

Declining Neo-colonialism and Peace Accord Attempts between the East and the West through a Contemporary Reading of Amel Dungul's Translated Poem 'Do Not Reconcile' (1970)

رفض أساليب الاستعمار الحديث و اتفاقيات السلام بين الشرق و الغرب من خلال قراءة معاصرة
لقصيدة أمل دنقل 'لا تصالح' (1970)

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Abstract: Deeply invested in challenging the legacies of colonialism and the destruction of Western epistemological dominance, postcolonial writers and poets have transformed literary aesthetics into powerful vehicles of political resonance. Among such figures is the Egyptian poet Dunqul whose poem *Do Not Reconcile* stands as a poignant refusal of reconciliation in the face of historical injustice. Though under recognized and rarely translated in Western literary discourse, the poem has been resurrected in contemporary political contexts like the uprisings of the Arab springs, the second Palestinian intifada and peace accords with Israel. In the midst of these political upheavals, Dungul's poetry found its way into street graffiti, discussion circles, and quotes on social media. Accordingly, this paper seeks to illuminate the enduring political force of *Do Not Reconcile*, examining how resistance poetry can foreground the brutal realities of colonization and state violence in a global landscape where militarized power frequently eclipses the written word.

Keywords:

Neocolonialism, peace accord attempts, poetry of resistance, reconciliation.

المخلص:

لَمَّا صَبَّ أدباء وشعراء ما بعد الكولونيالية تركيزهم على تحدّي ما خلفه الاستعمار وهدم الهيمنة الإستيمولوجية الغربية، حولوا الجماليات الأدبية إلى وسائلٍ قوّة فاعلة في الساحة السياسية. ومن بين هذه الشخصيات الشاعر المصري دُنْقُل الَّذِي تُعَدُّ قصيدته "لا تصالح" رفضاً صارخاً للتّصالح مع محطات التاريخ الظّالمة. ولو أنّ القصيدة لم تتلّ حقّها من الدّيعان ولا حظّها في الأدب الغربي المترجم، إلّا أنّها انبعثت من جديد مع الظروف السياسية المعاصرة كالربيع العربي والانتفاضة الفلسطينية الثانية واتفاقيات السلام مع الكيان الصهيوني. ومع التوتر السياسي الحاصل، وجد شعر دُنْقُل إلى فنّ جداريات الشوارع سبيلاً، وكذا الحلقات النقاشية، والمنشورات المقتبسة في مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي. وعليه تروم هذه الورقة البحثية إبراز القوّة السياسية لقصيدة "لا تصالح" من خلال تحريّ مدى

• Introduction

Though used recurrently, the original usage of the term neo-colonialism is relatively traceable to the French political activist and anti-colonialist writer Jean-Paul Sartre. Yet, the term has gained worldwide consideration with the publication of Kwame Nkrumah's *Neo-Colonialism, The Last Stage of Imperialism* (1965) where he critically decried the persistence of an enduring dependence of the lately independent countries. The core of neo-colonialism, according to Nkrumah, is premised on the idea that the state subject to it is formally and officially independent and sovereign, whilst its economy and political rule are controlled from outside.¹ This premise goes hand in hand with the Leninist philosophy which sees, neo-colonialism as a modified form of colonialism that seeks the opportunity to exploit the limitations of the newly decolonized states so that it attains more economic, political and cultural profits. The ultimate motivation of imperialism is based on the theory of a center-periphery which is hinged on a direct control and exploitation of the periphery economically, culturally, politically and militarily. Galtung assumed that international organizations are considered as forms of neocolonialism, while, international communication for peace accord attempts embrace neo-neo-colonialism ideas.² Discussing imperialism along with its dire consequences leads to controversial debates about the need for reconciliation in conflict zones or post violence milieus. Some theorists vouch for the emergency of peace building to create a social justice between indigenous inhabitants and colonizing forces claiming that these peace attempts are of paramount importance.³ Among peace attempts finalities is putting an end to the "transgenerational transmission of trauma".⁴

However, such premises of peacemaking have been perceived with a growing doubt and distrust, and proved to be as an endeavor for colonial perpetuation instead. As forms of counter-discourse, Postcolonial texts are another way to oppose the hegemony of Western colonial claims. The imperialist powers call for an emergency for peace-building under what they call peace accords or peaceful treaties. Postcolonial literature with its revolutionary texts is one way to resist and oppose peacemaking with the oppressors and the poem under discussion is an example where the poet Amel Dunqul denounces attempts of peacemaking and reconciliation with the colonizer through making literary aesthetic a political resonance. The outcomes of colonialism caused numerous countries to grapple with issues of identity, authority, and the remnants of external domination. In this space, literature appeared to be an influential means to contest predominant narratives and proclaim indigenous standpoints. Amal Dunqul, often referred to as the 'Prince of Protest Poets', employed his poetry to challenge the sociopolitical matters of his time, inserting resistance and political resonance inside his verses. Dunqul is famous for his steadfast resistance to despotic governance. The poem is concerned with the safeguarding of human dignity through individual certitude and systemic justice. Exceeding literary aesthetic, the poem symbolizes postcolonial resistance and serves as a sharp critique of peace accords with former colonies and

¹ Nkrumah, Kwame. *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*. International Publishers. USA, 1965.P, 65.

