Language and Intercultural Communication

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/rmli20

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To cite this article: Khawla Badwan & Alison Phipps (07 Feb 2025): Hospicing Gaza (غزة): stunned languaging as poetic cries for a heartbreaking scholarship, Language and Intercultural Communication, DOI: 10.1080/14708477.2024.2448104

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2024.2448104

Published online: 07 Feb 2025.

LANGUAGE AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION
https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2024.2448104

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Hospicing Gaza (غزة): stunned languaging as poetic cries for a heartbreaking scholarship

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ABSTRACT

The article explores the notion of stunned languaging in the construction of poetic cries as a genre of grief in times of unspeakability while witnessing the online streaming of the Gaza Genocide. Weaving together conceptual, experiential, and poetic threads and traces, the article presents a hospicing project of heartbreaking scholarship as a form of bearing witness, collective accountability, and a caring commons. It discusses the role of language in mobilising the immobile through poetic cries that speak to failing intercultural projects and argues for the need for attending to the languaging of mourning and grief as hospicing work that is both post-human and post-secular.

تكشف المقالة دور مفهوم اللغة المذهولة في بناء البكاء الشعري كنمط أدبي للحداد في أوقات عدم القدرة على التعبير كما هو الحال أثناء المشاهدة الإلكترونية للإبادة الجماعية في غزة. من خلال نسج خيوط مفاهيمية وتجريبية وشعرية، تقدم المقالة مشروعًا لرعاية الحداد لبناء الدراسات المفجعة كشكل من أشكال الشهادة، والمساءلة الجماعية، والرعاية المشتركة. كما تناقش المقالة دور اللغة في تحريك ما هو غير قابل للحركة من خلال امثله البكاء الشعري التي تعبر عن فشل مشاريع التعرف على الثقافات، وتؤكد على ضرورة الانتباه للغة الحداد كعمل رعاية في إطار مفاهيمي يندرج في ما بعد الإنسان وما بعد العلمانية.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 6 September 2024
Accepted 23 December 2024

KEYWORDS
Hospicing Gaza; stunned languaging; genres of grief; genocide; poetic cries; intercultural education for peace

Introduction

This article constitutes a beginning, a trouble, a call, a response, a rethinking and a laborious exploration of the role of language as a hospicing project of decolonial grief (de Oliveira Andreotti et al., 2015). Such an exploration unsettles what we think we know of language by rendering it vulnerable, hospitable, inhospitable, hopeful, hopeless and stubbornly painful to decreate (Weil, 2002). It begins not with stable speech but with a 'cry'. Through this article, we reflect on our work on digging language from underneath the rubble, forcing heartbreaking and painful words on the page as language becomes an intentional verb (Badwan, 2021), an accountable witness and a moral duty. We think of language when what we know of language is stunned to the core, struggling to hold, destroyed and requiring different forms that speak of the unprecedented horrors witnessed in Gaza. Indeed, we find ourselves in need of developing a heart-breaking applied linguistics for genocidal times as a paradigm that grapples with all these different stunned forms and functions of language. Henceforth, this article offers a beginning, out of the 'cries', for what we call 'stunned languaging'.

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As we explore our own practices of stunned languaging, we track the construction of an emerging genre of grief we call 'poetic cries'. We draw on Bakhtin's (1929/1984, p. 106) theorisations of a genre as 'always the same and yet not the same, always old and new simultaneously. Genre is reborn and renewed at every new stage in the development of literature … A genre lives in the present, but always remembers its past, its beginning'. This genre is constructed in numerous ways that are historical, literal, dialogic, stunned, stunning, responsive, in hope, in grief, in disobedience and in refusing to stay silent. To give our readers an example of this genre of poetic cries, we present the following example, written by Khawla on 30 October 2024:

A hanging body

I saw a hanging body
Lifeless on a wall
Covered in dust
Not facing me
Arm reaching
Nothing
Stiff as life
Dead
Alone.

Salaam upon you
Killed in a genocide
Nameless still
I see you. I do
Tears fall down
Rolling in pain
As my soul
Hangs
Sad.

Through daily practices of poetic cries, we have come to appreciate the power and vulnerability of our stunned languaging. We have become humbled by our words that have helped us feel, cry, reciprocate, bear witness, name the world, exist relationally, create infrastructures of collective grief, and remake life amidst the crumbs and the ruins, at the edge of the life-death continuum. In crying together, we carved out collaborative acts of linguistic disobedience (Komska et al., 2019) against the silences and silencing that surrounds the subject of Palestine in many settings including academic ones. Such disobedience cries out in a 'No', which is not negative but 'creative, synthetic, traveling, historical, collective, collecting and stunningly beautiful' (Komska et al., 2019, p. 157), as inspired by the Arabic no (لا) that refuses to be subjugated to oppressive colonial systems including the coloniality and violence of language itself. It may seem strange for two scholars to characterise their work and their 'No' as 'stunningly beautiful', but we assert the right to have been stunned by the truth and beauty words we have found in each other's cries, in a call and response. As such the article offers a 'stunned languaging' of the decolonial mourning and caring commons which Gutiérrez-Rodríguez (2023, p. 166) sees as 'a becoming with' in communal and reparative mourning. In grief we cry, and we are stunned by the enormity of what is lost. We do not, cannot, resort to stable, tonally controlled ways of speaking, or writing. Therefore, we bring forth the genre of the 'cry' for a heart-breaking Applied Linguistics and Intercultural Communication.

