary current that establishes a new consciousness of beauty, identity, and resistance.

This theory is not limited to Palestinian literature alone. It serves as a critical framework applicable to any literary production emerging from within open wounds, and from the violent human experiences of isolation, repression, or resistance. While named after Gaza, the theory is not geographically limited. Gaza here functions as a human and symbolic lens through which global literature born from contexts of siege, oppression, and resistance can be read. 'Gaza' is not merely a location — it is a metaphor, a living condition, and a mode of being. It represents a state where writing becomes an act of survival, not just creativity; where literature is no longer a luxury, but a cry, a testimony, and a refusal to disappear.

Avoiding rigid methodologies, the theory deliberately leaves space for interpretive multiplicity and encourages readers and scholars to engage literature not from academic detachment, but from within lived experience and ethical responsibility. It is applicable to Palestinian literature, exile narratives, Black literature, Latin American fiction, refugee testimonies, and beyond.

The objectives of Gaza Theory: Writing from Beneath the Rubble are to affirm that resistance literature is not mere propaganda, but a profound human and existential form of expression. The theory defends the legitimacy of works produced from the margins, written beneath rubble rather than from podiums, and emphasizes their value as authentic acts of survival and witness. It offers an alternative critical lens that elevates texts created outside elite cultural centers, granting attention to voices often overlooked. Furthermore, it resists the commodification of Palestinian literature, asserting that Gaza's literary output is not mere lamentation but a living critical and aesthetic consciousness. In this way, the theory positions itself as both a literary framework and a human-centered perspective that honors the ethical and artistic integrity of marginalized texts.

The Gaza Theory is thus not a closed system, but an open invitation to rethink the role of literature in times of war, erasure, and existential threat—where writing becomes the final act of presence, and memory the last fortress against annihilation.

1.1 Theory Definition

Gaza Theory: Writing from Beneath the Rubble is a contemporary literary and critical theory focused on studying and analyzing texts produced under contexts of siege, occupation, resistance, or isolation. It emphasizes the relationship between literature, space, identity, and writing as an existential and resistant act.

The theory holds that literature born from such conditions is not marginal or circumstantial, but a unique textual form — sincere, intense, and capable of saying “No” in times of collapse.

1.2 Core Principles

a. Resistance as an Aesthetic Value

The beauty in Gaza’s literature does not lie in ornamentation or traditional rhetoric, but in its ability to persist within language. Writing poetry or fiction amid destruction is itself an aesthetic act — not because it defies ugliness, but because it resists with profound human grace.

b. Language as a Tool for Survival

When the body is besieged, language becomes the final refuge. In the Gaza Theory, language is not intellectual luxury but a survival mechanism, preserving memory and shielding identity from erasure.

c. Place as a Character, Not a Background

Place in this literature is not a passive setting — it is a living character: it suffers, speaks, and resists. Gaza, as a symbol, becomes a sentient entity in the text, not just a geographic space.

d. Writing from Beneath the Rubble

This theory asserts that literature written under death and bombardment is not deficient; rather, it is concentrated, philosophical, and capable of offering existential visions, blending poetry, pain, and realism.

e. Universality of Tragedy

“Gaza” is not confined to a single place. It is a universal symbol — applicable to Syria, Iraq, Yemen, South Africa, Latin America, and beyond. It becomes a critical key for interpreting texts written from within human suffering — regardless of language or nationality.

2. Methodology

2.1 Methodological Note: On the Absence of Detailed Textual Application

Although the **Gaza Theory** refers to various Palestinian and global literary works, it does not offer detailed critical applications or direct textual analyses. This is not an oversight or omission, but rather a **deliberate methodological choice**.

The writer intentionally left a space of **purposeful ambiguity** within the theoretical structure, aiming to keep the theory open to interpretive multiplicity and to encourage scholars and critics to engage in **independent critical exploration** — allowing meaning to emerge from their own contexts, experiences, and intellectual frameworks.

General examples were provided to suggest potential directions for applying the theory, such as:

1. Reading the poetry of **Mahmoud Darwish** and **Mu’in Bseiso** as forms of “the poem as refuge” and language as resistance.
2. Analyzing the novels of **Ghassan Kanafani**, **Sahar Khalifeh**, and **Raba’i al-Madhoun** through the concept of the “besieged place” as a living character.
3. Interpreting the works of **Fadwa Tuqan** and **Suad Amiry** as voices of “double resistance”: against occupation and patriarchal control.
4. Exploring global literary examples, such as:

1. African-American literature as a form of “fortress memory.”
2. Gabriel García Márquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude* as a product of symbolic and historical siege.
3. Refugee narratives from Syria, the Rohingya, or Bosnia, viewed through the lenses of “**the besieged self**” and “**emergency language**.”

However, the theory intentionally **withholds detailed application**, not as an avoidance of analysis, but out of a belief that **literature written under bombardment resists singular interpretation**. These texts demand openness, and their meanings shift depending on the reader, the moment, and the wound.