² Galtung, Johan. *Peace by Peaceful Means*. Sage Publications. USA, 1996.P, 94.

³ Lederach, John Paul. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. USIP Press. USA, 1997.P,97.

⁴ Volkan, Vamik. *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. USA, 1997.P, 7.

new forms of neocolonialism. The upcoming discussion aim to present the notions of colonialism, imperialism, neocolonialism and the way they interrelate with this potent poem.

1. A Glance at Colonialism, Imperialism and Neocolonialism

Initially, it is important to make a clear cut difference between the terms imperialism, colonialism and neocolonialism. Edward Said, in '*Culture and Imperialism*', emphasizes the distinction between the two concepts and characterizes imperialism as "the practice, the theory and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory" and colonialism is seen as "the implanting of settlements on a distant territory" and is "almost always a consequence of imperialism."⁵ Subsequently, Imperialism refers to the ideology, policy, or practice through which a dominant nation extends its power and impact over other territories, either through direct political control or indirect economic and cultural domination. Focusing on economic exploitation, political dominance, and cultural hegemony imperialism may operate without formal colonization. This may be seen in the economic imperialism that presupposes the economic dependency of the former colonies, the ex-colonizer's military interventions in the newly independent counties, etc. These practices are vindicated through ideologies like, what is known as, the civilizing missions or "the White Man's Burden"⁶. Edward Said defines imperialism as: "the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory".⁷

Lenin in '*Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*' (1917) contends that imperialism is driven by capitalist expansion, where powerful states exploit weaker economies of the ex-colonies.⁸ As for colonialism, it is direct colonial governance involving the annexation and governance of foreign lands. In other terms, it is the physical manifestation of imperialism. Colonialism may include settler colonies like the French colonialism in Algeria. This kind of colonialism enforces foreign control, legal systems, and cultural suppression; like banning the use of Arabic language in the Algerian school during the French colonialism. Said simplifies that colonialism is "almost always a consequence of imperialism; and end up being the implanting of settlements on distant territory".⁹ On the other hand Fanon, in his fundamental book, '*The Wretched of the Earth*' (1961) inspects colonialism's psychological and intense culminations on the colonized peoples. As for, Neocolonialism it is about the continual economic and political governance over previously colonized republics without direct coercive or administrative rule, often through global monetary organizations, international corporations, and cultural stimulus. The main key traits of this phenomenon may be envisaged in economic dependency like Bank loans with strict conditions¹⁰. Nonetheless, Cultural imperialism can be seen in Western media dominance, elite comprador class or the social group within a colonized or economically dependent country that acts as an intermediate between foreign powers of the colonized and former colonizes, yet mainly working for the interests of the colonizes. This class naturally profits from its partnership with external

⁵ Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. Knopf. USA, 1993.P,5.

⁶ Kipling, Rudyard. *Complete Works*. Various publishers. UK, late 19th-early 20th century.P,7.

⁷ Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. Knopf. USA, 1993.P, 18.

⁸ Lenin, Vladimir. *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. First published Russia, 1917; many international editions.P, 65.

⁹ Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. Penguin Books. UK, 2002.P, 9.

¹⁰ Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Grove Press. USA, 1961.P,76.

forces, often taking wealth, influence, and position, as they facilitate the manipulation, exploitation and control of local properties, industry, or markets by foreign entities.¹¹

Kwame Nkrumah, in *'Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism'* (1965) argues: "the essence of neocolonialism is that the state which is subject to it is, in theory, independent, but in reality its economic and political policies are directed from outside".¹² Whereas imperialism is the wider ideology of control, colonialism is its direct implementation through direct military occupation. As such, neocolonialism characterizes a discreet form of control after attaining one's independence. Said clarifies that colonialism is a subcategory of imperialism, while neocolonialism is its contemporary subtler evolution. Thus, imperialism is considered as a mindset which theorizes, rationalizes and encourages the control of a distant territory whereas colonialism stands for the actualization of this mindset in a distant territory. These practices can also be articulated under the label of the civilization mission, as stated earlier, which gained the meaning of development, betterment or later on moral and material progress. This attitude can be seen as the official policy of modern European imperialism that does not only stress on the superiority of the Europeans, but also announces the inferiority of the colonized who were seen too backward to govern themselves and had to be elevated and empowered to profit from this presupposed modernity. These imperialist attempts are identified as Europeanization; which is simply the diffusion of a superior model and is considered a necessary law that is imposed by the force of the circumstances for the colonized.¹³ Blaut, in *'The Colonizer's Model of the World'* (1993), argues that the concept of diffusion integrally advocates European supremacy and frames the adoption of European models by colonized regions is both unavoidable and advantageous. Blaut argues, further, that such a worldview served to rationalize and legitimize colonial expansion by depicting it as a civilizing mission.¹⁴ Likewise, Trine Flockhart discusses how Enlightenment ideals, mostly those highlighting reason and rationality were deployed to construe a hierarchy placing Europeans as unrestrainedly rational and advanced, while depicting non-Europeans as illogical and immature. This dichotomy created by the Europeans justified the colonial agenda of improving the so called inferior races through European intervention."¹⁵

The dispersion of European administrative systems, Christian philosophies, and notions of racial superiority were steadily propagated through colonialism strengthening the narrative of European cultural dominance. Moreover, Antony Anghie, in *'Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law'* (2005), scrutinizes how international law was employed to support colonial actions. He presents the concept of the civilizing mission, wherein European sovereignties vindicated their colonial subjugations by depicting non-European societies as culturally inferior and in need of European power and legal constructions.¹⁶ This legal agenda continued the idea that

¹¹ Loomba, Ania. Colonialism/Postcolonialism. Routledge. UK, 2005.P, 23.