In particular, we ask: what becomes of the crying language in contexts of state propaganda and the normalisation of crimes against humanity? What is the role of grief in intercultural education scholarship in times of genocide streamed on our screens from a place of immobility to a world of different mobilities? What conceptual tools and improvised genres enable us to hold on to linguistic sense in the dominance of political nonsense? In answering these questions, our work becomes mobile, losing its moorings, as it transcends mourning into active resistance to the overwhelming horrorism (Cavarero, 2011) of genocide.

As applied linguists and intercultural education scholars, we have been troubled and fascinated by the work of language, the violence this work constitutes, the mercy it offers, the gift it recreates, and the limits it operates within. Educated in the trade of producing and analysing words, we write this piece to attend to the construction of genres of decolonial grief as a hospicing project. Written through weaving together conceptual, experiential, affective and poetic threads and traces, the article presents snippets from our experiences of stunned languaging against conditions of unspeakability, due to loss of words in the face of the horrors coming out of Gaza and/or due to institutional surveillance and repression. Stunned languaging as a potency insists on mobility, agility, survival, or destruction, jolting us on to new ways of caring and mourning and living with words.

We are encouraged by the work of the journal, *Language and Intercultural Communication*, and particularly by its turn to publications on wars and conflict, and on the difficulties Palestinians have faced in creating conditions for sustainable peace, not least in the recent Special Issue where the journal acted to publish work of Refaat Alareer posthumously (Jalambo et al., 2024). Equally, the journal has charted a number of projects which have progressed through the years of siege and repeated wars to ensure that this most intractable and iconic of struggles and injustices might be witnessed to in scholarly research (Fassetta, Imperiale, et al., 2020; Fassetta, Nazmi, et al., 2020; Imperiale et al., 2017; Phipps, 2014). To this end, we offer in this article an extension to the Journal's tradition that contributes to language and intercultural communication scholarship in the face of bombs, rubble, shredded bodies, the deliberate starvation of civilians, immeasurable death and unfathomable loss.

The article is significant in many ways. First, it wrestles with the role of language as a decolonial hospicing project (de Oliveira Andreotti et al., 2015) that enables us to sit with systems of death and destruction with a commitment to re-memory (Morrison, 2019) and (re)existence through improvising genres of grief as political action, collective accountability, intercultural education, and a caring commons (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, 2023). Indeed, this article offers important avenues for conceptualising the effortful work of languaging as wake work (Sharpe, 2016) in pursuit of restoring and remaking life against necropolitics which dictates 'who may live and who must die' (Mbembe 2003, p. 11). Second, through this work we accentuate the ethical limitations associated with the self/other duality and seek to disrupt such arrangements, especially when the Other (the Palestinians in this case) have been positioned, through the gaze of the colonisers, in the 'the zone of nonbeing' (Fanon, 2015), in a state of below-Otherness (Gordon, 2007): 'below human', or even 'human animals' as described in the words of Israeli Defence Minister, Yoav Gallant (Aljazeera, 2023). Opposing this dehumanisation of Palestinian lives and lamenting the breakdown of legal systems that failed to stop the mass killing in Gaza, we write with a relational ontology underlining our interdependency, moral imagining and collective vulnerability. We do so in a prose which is of necessity kaleidoscopic, piling up phrases in its quest for adequacy even as each phrase or sentence crumbles with the impossible symbolic and semantic weight genocidal experience performs. Third, the article problematises notions of mobility and immobility in the context of siege and necroborders in Gaza, amid the flow of raw images and videos, and against the (in)hospitabilities of mainstream media, online character limits and the surveillance of Palestinian content.

In what follows we start by discussing the notion of hospicing Gaza before then contextualising our acts of hospicing among different types of mobilities amid the immobility of Gaza. The sections that follow provide examples and analyses of some of our stunned poetic cries as a hospicing project of grief, relational being and a caring commons. After that we turn our attention to genres of grief to theorise our own daily poetic cries as raw articulations of languaged grief that is accountable, collective, political and linguistically unbearable.

Hospicing Gaza

Hospicing in this work is a decolonial project that requires stretching language beyond the limit as it operates between life and death; remaking and restoring life in contexts of destruction and mass killing. De Oliveira Andreotti et al. (2015, p. 28) write about hospicing as follows:

> Indeed, hospicing would entail sitting with a system in decline, learning from its history, offering palliative care, seeing oneself in that which is dying, attending to the integrity of the process, dealing with tantrums, incontinence, anger and hopelessness, 'cleaning up', and clearing the space for something new. This is unlikely to be a glamorous process; it will entail many frustrations, an uncertain timeline, and unforeseeable outcomes without guarantees.

As such, hospicing requires courage to learn, experiment, acknowledge failures, understand the pains inflicted by violence and attend to the roots of destruction in systems of tyranny, with the aim of producing something radically new, hopefully wiser (de Oliveira Andreotti et al., 2015). As a project, it does not follow neat recipes. Rather, we understand it as a disobedient and defiant attempt at living with language edges and limits in the search for justice. It refuses the language of annihilation, domination and occupation as it looks this language in the eye and names the world as it is. It is disobedient to the academic idioms or AI-generated texts used to counsel in distress (Phipps, 2024b). Even as language is murdered, it refuses its own death and in spare, short fragments – rough poetic cries – it becomes generative and attentive as it speaks and uses breath, even as breath is suffocated to death and taken in death.