Thus, the Gaza Theory does not present itself as a formulaic method of textual dissection, but as a **human-centered, resistant perspective of reading** — a **free interpretive framework** that invites the reader to participate in the act of meaning-making, not simply receive it.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Related and Comparative Theories

This research aimed to explore the strategies used by English teachers in teaching reading comprehension at senior high schools and to identify the most frequently employed strategies. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews with four teachers actively involved in teaching reading comprehension.

Theory	Points of Convergence	Points of Divergence
Postcolonial Theory	Resists Western hegemony; centers the experience of the oppressed.	Gaza Theory emphasizes <i>ongoing</i> , embodied resistance rather than postcolonial retrospection.
Feminist Literary Theory	Treats writing and narrative as tools of resistance and liberation.	Feminist theory centralizes gendered experience; Gaza Theory centers spatial/geopolitical struggle and collective resistance.
Literature of the Marginalized	Amplifies silenced or oppressed voices through narrative.	Gaza Theory redefines “margins” not as peripheral but as central, symbolic sites of resistance.
Socialist Realism	Values literature’s role in social and political engagement.	Gaza Theory avoids doctrinaire ideology, favoring interpretive openness and reader agency.

3.2 Supporting Elements that Strengthen the Gaza Theory

3.2.1 Theoretical Foundations

- a. Builds on broad critical traditions that explore culture, trauma, and resistance.
- b. Engages with key questions such as: 1) Can poetry be written after the bombs fall?” b) “Is beauty still possible in times of brutality?”

3.2.2 Transcending Boundaries

- a. Applicable to global literature: Bosnia, Rohingya, detention camp narratives, refugee literature, etc.
- b. Redefines tragedy as a readable literary identity — not merely an unhealable crisis.

3.2.3 Interdisciplinary Crossovers

- a. Language as a resistant archive
- b. Literary trauma studies
- c. Literature's role in shaping collective consciousness

3.2.4 Cross-Field Applications

Gaza Theory: Writing from Beneath the Rubble demonstrates applicability across multiple academic fields. In anthropology, the theory highlights how literature preserves cultural memory and oral traditions under conditions of siege, reflecting the concepts of *Memory as Fortress* and *Siege Aesthetic*. In media studies, texts interpreted through Gaza Theory reveal counter-narratives that challenge dominant media portrayals, illustrating *Emergency Language* and *Explosive Realism*. Political science perspectives benefit from the theory by showing how narratives expose occupation, repression, and the lived experiences of the *Besieged Self*. In psychology, literary works examined via Gaza Theory shed light on human resilience, coping, and existential testimony under extreme conditions, emphasizing *Rubble Writing* and *Survival Literature*.

These observations indicate that Gaza Theory provides a **flexible, human-centered lens** for analyzing texts produced under oppression, siege, or existential threat. It enables scholars to interpret literature not merely as art, but as an active form of survival, resistance, and memory preservation across disciplines beyond its original Palestinian context.

Field	Application
Anthropology	Analyzing texts as repositories of oral traditions, folklore, and cultural memory.
Media Studies	Deconstructing resistance narratives in contrast to dominant or biased media frames.
Political Science	Examining how literature portrays systems of power, occupation, and resistance.
Psychology	Interpreting literature through the lens of trauma, collective memory, and survival.

3.2.5 Provocative Questions Raised by the Theory

Question	Interpretive Significance
Is language enough when homes are destroyed?	Challenges the limits of representation — can words adequately capture or respond to material devastation, displacement, and loss? It questions the adequacy of symbolic resistance in the face of physical erasure.
What is the difference between writing as art and writing as a cry?	Draws a line between aesthetic creation and existential necessity. Writing as <i>art</i> may seek beauty or structure; writing as a <i>cry</i> may be urgent, raw, and necessary for survival or witnessing. Gaza Theory leans into the latter.
Can a literary text delay or defeat	Asks whether literature can be a form

death? of preservation, resistance, or immortality —
does telling the story keep the person
(or place) alive in defiance of violence
or erasure? It's a question of
memory vs. mortality.

a. Potential for Expansion

1. May evolve into an academic research project or digital platform
2. Could be integrated into critical theory or siege literature curricula
3. Lays the groundwork for a contemporary Arab literary school

b. Unique Identity

1. Emerges from lived experience, not detached theorizing
2. Not neutral — it is human-centered and ethically grounded

Merges aesthetic and justice without conflict

3.2.6 Gaza Theory Lexicon: Foundational Concepts

A theoretical lexicon is central to any robust literary theory. It provides a framework of terms that crystallize the theory's core vision and serve as tools for critical interpretation.

The **Gaza Theory Lexicon** introduces a set of foundational concepts emerging from the act of writing under siege, bombardment, and existential threat — where language is no longer a vehicle of beauty, but a last act of survival.