¹² Nkrumah, Kwame. Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism. International Publishers. USA, 1965.P, 4.

¹³ Blaut, J.M. The Colonizer's Model of the World. Guilford Press. USA, 1993.P, 79.

¹⁴ Blaut, J.M. The Colonizer's Model of the World. Guilford Press. USA, 1993.P, 87.

¹⁵ Flockhart, Trine. The Problem of Diffusion in International Relations: Europeanization as a Civilizing Mission. International Studies Review, vol. 12, no. 2–100 ,2010.P, 83.

¹⁶ Anghie, Antony. Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law. Cambridge University Press, UK, 2005.P, 54.

European civilization was compulsory and that its disposition on colonized peoples was both required and legal. Together, these scholarly works underline how Europeanization was not only a gentle cultural exchange but a deliberate imposition of European standards and organizations, imposed as superior and indispensable for the progress of colonized societies. This course was extremely twisted with imperialist purposes, aiming to legitimize and simplify colonial control under the guise of civilizational progress. For the imperialist, this was a vindicated right because they were protecting the colonized from their presupposed lethargy. Nevertheless, the westernization of the world forced on everyone the adaptation and, thus, the assimilation of the European assumptions and epistemological thoughts. So, European cultural assumptions were estimated to be normal, natural and universal.¹⁷

The progression of colonization goes beyond territorial subjugation to the psychological and epistemic subjugation of the colonized. The colonization of the mind occurs through controlling language, education, and cultural narratives. To do so, the colonial powers reshape the consciousness of the oppressed, ensuring their submission and continuing a hierarchy that justifies European domination. This process is a critical aspect of imperial control, as it naturalizes the inferiority of the colonized while legitimizing the colonizer's authority. To colonize the minds, language turns out to be a basic apparatus which enables people to adopt its reason and "internalize its logic and speak its language; to perpetuate the values and assumptions of the colonizers as regards the ways they perceive and represent the world"¹⁸ Hereafter, by means of the above-mentioned effects of language, all pejorative characteristics are accredited to the colonized from a European point of view. So, the colonial discourse represents a binary opposition which expedites the colonization. Similarly, Foucault sustains that power produces knowledge. Therefore, there is bidirectional relationship between power and knowledge because while power builds knowledge to shape superiority, knowledge also dismantles the continuity of the superiority of power.¹⁹ In '*Discipline and Punish*' (1975), Foucault reveals that "power and knowledge directly imply one another" and "there is no power relation without correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations"²⁰.

Besides, Edward Said views Orientalism as a "style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction between the Orient and the Occident."²¹ According to Said, the association between the occident and the orient is one of power, of domination a varying degrees of complex hegemony. This relationship is hinged on the sovereignty of the occident. Loomba explains this colonial attempt as follows:

[I]f colonised people are irrational, Europeans are rational; if the former are barbaric, sensual, and lazy, Europe is civilization itself, with its sexual appetites under control and its dominant ethic that of hard work; if the

¹⁷ Flockhart, Trine. The Problem of Diffusion in International Relations: Europeanization as a Civilizing Mission. *International Studies Review*, vol. 12, no. 2–100, 2010.P, 83.

¹⁸ Wa Thiong'o, Ngũgĩ. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. James Currey. UK, 1986.P,16.

¹⁹ Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. Edited by Colin Gordon. Pantheon Books. USA, 1980.p, 54.

²⁰ Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish*. Pantheon Books. USA, 1977.P, 27.

²¹ Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. Penguin Books. UK, 2002.P,3.

Orient is static, Europe can be seen as developing and marching ahead; the Orient has to be feminine so that Europe can be masculine.”²²

The connection between language and power permits the representations to become stereotypical and these depictions become tools to reinforce the inferiority of the colonized. In ‘*The Location of Culture*’, Bhabha regards colonialism as a structure of demonstration” which works as an “apparatus of power.”²³ For example, postcolonial texts are written to determine the colonized populations as debased of any racial origin. Such alibies were presented by the colonizers to justify conquest. These, representations become instruments to consolidate the inferiority of the colonized. For example, in Joseph Conrad’s ‘*Heart of Darkness*’ (1899), Africa is seen as ‘the other world.’²⁴ According to critics, this narrative reflects the dark side of the African people and the direct depictions of colonial discourse. This narrative is conveyed as a thoughtful account of European colonialism in Africa, revealing its cruelty, hypocrisy, and moral decay. Throughout his journey, Charles Marlow faces the disgusts of colonialism. The African wilderness serves as a symbolic antithesis to Europe. Yet, it portrays the dark reflection of European greed and savagery. Conrad makes Africa enigmatic, almost mythical space that opposes Europe’s presupposed civilization. Yet, the reality of European hostility is exhibited as Marlow learns that the real darkness lies in European colonial exploitation²⁵.