What is the hospicing of an intercultural education which has been powerless against the genocide in Gaza? What does such a hospicing look like as scholarship and action? For us, working in applied linguistics and intercultural language studies, it means work with language when language itself is in ruins, when words seemingly disintegrate even as they are used, when the strength and determination of the fake news and propaganda are so durable, believable and well-honed (Albanese, 2024) that every word of resistance is found wanting, culpable, and we are pushed into unwilling silence. It means a return to the methods of applied linguistics, to autoethnolinguistic documentation and journalling, the noting of patterns, the tenacious and fierce refusal of all but the most apt of words. It is legal, compassionate, applied, foraging and furious. It is poetry and prophecy with and at the edges of languaging.

What might hospicing Gaza then entail? Gaza is the epicentre of occupation, colonialism, capitalism, White supremacy and necropolitics. Through this lens, we observe, not just the erasure and decline of Gaza, but also the decline of the international order with its humanitarian laws, systems and processes. We do not offer a masterful plan for what a good, ethical and even effective hospicing Gaza should entail but we sketch out a list of conscious efforts which call for 'uneasy rehearsals' (Phipps, 2019), including:

(a) finding and testing out words, old and new, to bear witness to the ongoing horrors in Gaza in ways that historicise, document and do re-memory work that tells the untold.
(b) refusing to look away and resisting the silencing and erasure of Palestinian rights and contextualising the work within the long history of 77 years and the colonialities of language and culture which seek this erasure.
(c) nurturing ethics of care and remaining in an ethic which exceeds the clear limitations of human rights and even democracy in their present abject state. Looking, with freshness and unflinching honesty, to poetry, prophecy and prayer in the post-secular and post-human age.

While embracing this concept of hospicing, we are reminded by Gramling (2021) that it has a daunting prospect that brings along different kinds of incredulity and frustration. We are aware that hospicing may appear as capitulation to the forces of death but we assert that we see this prising open of the deathly space which sees body counts established by weighing body parts in 70 kg bags, and insisting on dignified mourning, yet in words and language which refuse to destitute the corpse of its lived life, its bonds of love, its agonised dying, its martyrdom and its survival as story, memory and in love.

The Gaza context, as experienced vicariously online, be it through intimate communications from loved ones, including our own, or through the stream of images of shredded children, is

one in which unimaginable quantities of grief seek a container strong enough to hold. How we hospice Gaza in these times, in language, is a question of stunned languaging, against the unspeakability of horrors and the brutal inhospitality of any languaging which denies humanity, and rather casts Palestinians as less than human and therefore as not requiring even the ministrations of the hospice-r.

Our response – as scholar-humans – has been to develop genres of grief in the form of poetic languaging practices to respond to our mobile digital witnesses, within the inhospitalities of character limits and social media shadow bans. Our genres of grief also respond within the inhospitalities of mainstream media which has proved largely inadequate to the task, and an academy lauding decolonial studies or feminist ethics of care and yet largely, or at least slowly, failing in this case to name the injustices and crimes in Gaza.

Poetic cries

This section contains examples of our poetic cries. It is structured loosely following a timeline that stretches from the Autumn of 2023 to the time of writing this article in the Autumn of 2024. Every section opens with a stanza from a poem by Khawla entitled 'Language witnessing a genocide'. Interpretative thematic headings have been added to exemplify our analysis.

Autumn loneliness

Working with the crumbs of words
Forcing them open to mean
Pushing them further to feel.

The early days following the atrocities of 7th October 2023 were characterised by shock, cautious silence and wary anticipation. The war on the language of truth-telling started with ahistorical reporting, casting doubts on the numbers of the dead on the Palestinian side, the insistence on using the passive voice when reporting on the murdering of the Palestinians, the hostilities towards the term 'genocide', and the labelling of any criticism of Israel as 'antisemitic'.

On 30th January 2024, Alison wrote her first cry of this improvised genre (Phipps, 2024a). The timing was significant. It was a couple of days after the first binding order on Israel was issued by the International Court of Justice (International Court of Justice, 2024). The Order indicated measures on Israel beginning as follows:

The State of Israel shall, in accordance with its obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, in relation to Palestinians in Gaza, take all measures within its power to prevent the commission of all acts within the scope of Article II of this Convention, in particular:

(a) killing members of the group;
(b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
(c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; and
(d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group.

Legal language, the language which brings justice and is the idiom of the courts, is important for our purposes in this article. It is the language which, for all its dry carefulness, is the container of the hope for justice. Yet, the orders associated with the language of the judges have also failed. The killing machine continues, and the shipment of weapons is resumed, marking the final shredding of the vestiges of hope in a just and legal approach to stop the bombings. As of this writing, Gaza is without a ceasefire and with no aid or humanitarian relief from the largest providers by far.