These terms are not confined to Palestine. They aspire to become tools for reading texts produced from within catastrophe — whether in Gaza, Aleppo, Sarajevo, Darfur, or elsewhere — wherever literature emerges as a voice resisting silence.

Concepts:

Term	Definition
Rubble Writing	Writing produced in the midst of destruction, not after it. These texts narrate not what "has happened" but what "is happening" — in a fragmented, urgent language that reflects collapse.
Siege Aesthetic	An aesthetic that arises from absence rather than fullness, where survival becomes a form of beauty, and words bear the burden of life.
Geopolitical Characterization	The place is no longer a silent setting; it becomes an active, living character — breathing, attacked, resisting, and symbolically charged.
Existential Testimony	Texts written not for literary recognition, but for survival. Writing becomes an act of

	existential resistance — a testimony against erasure.
Emergency Language	A language stripped of rhetoric, born out of necessity. It operates with minimal aesthetics and maximal truth.
The Besieged Self	A threatened self that writes to prove its existence. Writing becomes the last act before disappearance.
Explosive Realism	A hybrid narrative style that merges documentary precision with emotional outburst — where the real is more violent than the imagined.
Survival Literature	Literature not written for artistic achievement but as an immediate reaction to trauma — a last grasp at the moment before erasure.
The Metaphor of Siege	Siege becomes a total metaphor for suspended existence, where desire is postponed and language is trapped.
Memory as Fortress	When memory becomes the final stronghold of place and identity. Characters write not just to remember, but to prevent symbolic extinction.

3.2.7 Invitation for Criticism and Development

This theory is an open project and a genuine invitation for discussion and critical engagement by researchers and interested readers. The diversity of perspectives and interpretations will serve as the fundamental foundation for developing and expanding the theory's horizons.

4. Conclusion

Gaza Theory: Writing from Beneath the Rubble is not a closed project but an open invitation to reconsider the purpose of literature, the criteria of critique, and how we read what is written under fire — not from ivory towers, but from the heart of rubble and reality. "The Gaza Theory" is a profound critical and human project. This is the courage of mind and an emancipation from the Western academic center, bringing back to literature the meanings of resistance and survival. Human strength, aesthetic vision from pain, challenges are characteristic for any new theory. Challenges can be diminished with research, application, and academic diffusion. It is a call to put literature back to where it naturally belongs, watching truth-bearing up-and speaking out that never dies.

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Appendix I:

Glossary of Key Terms in Gaza Theory (Applied Glossary of Gaza Theory Concepts)

This glossary offers theoretical definitions and practical literary examples of the key terms introduced in *The Gaza Theory*. These terms are intended to serve not just as abstract ideas but as analytical tools for interpreting literature born from siege, occupation, displacement, and existential threat.

No.	Term	Theoretical Definition	Literary Example	Critical Function
1	Rubble Writing	Writing produced not after the catastrophe but from within it — fragmented, urgent, and raw	From Gaza war diaries: "Writing by candlelight... I hear the blast... I don't know if I'll finish this sentence."	Turns writing into a living testimony, collapsing the boundary between life and text
2	Emergency Language	A language stripped of ornamentation, written under the pressure of survival — direct, concise, and truthful	Mahmoud Darwish: "On this earth what deserves life" — a simple, concentrated line of defiance	Language becomes shelter, not luxury — survival takes poetic form
3	The Besieged Self	A voice writing not for art, but to prove it exists under threat of erasure	Suad Amiry's <i>Sharon and My Mother-in-Law</i> : humor and irony as forms of personal survival during curfew and war	Writing affirms presence; narrative becomes existential resistance
4	Explosive Realism	A style that fuses sharp documentary detail with emotional outburst — real life that shocks more than fiction	<i>Men in the Sun</i> by Ghassan Kanafani: sudden, emotionless revelation of death inside the water tank	Reflects sudden, silent violence; realism turned urgent and volatile
5	Siege Aesthetic	A redefinition of beauty under fire — not polish, but persistence; not form, but survival	A poet writing while under bombardment — the act of writing becomes the aesthetic itself	Restores ethical depth to beauty — literature as an act of grace under pressure

6	Memory as Fortress	Memory becomes the last line of defense — a literary stronghold against erasure	Fadwa Tuqan: “I carry Jerusalem in my heart; the occupier cannot reach it”	Memory becomes resistance — the text preserves what violence tries to erase
7	The Metaphor of Siege	Siege as a symbolic and philosophical condition — representing existential suspension, isolation, and delayed desire	The siege of Gaza read as a metaphor for global human isolation and resistance	Expands the theory beyond Palestine — toward Bosnia, Syria, Latin America, etc.
8	Deferred Realism	Narratives written long after the traumatic event — rearranging the experience from the wound of memory	Syrian exile literature: novels describing what <i>remains</i> of war, not war itself	Highlights silence, aftermath, and the weight of what is unsaid

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