The African wasteland is illustrated as disordered and wild, demonstrating the unconscious, primitive drives that European civilization advocate to suppress. However, colonialism tells that Europeans are just capable of savagery. This is proved as Conrad asserts: “the wilderness had taken him, loved him, embraced him, got into his veins, and consumed his flesh.”²⁶ Henceforth, though Europe validates colonialism, under the guise of the civilizing mission, the reality is exploitation, violence, and dehumanization. Chinua Achebe eminently criticized Conrad’s representation of Africa as dehumanizing in ‘*An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s Heart of Darkness*’ (1975), arguing that the novel reinforces colonial stereotypes even as it criticizes imperialism. The corruption of power is displayed through Kurtz’s transformation from an idealistic European to a tyrannical figure²⁷. Again, Edward Said, in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), deliberates how *Heart of Darkness* reveals the “imperialist ego” and the destructive nature of colonial domination.²⁸ ‘*Heart of Darkness*’ (1975) is still an essential text in postcolonial studies, exposing the moral darkness at the heart of European imperialism. While it

²² Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. Routledge. UK, 2005.P, 45.

²³ Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge. UK, 1994.P, 70.

²⁴ Achebe, Chinua. *An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s “Heart of Darkness.”* Ed. Robert Kimbrough, Norton&Co, London, 1975.P, 783.

²⁵ Achebe, Chinua. *An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s “Heart of Darkness.”* Ed. Robert Kimbrough, Norton&Co, London, 1975.P, 94.

²⁶ Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*. William Blackwood & Sons. UK, 1899.P, 245.

²⁷ Achebe, Chinua. *An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s “Heart of Darkness.”* Ed. Robert Kimbrough, Norton&Co, London, 1975.P, 94.

²⁸ Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. Knopf. USA, 1993.P, 87.

critiques colonialism, its portrayal of Africa remains contentious. Therein, the text still perpetuates racist stereotypes by portraying Africans as mute impersonal victims.

Neocolonialism pronounces the continuous economic, political, and cultural domination of formerly colonized nations by external powers, even after formal independence.²⁹ Unlike classical colonialism, which depends on direct provincial control, neocolonialism operates through indirect mechanism, economic dependency, political manipulation, and cultural hegemony.³⁰ However, it has got its own manifestations, structural mechanisms and agents of perpetuations. It is, for instance, sustained through propping up compliant regimes that prioritize foreign interests over national sovereignty. Frantz Fanon's, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), maintains that the postcolonial bourgeoisie becomes an intermediate class, serving foreign capital rather than national development³¹. Neocolonialism can be manifested through economic dependency manipulation. As an example of this, African economies continue to be structured around raw material extraction; advancing the cooperation global organizations while stifling industrialization. In a study underwent by, Mkandawire & Soludo entitled *'Our continent, Our Future'* (1999), it is argued that about 60% of Africa's exports are unrefined minerals and agricultural goods. Another way to neocolonialism can also be seen, on the existence of foreign militaries to destabilize sovereignty and preserves security dependence.³² For instance, France preserves perpetual bases in Djibouti, Senegal, and Gabon under the guise of "stability."³³

Other ways to perpetuate neocolonialism can be seen through cultural and religious organizations, media propaganda, missionary organizations that promote neoliberal values. Throughout this study, the researcher aims to reveal how peace accord attempts with former colonies can be considered as a form of neocolonialism. The struggle against neocolonialism requires dismantling structural dependencies and regaining agency in governance, economics, and culture. Nonetheless, it is also aspired to challenge neocolonialism in rejecting peace accord attempts with the colonizer; which is the core of this study.

2. Peace Accord Attempts: An Overall Viewpoint

Peace accords are sort of formal arrangements that are intended to put an end to the brutal conflicts between the colonial powers and the colonized, frequently including discussions and negotiations between combatant parties, third party peacekeepers, and universal organizations. According to Volkan a peace accord attempt is considered as "a peace-building phase of social justice that attempt to prevent: psychological and biological harm caused by the direct and indirect violence of colonialism and prevent the transgenerational transmission of trauma."³⁴ Accordingly, peace accords are not merely political means to sustain ceasefires among two warring parties, but they also target the patronizing of the dire psychological, cultural and structural legacies that were imposed by the colonial regime. In this view of things, an effective peace process must avoid direct

²⁹ Nkrumah, Kwame. *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*. International Publishers. USA, 1965.P, 31.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Grove Press. USA, 1961.

³² Mkandawire, Thandika and Charles Soludo. *Our Continent, Our Future: African Perspectives on Structural Adjustment*. CODESRIA. Senegal, 1999.P, 37.

³³ Charbonneau, Bruno. *France in Sahel: The War in Mali and Beyond*. Indepaz. France, 2016.P,34.