What to do? What to say? What to make of the way the world failed to make any sense? In pursuit of an answer, we turned to prayers which cry aloud, as people who have occasion to use the language of prayer in our life. This was not so much a turn away from academic or legal attention but as a counterbalancing, a holding to centuries of a language of care, of listening and attention, of intercession and petition, but in a new form. The following is the first prayer from Alison:

Prayer in Genocidal Days
Praise be for the two green ticks
That say the starving eyes are still reading
Praise be for quiet care behind the glare that asks how to help and give
Praise be for thinkers who ask the questions that open our hearts
Praise be for the nausea that fills the throat at what we witness.
It tells us our hearts are breaking

And with this, Alison began a daily commitment to write lines which would fill the space of a post, limited by character length, on social media. Such daily poetic prayers are anchored in the liberation theological traditions of peace/Salaam, comprising a collection of 'Call and No Response' poetic prayers which was published in March 2024. This was an intensely lonely and exposing process, for it involved working from a place of public meditation, cry, even prayer. It was unclear how this new speech would be received. Prophetic speech, in Alison's cultural and faith tradition of liberation theology, is described as emerging from a sensation of 'fire in the bones'. Such language is a long, lonely way from 'models of intercultural communicative competence' and yet it is precisely about reimagining with urgency, an intercultural communicative competence for genocidal times (Brueggemann, 1989).

Early cries wobbled on the knife edge of a psalm-like speech. Publishing these cries daily across social media and then as an ebook, and speaking of these in public meant also finding an idiom which was a long way even from the poetic forms that Alison is known for using. The cries below are examples of stunned hospicing language which emerged in the early phase of compulsion to break the stifling silences in public spaces (Phipps, 2024a).

January 30th
I wake early;
check names of the overnight dead;
give thanks each day friends & colleagues survive;
scrape, scroll & upload evidence to @archivegenocide;
each entry handfasting to justice.

I beg for mercy from whosoever may bestow it.

Then Silence.

3rd February

The skulls in the rubble.
The 7 minutes it takes to watch the names of those killed on the screen.
Thanks for those to name and bury.
Thanks for knowing we must name and bury.
Thanks for the lingering music of the hollow bone song of a freedom bird.

Then on the 3rd February Khawla responded with a poem; we now call these 'cries', echoing and shaping afresh the language that was cutting through. This became an act of palliative care of, for, and through language. An act of re-existence through disobedience, witnessing and rememory(ing). Khawla's first poetic cry, a narration of a telephone conversation with her displaced father in Gaza, goes as follows:

Don't worry

He asks me not to worry
Darling, he says, we'll be fine

Our tent stood the challenge of rain
Our bread might last for another day
Our clothes are not that heavy but fine

He asks me not to worry
Hey, he says, we still try to smile
We talked about your funny story
It still made us laugh.
Our faces still remember how to smile

He asks me not to worry
Listen, he says, we survived the night
The bombs were too close we were ready to go
The bullets prepared us for a quick death
But here we are talking to you again

Please don't worry, he says
The line starts to break
I could hear bombs
Daaaaaaad, I said

With this poem, the exhilarating task of forcing words open to mean and pushing them further to feel had begun. It marks vulnerable beginnings in an attempt to stay in response to Alison's 'Call and No Response' prayers, to the ongoing atrocities in Gaza, to specific events, and to different feelings and states of being that constitute our collective sense of grief in the face of unfolding horrors daily.

Poetic dialogues of care

Working against the violence of language
Breaking through the darkness
Daring to sustain the flow of words.

The examples we present here demonstrate some of our poetic dialogues of care with one another. As such, they form a special category of response and languaging for caring commons. The poetic cries in this section were specifically written in response to Alison's poetic cries as Khawla attempted to sustain the flow of words, in care, pain and reciprocity.

On 23rd May Alison wrote:

I don't sleep.
We don't sleep.
Nothing stops the wicked.
They are smug in their impunity.
They curse the judges.
They bludgeon the peace-makers.
They erase the conditions for life.
Nothing stops the wicked.
Our words are broken.
Our words are broken fragments.
Our words are ashes.

In response, Khawla wrote:

I can't breathe
We can't breathe
Nothing stops the wicked
They have a tight grip
The grip is getting tighter
They have no humanity

Humanity crumbles at their hand
Nothing stops the wicked
They manipulate facts
They twist words
Our systems are broken
Are breaking
Are crumbling

Here is another example from the 26th May where Alison wrote about the news that the US-built Gaza pier was destroyed by strong winds and high waves:

They have made
elaborate plans,
claimed impunity,
whole-heartedly supported the wicked,
hidden behind wriggling words,
refused to stop the blocking of aid,
vetoed every attempt at peace;
Their pier has broken and washed away.
Their pride is all at sea.
They are ridiculed on the streets

In response Khawla wrote about the same event:

They wanted to build a pier
For aid, they said
For ease of access, they said

They wanted to build a pier
Made of the rubble of our homes
Mixed with blood, limbs and bones

They wanted to build a pier
Millions of dollars
More soldiers
Near gas fields
In a death camp

They wanted to build a pier
Strong winds
High waves
Wash away pier,
Gaza says!

These examples of grief through dialogic languaging of care speak of relationality and responsive synergy, not only in terms of the thematic focus of the poetic cry but also in terms of the genre developed to tell the story of the cry. Our cries converge relationally in response to one another, in grief as a form of political witness and activism.

It is here we can begin to theorise an emergent practice of dialogic hospicing and beyond-hospitable languaging. It is not simply a matter of turn-taking in a conversation; indeed this is precisely not a conversation, and yet in the call and response of the words, drawing on long and established traditions found in Islam, in Christian liturgy, in the folk singing traditions and oral storytelling, there is a risk that the caller, the cry-er enters into calling and crying and ends in a state of despair at the lack of response.

When Alison began the cries it was a lone endeavour. The cries offered a fresh way of speaking of the horror, and it, in turn, was a felt obedience to the need to disobey the logics of genocide and propaganda, which others have felt and have heard in traditions in the past (see below, on Brecht). The felt response took the form of a description of practice, followed by a decision to work with deliberately spare language, not cleaning up the horror but just rendering it as honestly as possible. The form of the cries is also dialogic. There are many interlocutors – the world, politicians, the

Palestinian people, the Israeli leaders, people of faith and no faith, readers of social media, among many others. Indeed, this is not the language used in either the classroom or lecture hall or the street protests or being used in Sunday prayers in churches or Friday speeches in masjids. Yet it is made of all of these discourses and fuses and escapes (Akómoláfé, 2023) with something from these dialogic spaces of call and response, of learning and protest, to attempt a newness, a post-activism in speech in the hope, active hope of a response.

From words of hospicing issued as a call, a request to be heard, and to respond, somehow, maybe with words, comes the pause, the silence, the waiting, and then, in what emerged in our dialogic hospicing was the response to the initial invitation of the call. Khawla responded, Alison was heard, an echo came back augmenting the one voice into two, into a dialogue of hospicing each situation and each new day, as days leak into new days that are not entirely new but an extension to ongoing bombs and enduring grief.

In addition, we can identify the beyond-hospitable languaging in this approach. This pertains not as a vague hospitality to 'the world' or 'the other' or even 'the victim' or 'perpetrator' but to the events and the griefs of each passing genocidal day, stretching hospitability to a caring-commons. Many reports of war crimes found a caring languaging commitment through this emergent genre. Every failure of intercultural education finds a move out of the normative spaces of intercultural dialogue and education into ones long neglected – those of the post-human and post-secular. Its neglect of the languages of ritual, mourning, ceremony, grief and liturgy as hospitable ways of languaging while hospicing and caring has exposed profound weaknesses in applied linguistics and intercultural communication as theoretical endeavours and as practices of peace.

Documenting a genocide in an intercultural world

Working despite the fatigue of language
Crafting painful imagery to witness
Putting together strings to scream.

In this category of poetic cries, we discuss examples of re-telling stories inspired by the words of different interlocutors. Khawla wrote many poetic cries to commemorate videos and images of suffering children and parents. For example, on the 11th June, Khawla wrote, 'Far away' to tell the story of a mother who asks her child to stay next to her whenever the child asked if the bombing is far away:

I hear a loud sound
I jump with every sound
Is it far away?

I see orange flames
I smell the smoke of flames
Is it far away?

I feel the heat of the tent
I fear the anger of the tent
Is it far away?

I miss my family home
I hold the key of our home
Is it far away?

I once heard of humanity
I learned something about humanity
Is it far away?

I want to go to the moon
I can still see the moon
Is it far away?

It's all far away
Stay next to me.

Similarly, on the 7th July Khawla wrote, 'A child in pain' to cry about her nephew in Gaza who was diagnosed with hepatitis due to shortage of drinking water:

A child wakes up in pain
Screaming and can't explain
He drinks polluted water again and again
And lives on little food that cannot sustain

A child wakes up in pain
The doctors are trying in vain
No food or medicine, they maintain
And the mother wailing trying to stay sane

A child wakes up in pain
Help me, mom. Take away the pain
They cry as we protest and campaign
While many shamefully silent remain.

On 3rd February Alison woke to a film made by an NGO[1] to document the names of those who had been killed by Israel in Gaza. The horrifying task of excavating and identifying bones from bones and teeth and the anthropologist's soothing understanding of the need for the dignity of rituals of grief and silence:

The skulls in the rubble.
The 7 minutes it takes to watch the names of those killed on the screen.
Thanks for those to name and bury.
Thanks for knowing we must name and bury.
Thanks for the lingering music of the hollow bone[2] song of a freedom bird.

Remaking life

Working at the edge of sanity
Enduring the loss of understanding
Rejecting the evil of the world

The theme of remaking life is another feature of our genre of cries and a key component of our hospicing project that insists on creating something different amid the ruins. On the 26th June, Khawla wrote, 'The Remaking of life':

I cannot despair
We cannot despair

The wicked destroyed life
We cannot give up on life

They want us to lose our minds
Their horrors traumatise the minds

Everything we ever knew
All laws we thought were true

Hold on to the pain of life
That's how we remake life

With ethics of care
With those who care

For those who care
For those who need care

On July 21st Alison responded to the request to 'buy a coffee' as a fundraiser for which books and brushes would be sent to Gaza, and an A-Z of Gaza landmarks before the destruction of conditions for life would be exchanged in return.[3] The illustrations were stunning and life-giving, allowing an imagination of a future-past from the future-present:

Praise those who teach life
Praise those who illustrate the beauty
Praise the Alphabet
Praise those who tell of children
Of what was good
and wickedly destroyed.
Praise the A -Z of Gaza
Praise the books and the brushes
Praise the good life that is remembered
And must be restituted and restored

Stretching language to the limit

Rethinking what I knew about language
Relearning what it means to language
Sitting with the pain of language

This category refers to our explicit wonderments about the work and vulnerability of language as we language with and beyond language, and with or against what we thought we knew about language. Here are some more poems directly related to languaging.