³⁴ Volkan, Vamik. *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. USA, 1997. P, 7.

and indirect violence like “displacement, massacres and structural violence, economic exploitation, cultural erasure.”³⁵ Nonetheless, peace accords must dismiss universal injustice in the ex-colonies in order to preclude the cyclical occurrence of violence.³⁶ Furthermore, these efforts of peacemaking are launched with the intention to halt the perpetuation of historical trauma that is wrought due to massive genocide and compulsory assimilation imposed by the colonizer. Hence, they, presumably, aim to suppress historical trauma of fear and hatred among present and future generations. Peace building ideology is premised on the deconstruction of colonial educational system and the installation of decolonized curricula that engages indigenous epistemologies.³⁷

Decolonizing history through truth building initiatives was also part of peace building attempts. Though peace making succeeded at given countries where cultural and linguistic rights could have been restored, like New Zealand’s Māori Language Act (1987) that revitalized the reo Māori in schools and Bolivia’s Plurinational Constitution it was a complete fiasco in others.³⁸ In the Arab world, for instance countries have witnessed frequent peace accord attempts, numerous addressing post-colonial struggles, territorial clashes, and civil wars. While some have succeeded in decreasing the colonial tyranny, others have been unsuccessful due to external intrusion, lack of inclusivity, or unsettled historical grievances. Nevertheless, these attempts may also be seen as a subtle way of colonial perpetuation or a new birth of neocolonialism. Chandler, in his critical work *‘Empire in Denial’* (2006), assumes that peace accord attempts are constructed to replicate the logic of the civilizing mission that claimed to bring order and progress to the presumed backward societies³⁹. For example in the post 2003 Iraq, the US enforced a neoliberal constitution that privatized resources leading to prolonged instability.⁴⁰ Afghanistan (2001-2021): Western “state-building” collapsed due to corruption and imposed governance.⁴¹ As such, these models are commonly applicable, disregarding local governance traditions.⁴² Such examples of peace building fail because they generate dependency instead of self-determination and are, hence, seen as an imperial paradox. These colonial practices fail in peace building simply because they are a new means of legitimizing military occupation and generating enduring transitional governance.⁴³

³⁵ Galtung, Johan. *Peace by Peaceful Means*. Sage Publications. USA, 1996.P, 69.

³⁶ Lederach, John Paul. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. USIP Press. USA, 1997.P, 197.

³⁷ Battiste, Marie. *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit*. Purich Publishing. Canada,2013.P, 213.

³⁸ Indepaz. *Decolonizing History: Indigenous Rights and Constitutional Reforms in Bolivia* La Paz: Instituto para el Desarrollo de la Paz, 2010.P, 204.

³⁹ Chandler, David. *Empire in Denial: The Politics of State-Building*. Pluto Press. UK, 2006.P, 12.

⁴⁰ Klein, Naomi. *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. Metropolitan Books. USA, 2007.P, 7.

⁴¹ Suhrke, Samir. *When More Is Less: The International Project in Afghanistan*. Columbia University Press. USA, 2022.P, 11.

⁴² Mamdani, Mahmood. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton University Press. USA, 1996.P,87.

⁴³ Pugh, Michael. *Liberal Internationalism: The Interwar Movement for Peace in Britain*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.P, 21.

3. Amel Danqul's Early Life

Dunqul was born in Egypt in 1940. His burgeoning love for Arabic literature emanates from his father's wide library. The confluence of a traditional upbringing and personal adversity forged his perspectives. His poor status led him to quit university early to cater for his siblings' wellbeing. His ideological alignment with Leninism and his acute stance toward political institutions profoundly shaped his poetic discourse, which is marked by a tone of defiance and an urgent demand for justice. As a committed communist and militant nationalist, the Egyptian poet articulated a position of principled resistance, most notably exemplified in his Arabic poem 'La Tusalih' 'Do Not Reconcile'. Despite its significance in Arabic literature, the poem has received limited recognition and remains scarcely translated within Western scholarly circles. The poem was brought back into graffiti streets of Cairo and Alexandria after a couple of events like the events of the military coup in 2013, the second Palestinian Intifada, the events of the Arab spring and the peace agreement with Israel.⁴⁴ Despite its unpopularity, Dunqul's poetry found its way into graffiti, discussion circles, and quotes on social media. Throughout this analysis, it is aimed to explore how resistance poetry can make a difference by showing the reality of the colonizer's heinous crimes in a world where guns and drones spoke louder than the written world.

3.1. The Original Use and Historical Implication of the Poem

The poem under discussion was written in 1970. Perceived as a scorching literary work, it furiously conceptualizes a groundbreaking episode that is concerned with an indelible incident from pre-Islamic Arabian history. This catalyst episode was the murder of Kulaib, an iconic warrior and a legendary Arab tribal leader. Kulaib ibn Rabiah was the chief leader from the Taghlib tribe; which is well known for triggering the War of Basus; over a camel dispute that sparked a 40 years of war. The war started over the killing of a camel belonging to a woman known as al Basus who was related to another tribe called the Bakr tribe. Enraged at his aunt grief over her camel murder, Jassass, a member of the Bakr tribe, backstabbed Kullaib. This cowardly assassination ignited decades-long war and epitomized pre-Islamic Arab concept of vengeance. As Kullaib fell to a coward's blade, his brother Al-Muhalhim took an oath to avenge his death. Known as a fierce warrior and poet, Al Muhalhil is known for his relentless pursuit of vengeance. Though, he killed Jassass Ibn Murrah, Al Muhalhil prolonged the war making it an example of tribal grudges. In this poem, Dunqul alludes to Kullaib's death scene. He assumes that as he breathed his last, Kullaib asked his brother to never reconcile with those who have killed him when they come for reconciliation saying: "do not reconcile over blood even with blood; Do not reconcile over blood even with blood Are all heads equals? Is a stranger's head equal to your brother's?"⁴⁵ Throughout

⁴⁴ Radwan, No. "Amal Dunqul, The Prince of Protest Poets." *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 45, 218-243, 2014.P, 2-3.