From Alison on 21st March:

For the words written.
For the timeless words.
For the words painted.
For the words in the sky.
For the words as pictures.
For the words of hope.
For the words of our friend
Our friend who is dead.

From Khawla on 22nd July:

Nothing but words

Holding the crumbs of words
Putting them together to cry

Begging them to honour the loss
Hoping they can bear the pain

O! the gift of words
O! the pain in words

Remaking life with words
From words, for more words

Wrapping arms around the lonely
Announcing they are not alone

Repeating we are not alone
Repeating we are not alone

Against the violence of silence
Against the erasure of words

O! I have nothing…
Nothing but words

Ethics of existing for one another

Putting words together to scream
Wrapping arms around the lonely
Announcing they are not alone

The poetic cries in this category include explicit references to our ethics of care and existing relationally in times of immense pain and unspeakable suffering. While doing so, we acknowledge the role of language in how we exist for one another, against the silences and erasures, under the rubble of international law. Here are some poems related to this. From Khawla on 21st July:

Ethics of love

Existing for one another
Against their politics of hate
With the aesthetics of symbols:

A watermelon
A keffiyeh
A poster
A sticker
A kite
A flag
A pin

Building a movement
Of love, solidarity, and collective struggle
With eyes meeting, tearing and comforting

In our thousands, the chant goes
In our millions, the crowd repeats
We are all Palestinians, the spirit echoes

Looking after one another
Holding our otherness and togetherness
Remaking life with ethics of love

On 31st July Alison received a message from a friend in Gaza, a friend who loves the land and tends olive groves and date palms and in response she wrote:

The birds have stopped singing
writes my friend.
They have been silenced by the bombing
They hide and cannot be seen
in the trees
In quiet times they come in search of water and food.
The birds have stopped singing, writes my friend.

These different categories and examples from our daily cries establish a sign of a care beyond the human, and for the more-than-human-world. The caring commons extends to the interspecies, as well as the intercultural even as the projects of intercultural education and dialogue fail. These examples and categories do not fully cover all the themes that emerged in our daily poetic cries. Rather, they offer an incomplete, yet significant, hospicing project of grief that has enabled this article to take shape. In the next sections, we theorise our practices while refusing to sit obediently within a particular theory of languaging in genocidal times.

The mobility of the immobility of Gaza

The notion of mobility is of particular significance to this work as we observe the mobility of weapons and technologies as well as the mobility of videos, images, and stories of death and destruction, and the mobility of a global movement for justice and peace in Palestine. To this, we might add the

mobility of feelings and emotions oscillating between rage and despair, grief and hope, dumbfoundedness and comfort, loneliness and solidarity, horrorism. A range has been traversed in the months since October 2023 that have not had signifiers, or syntax in English, or in other languages available to us. Multimodality is the word we give to those ways of expressing alongside or without words. It is inadequate to the task. Images move without language. Digitally recorded sounds and cries crash against our screens. A father holds a child's corpse, the skull shattered, the brains scooped out, the image moves across our screens and into a place in human memory where it becomes immobilised and immortalised in its very horror. We try and language the modalities of what we see with the academic tools available to us, and with the law too, with its careful, forensic articles and statutes. The diet of words to render the mobility of emotion is a starvation diet. It is wholly inadequate to the task of bringing to life the profundity of this experience we share and share with so many others in different ways of death, leading to transforming the ultimate mobility into immobility at the hands of others who will animate the corpses with their hands, and with spades (or other tools) they dig graves as places of immobility.

In juxtaposition to these multiple layers of mobility that affect human and nonhuman actants, we witness the immobility of an entire population in what Israel has turned into a concentration camp. Yet, it is this very immobility that has gone mobile through mobile phones acting as digital witnesses to the mobility of suffering which gave birth to different types of mobilities: the mobilities of social media news to face the complicity of mainstream media, the mobilities of words as they are screamed by the people of Gaza and translated into many languages around the world, and the mobilities of responses to advocate, campaign, organise and raise awareness. And it is this very immobility that has also gone viral – taken on a metaphor form of mobility that is barely perceptible. It is so mobile it is unstoppable. There is no end, no ceasing of the spreading fire.

Here, we wrestle with the term 'hospitality' when the 'homes' of the 'other' are turned into heaps of grey rubble and when what is left of the 'other' is words cried online and echoed across the uncrossable borders. Words that need much more than a concrete 'welcome'. Welcome to what, to rubble, to soup filled with the blood of the martyrs, killed delivering the 240 calories the population are 'allowed' to exist on daily in Gaza.