⁴⁵ Dunqul Amel, "Do Not Reconcile" by Amal Dunqul, translated by Shima Eid, 2024. Political Arabic Poetry. URL: <https://polarabicpoetry.tumblr.com/post/91953926521/لا-تصالح-do-not-reconcile-by-amal-dunqul>.

these lines, Kulaib tries to convince his brother that no other man from the Bakr tribe can be equal to him. Despite their kinship, their struggle remained unsolved for about forty years of bloody wars. Henceforth, the primary goal of poem is not merely esthetic but rather subversive treating themes of tribal honor, cycle of intense revenge and ethical deterioration.⁴⁶

3.2. Rejecting Peace Accords through a Contemporary Reading of the Poem

Summoning distant history, Dunqul's poem appeared in 1970 to decry contemporary power constructions, domination, and recurring violence in the Arab world. Jabra assumes that Dunqul revokes the poem in a new context after the postcolonial failures of peace accord attempts.⁴⁷ This poem brings back history to revisit timely oppression; as stated by Fanon through his famous book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) where he exposes how colonized writers reenter history to repel coercion.⁴⁸ Lines of the poem appeared in Graffiti streets in Cairo in 2013 as a searing critique of tyranny and a visual weapon of resistance. *Revolution Graffiti: Street Art of the New Egypt* (2013) document how rebels repurposed old texts to evade censorship. Lines like "do not reconcile even if they bestow leadership on you" and "do not reconcile even if they say head for head. Are all head equals⁴⁹" were resurrected in graffiti after Egypt's military coup to defy the tyranny of the regime exhibiting people's rejection of false peace.⁵⁰ The heads in the previous lines were written next to the pictures of massacred protestors depicting the population's dissatisfaction with the prevailing status quo back then. Walls of Freedom analyze Egyptian graffiti as a predominant archive that challenges these forms of violence⁵¹. As a result of this graffiti revolution, the Egyptian military whitewashed walls every day, yet artists repainted them at night time.

The poem's lines reappeared as well after the uprisings of the Arab Spring. In his seminal book, *The Arab Uprisings: What Everyone Needs to Know (2015)?*, Gelvin assumes that the Arab spring denotes a succession of militant protests, uprisings, revolutions and armed rebellions that spread dissatisfaction over dictatorial rule, economic disproportion like poverty and unemployment, corruption, and the violation of human rights.⁵² The movement targeted to takeover tyrant rulers, inaugurate self-governing transformations, and advance better living circumstances⁵³.

⁴⁶ Asha, A. The Revolutionary Dimension in the Poetry of Amal Dunqul, 2020 . Academia.edu. URL: <https://archives.ju.edu.jo/index.php/hum/article/view/249.P, 24>.

⁴⁷ Jabra Ibrahim Jabra. Modern Arabic Literature. Unknown publisher. Likely UK/USA, 1983.P, 98.

⁴⁸ Fanon, Frantz. The Wretched of the Earth. Grove Press. USA, 1961.P, 35.

⁴⁹ Dunqul Amel, "Do Not Reconcile" by Amal Dunqul, translated by Shimaa Eid, 2024. Political Arabic Poetry. URL: <https://polarabicpoetry.tumblr.com/post/91953926521/لا-تصالح-do-not-reconcile-by-amal-dunqul>.

⁵⁰ Hamdy, Basma, and Don Stone Karl. Walls of Freedom: Street Art of the Egyptian Revolution*. From Here to Fame Publishing, 2014. URL : [https:// Political Arabic Poetry. \(2017\). Graffiti in the West Bank. Tum](https://Political Arabic Poetry. (2017). Graffiti in the West Bank. Tum) issuu.com/basmahamdy/docs/wofteaser.P, 2.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Gelvin, James. The Arab Uprisings: What Everyone Needs to Know. Oxford University Press. USA, 2015.P, 12.

⁵³ Ibid.P, 43.

In the light of the Arab Spring events, Danqul's previous poetic lines can be interpreted as a condemnation of dictatorial governing and an urgent request for legality through justice and uprightness. Graffiti lines dispatched in Egypt and Tunisia; like "do not reconcile even if they bestow leadership upon you" can be interpreted in the sense that the power Arab pre-Spring leaders have inherited is coercive and hollow. The line "indeed your throne is a sword" alludes to some Arab regimes that maintained control via military forces and brutality. However, this coercion is but fake as it is revealed through the line "and your sword is a sham"; which ultimately means that power, alone, cannot sustain legitimacy⁵⁴.

Throughout recent history, we could have seen that well-organized forced regimes failed when people revolted to indicate that even the supremacy of coercive power has limits. Furthermore, the line "unless it witnesses moments of honor" presupposes that correct leadership demands the inviolable sanctity of human dignity, societal equity, moral coherence and distributive fairness. Overall interpretations of these sprayed lines throughout the Arab spring context expose that protesters inquire governors who would serve their citizens instead of catering for their own private interests. Though, the uprisings succeed in certain countries like Tunisia; where success was achieved through the integration of dialogue instead of brutal force only, it failed in other countries where "the sword was a sham"⁵⁵ denoting power without honor and injecting terror without virtue. This, therefore, lead to permanent chaos and enduring instability. Thus, the poem reflects the strikers' rejection of the perpetual tyranny that is practiced against people in the Arab world. Hence, it serves as a postcolonial text that aims to deconstruct this form of neo-colonialism where leaders were using the illegitimate violence of the colonizer against their own people. This street art adaptation did not just quote the poem, but recontextualized it. In this regards, it is argued that the "Arab Spring graffiti became a museum of lost dreams."⁵⁶

Putting the Palestinian cause under scrutiny, the poem's themes of boundless revenge (like the Basus War) resurge again to parallel the heinous crimes committed against Palestine. Nassar argues that Graffiti artists in Gaza and the West Bank mixed lines from the poem with images of martyrs and demolished homes. In *'Palestinian Resistance Poetry'* (2013) Nassar, further, maintains that pre-Islamic tribal clashes are symbols for modern occupation. Initially written in 1976, the poem was a political response to the first peace attempts with Israel under what is known the Camp David Accords which, ultimately, launched the first peace agreement between Israel and Egypt⁵⁷. Fahmy considers the accords as a turning point leading to pervasive wrath in the Arab world communities who saw this agreement as a betrayal to the Palestinian cause and a submission to a colonial oppressor.⁵⁸ This can be clearly seen in the following line: "Do not reconcile even if they bestow leadership upon you"⁵⁹. This indicates that appointing Arab rulers as leaders is just a disguised way to perpetuate colonialism. Nonetheless, the poet is flabbergasted on the way Arab

⁵⁴ Dunqul Amel, "Do Not Reconcile" by Amal Dunqul, translated by Shima Eid, 2024. Political Arabic Poetry. URL: <https://polarabicpoetry.tumblr.com/post/91953926521/لا-تصالح-do-not-reconcile-by-amal-dunqul>.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Bayat, Asef. Revolution Without Revolutionaries. Stanford University Press. USA, 2017. P, 24.

⁵⁷ Nassar, Hala. Palestinian Resistance: The Politics of Everyday Life. Routledge. UK, 2022. P, 45.

⁵⁸ Fahmy, K. A Camp David for Egypt? Cambridge University Press, UK, 2014. P, 92.

⁵⁹ Dunqul Amel, "Do Not Reconcile" by Amal Dunqul, translated by Shima Eid, 2024. Political Arabic Poetry. URL: <https://polarabicpoetry.tumblr.com/post/91953926521/لا-تصالح-do-not-reconcile-by-amal-dunqul>.

leaders accept peace accords with Israel regardless of the close ties they have with Palestine: those of Islam and Arab unity saying: “How can you step on the corpse of your father’s son”⁶⁰ Nonetheless, settling and signing agreement with the colonizer is allegorized as the bloodied handshake when Dunqul states: “how can you look at the hands of those are shaking your hands, and not see blood on them”⁶¹. This can be traceable to what the Marxist historian Gabriel Pieterseburg in his book *‘The Returns of Zionism’* (2008) calls “settler contracts”⁶² (90). These attempts are indeed prolongation of neocolonial treats. The line “if it was one arrow that stabbed me in the back, for you it will be one thousands” metamorphoses colonial violence that would beget violence. This, eventually, implicates that this neocolonial peace will generate an ultimate backstabs for the countries who show reverence to Israel and that it is just a matter of time for their turn to come.

Peace accords attempts, also, occurred after the second Palestinian intifada or uprising. Either first or second, the intifadas’ main targets were putting an end to the Israeli colonial occupation in Palestinian territories in the West Bank and Gaza. The initial uprising occurred in December 1987 and ended in 1993 with the signing of what is known as the Oslo Accords that delivered a framework for peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. The second intifada, commonly known as called the Al-Aqsa intifada, signifies a critical case study in the breakdown of conflict resolution mechanisms and the failure of peace accords after the Camp David talks in July 2000 (the Britannica online encyclopedia). After these events, peace talks became but a disguise for prolonged occupation. Lines from the poem showed in the street of Gaza and the West Bank serving as a condemnation to Arab governors who agreed to sign deals with ex colonies. The lines “do no reconcile even if they give you gold” implicates that Palestinians’ martyrs souls are so precious that they cannot be substituted by gold. Again, the poet provides a metaphor comparing martyrs slain souls with eyes that have been gouged out; “if I were to gouge out your eyes and replace them with two gems, would you see, these things are priceless?” Gems as artificial sight implies the colonizer offers such as impressive alternatives, better media narratives, humanitarian approach, and economic peace. However, in real eyes they deliberately violate these promises⁶³.