There are also 'our' words which are articulated in dialogue, in response, in stunned disbelief, in the absence of response or in the presence of the cruelty of responses. These words are also *hosted* online and in need of more than a *welcome,* and certainly more than academic silence. These are words about articulating grief, righteous anger and collective helplessness. We produced such words in our text here, piling up the adjectives and verbs and adverbs to create a sense of the resistant mobility and suffocating paralysis that grips our thinking-as-writing. The words of W. H. Auden (1940) in memory of W. B. Yeats somehow spoke to us when he says:

> Mad Ireland hurt you into poetry.
> Now Ireland has her madness and her weather still,
> For poetry makes nothing happen.

However, unlike W. H. Auden, we disagree that poetry makes nothing happen. Rather, we attempt to excavate what *could* happen, inspired by Gutiérrez-Rodríguez (2023), with words through genres of grief: the absence of words, the gift of words, the violence of words, the mercy of words and the hospicing we both developed with words. It can make the world seem different, open to air, to light. We seek to learn about words and what they might offer for a failed project of intercultural education, of intercultural communication, and a failed notion of hospitality, failed because it has not prevented this horror, failed because none of the decolonial, or critical, or intercultural education debates, none of the ways of languaging and language teaching and learning, none of the models of intercultural citizenship or the claims staked on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in our journal, have been anywhere close to stopping or intervening in this situation which, we are told by judges, could plausibly risk constituting a genocide (International Court of

Justice, 26th January 2024). Indeed, the silence testifies eloquently to the intellectual ruins which genocide constitutes. Working with the crumbs of words in what we call genres of poetic cries has enabled us to improvise stunned languaging practices of care, activism and wake work that are beyond-hospitable, and of the rubble.

Genres of grief

Genres of grief, as part of hospicing, are not a strong research theme in applied linguistics or intercultural education. Indeed, it is anthropology where the thick description of rites of death might be found and the theories of how humans make meaning out of death, war, horrifying injustice. Anthropology and feminism have given us the stance of the 'vulnerable observer' (Behar, 1996, p. 177), through which Behar states that 'Anthropology is nothing if it does not break your heart'. Monumentality is of course a strong material language and offers a rich field for intercultural theorising across a wide range of fields from memory studies, to museum studies, to holocaust studies and archaeology. In theoretical terms the work of Achille Mbembe (Mbembe, 2003), Judith Butler (Butler, 2004) and Gillian Rose (Rose, 1996) are all key references alongside scholars from the Holocaust such as Walter Benjamin (Benjamin, 1973) and Hannah Arendt (Arendt, 1958, 1969). Indeed, the work we offer here is a response to the questions posed by necropolitics – the decision by state powers to inflict death on key populations. It offers a response to the focus on mourning without end, which Rose critiques as a dimension of the Auschwitz memorial. By grieving through a present when the griefs layer thickly (between us we know over 150 of the dead) we affirm the need for the work of grieving at some point to move, as psychotherapy also stress, into new phases, from Thanatos to Eros, for a patient or collective to have a chance of psycho-social healing. Similarly, we recognise we write in ruins such as those excavated by Benjamin and Arendt, both of the cultural fabric (Benjamin, 1977) and also of the category of the human, which absorbs and morphs even as it adapts to genocide. Furthermore, we acknowledge the work and stance taken by Judith Butler, in speaking of populations and bodies who are not deemed to be grievable, leading us to attempt, with our work of hospicing, to undo the ungrievability and to insist on a commons of languaging grief, interculturally, and without a need for proximity (Butler, 2011).

We see in genres of grief a way to remember, reassemble, witness and respond to the dying and the dead, while excavating and improvising raw literary traditions to enable public recognition and awareness. This re-memory (Morrison, 2019) work might not offer healing, yet it enables something to happen; something we cannot easily point at or name but can describe as a form of grief activism anchored in wake work (Sharpe, 2016). Such activist wake work holds together care, attentiveness, vigilance, and the formidable task of 'defending the dead' (Sharpe, 2016, p. 10) and the dying. Indeed, genres of grief hold together life and death, paying tribute to those lost or suffering, reinstating life – or what remains of it – and dealing with ongoing atrocities. Commenting on this laborious task, Gutiérrez-Rodríguez (2023, p. 103) notes:

> The acts of remembering, presenting, bearing witness and demanding justice constitute the labour of mourning carried out through moments of life and struggle, redeemed through caring for the loss of loved ones, actualising their presence and working through the grief of those left behind. The political is conceived here through the immediate connection of life with death, shaped by the intense work of grief delivered daily.

The ethical arrangements required for these genres of grief trouble the separation between the self and the Other as they insist on different arrangements based on relational ontologies, kinship and interdependency. As we demonstrate in many examples of our poetic cries, the witnessing voice becomes entangled with the witnessed, not as an independent observer but as a vulnerable participant observer, grieving, cracking and crying in stillness, in sadness, in solidarity, in togetherness, in pain and in feeling somehow trapped under different types of rubble. What we witness in such arrangements unsettles the cartography of intercultural

education which is accustomed to a lingua franca that no longer holds in the presence of screams understood universally as the breathing out of pain in disbelief, with a call for rescue and a demand for action, for justice. Demonstrating this, Khawla writes as more than a witness, but as a voice that narrates, documents, breaks, and connects what is being observed to humanity at large:

Rice bag

I saw a child's remains in a rice bag
Shredded into nothing but three kilos
Placed in a rice bag that remains half empty

I saw a child's remains in a rice bag
O my little one! You were not buried whole
Remains, parts, pieces- like my witnessing heart

I saw a child's remains in a rice bag
O rice bag! What has become of us
Held by a father, digging a grave

A grave where humanity also lies

It is important to pay attention to the plurality of genres of grief, including the poetic cries we present here, and to the different functions performed by such genres. Our own poetic cries, as we demonstrate in Section 3, do not constitute a stable, defined genre. Rather, we seek improvisations of stunned languaging as we respond to horrifying events and unsettling states of being. When it comes to language of grief and to the task of hospicing Gaza there are some important references connected to the rise of National Socialism in Germany, for all that the Holocaust is imprescriptible. Such references offer practice, philosophy and verbal arts which can support the quest for genre and language with which to document, as scholars, and vocalise, as writers and philosophers in this new age of genocide.

Some examples of genres which have been resonant for us include the work of the diarist and scholar Viktor Klemperer. Klemperer's LTI diaries written documenting the language used in the Third Reich (Klemperer, 1998a, 1998b, 2003) are a way of disciplining language and the mind daily to pay attention and to witness to the way the perpetrators are justifying, manipulating and changing the words of the age to suit and implement their processes. Following a similar tradition, our daily 'cries' have been our way of diarising, responding and documenting as vulnerable participant observers. Equally, the works of Bertolt Brecht, his plays and poems, have echoed. 'Wirklich wir leben in finsteren Zeiten' (Surely, we live in dark times) is a poem which echoes daily in Alison's mind as it prompts, as does the poem – 'Schlechte Zeit für Lyrik' (A bad time for poetry) in which the poet declares it to be a terrible time to write of the beauty of apple blossom but the speeches of the painter (Hitler) are the ones which compel him to write (Brecht, 1938, 4: pp. 743–744). This sense of compulsion – drängen – with regard to the poetic task might be traditionally referred to as muse. It is the name given to a force which means an artistic or poetic response is no longer optional.

Other genres which offer a way of grieving come from the Gaelic tradition of keening and indeed the work of Madge Bray, in her Keening for Refaat (Bray, 2023) has been a side dialogue and an important part of the tonality of the genres of call and response which emerged in our cries. The folk tradition has long used the call and response as part of oral singing and storytelling. Finally, we found in our religious traditions genres of liturgy, suras, dua'a (supplication), mass prayers and vigils that have offered a respite from the anger, a coarse language of protest and a dialogic form that continues to sustain our relational ontology that well transcends the self/Other duality or the human/non-human dichotomy.

Conclusion

> We die. That may be the meaning of life.
> But we do language. That may be the measure of our lives. (Morrison, 1993)

This article has told a story of doing language, when stunned, not just as a measure of our lives but also as a duty that is heavy to shoulder; a hospicing work of stunned languaging for a heartbreaking scholarship, and as an embrace (Herremans, 2024) through the poetic cries that are 'more than a thing of beauty', but a 'feeling of responsibility' (Heaney, 2008). As we do this, we add our voices to Akómoláfé's (2023) when he asks:

> What new solidarities, hybridities, surprising futures, speculative storytelling, postural gestures, bold questions, and radical hospitalities might we entertain in response to what can only be sensed in part, never as a whole?

Through this article, we offer our partial response to what was sensed in part. In return we keep the question open, directed to different audiences and disciplines concerned with researching language and intercultural communication in times of stunned languaging and failing intercultural projects and in need for a heartbreaking scholarship. This article is a call:

> A beginning, a trouble.
> A call, a response.
> A rethinking.
> A laborious exploration,
> of the role of language,
> as a hospicing of decolonial grief.
>
> A laborious exploration,
> To be stunned.
> To be unsettled,
> in what we know of language,
> rendered vulnerable.
> Hospitable, inhospitable.
> Hopeful, hopeless.
> Yet stubbornly painful
> A laborious exploration,
> to excavate and examine
> words
> that help us,
> to feel, to cry.
> To reciprocate.
> Bear witness.
> Name the world.
> Exist relationally.
> Create infrastructures,
> of collective grief.
> A laborious exploration,
> to remake life,
> amidst the crumbs and the ruins,
> at the edge of the life-death continuum.

Notes

1. https://www.aljazeera.com/program/newsfeed/2024/1/31/contact-lost-with-sisters-trapped-under-israeli-gunfire-in-north-gaza.
2. The hollow bone references the flute whistles made in past times of bird bones and a set of tunes by the Northumbrian Folk musician and small pipe player, Kathryn Tickell, called 'Hollow Bone' as well as the poetry of Darwish which evokes freedom and the skies.
3. https://buymeacoffee.com/ashrafhamad/e/278241.

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the Palestinian struggle of 77 years which necessitates a lexicon of stunned languaging. We acknowledge the witnesses in Gaza who mobilised the immobilised. We thank our editors and anonymous reviewers for handling our work with care and for giving us the humbling honour of introducing a heart-breaking applied linguistics. Our humble thanks to Hyab Yohannes for the generous reading and to Tawona Sitholé for giving us our words back as a laborious response in the last poem. Our 'cries' were first published across social media platforms and then compiled in an anthology of poetry, Keep Telling of Gaza, Khawla Badwan and Alison Phipps: Sídhe Press, published in November 2024. We retain copyright.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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