Interestingly enough, Dunqul considers the Arab leaders as blind to these violations. Nonetheless, reality cannot be blinded by a prosthetic sight or what Dungul refers to as “gems” for they can never replace real eyes when stroke blind. Dungul’s defiant voice went wilder as he insists repeatedly on the phrase “Do not reconcile, over blood even with blood. Are all heads equal? Is a strangers is equal to stranger’s head?”⁶⁴ This implicates that the martyrs who died are not to be dehumanized so as to forgive their killers and start over in coexistence. The poet disclaim normalizing the death of Palestinians in peace talks inquiring: “are all heads equal? Is a stranger’s

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid;

⁶² Pieterseburg, Jan Nederveen. *The Return of Zionism: Israel and the Peace Process*. Zed Books. UK, 2009.P, 23.

⁶³ Britannica Online Encyclopedia. Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. USA, ongoing.URL: <https://www.Britannica.com>

⁶⁴ Dunqul Amel, "Do Not Reconcile" by Amal Dunqul, translated by Shima Eid, 2024.Political Arabic Poetry.URL: <https://polarabicpoetry.tumblr.com/post/91953926521/لا-تصالح-do-not-reconcile-by-amal-dunqul>.

heart equal to your brother's head?"⁶⁵ These peace accords have always dishonored the universal principles of human equality, and hence, this notion of 'head for head' fails since an oppressed cannot be equal to the oppressor. Nevertheless, the poet is critical of the Arab unity which was supposed to be one stating: "two swords are your sword and two voices are your voice"⁶⁶. This line suggests that Arab countries were to protect the Palestinian lands and speak in one voice to free it, for the lands of Palestine are fortified not by one hand, but by the united strength of Arab steel and militant army. Remaining separated is to weaken, however when blades align and tongues speak as one, no force can undo the victory that history, faith, and blood guarantee. This aspiration is seen in the lines: "there is one who will be born, who will wear full armor, who will kindle the fire fully who will bring about truth from the ruptures of the impossible s".⁶⁷ So, this sacred hope is engraved in the records of destiny: There shall rise one hero who does not merely spark the flame, but ignites the blaze of justice until it devours this prolonged night; one who does not merely implore for justice, but gains it, unbroken, from the jaws of the unattainable. The poet keeps questioning if the Palestinian blood is that priceless to accept peace agreements asking: "Would you wear over my blood clothes adorned with silver and gold?"⁶⁸ This unwaveringly lines mount scathing critique of Arab's moral compromises especially those who would trade justice for material or political gain; like US aid and political and economic support. The poem questions the moral decency of reconciliation when the indelible traumas of brutal colonization linger till now.

Subsequently, Dunqul rejects the equivalency often proposed in diplomacy stating "Reconciliation is nothing but a treaty between two equals... otherwise it cannot be true s." In a searing tone, he denounces the cowardly silent tone of Arabs and their complicit hush upon the heinous war waged against Palestinians who are daily butchered stating: "this is war, it may wear the heart but behind you will be the shame of all the Arabs." Dunqul snarls again emphasizes on the no reconciliation emergency even when others insist on reconciliation. "Do not reconcile even if all the leaders stand against your sword along with the men with no integrity and those whose turbans dangle over their eyes and their Arabic swords have forgotten the years of glory." This loud silence goes in hand with the blinded eyes that have been covered with sightless turbans. These turbans covering symbolize their sightless eyes that cannot see their glory past that rusts in the scabbards of shame now. Dunqul's rejection of provisional ceasefires is intensified as he revokes the legacy of the traumas of multiple generations. He emphasizes: "do not reconcile, this is not your vengeance alone; it's generations after generations".⁶⁹ The ineradicable traumas of these generations, thereupon, impel the impossibility of peace deals with the colonizer.

Additionally, the malevolence manner, through which the colonizer is practicing his brutal extermination, deepens the rejection of peace attempts, for it is marked by cowardice: "My killer never shouted 'watch out!' to me and suddenly a shiver punctured between two ribs". Another line denoting the same meaning is "he who has killed me is not nobler than I such that he could kill me

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

with his knife; he was no cleverer than me such that he could kill me through deceit”.⁷⁰ Unlike conventional wars, the ongoing war and genocide in Palestine is not two equal sides clash or conflict, but one sided slaughter with all the advanced weaponry system that is sponsored by super powers and a completely defenseless population on the other side. To stress this notion, Dunqul ensures the reader that the colonizer is but a burglar who stole the land as it shows through these lines: “the one who has assassinated me was just a thief who stole my land right in front of my eyes as the silence was sarcastically laughing”.⁷¹ At this core, this suggests that the colonizer is not a civilizer or a liberator but rather a greedy thief who disguises his larceny with outstanding myths of manifest destiny, divine promise, or historical right.

Last but not least, Dungul’s lines conjure up a sense of an irrevocable reconciliation until the natural order is renovated; heavenly movements, the rough truth of existence, and the heartbreaking gathering of the martyr with his waiting daughter. This is evident in the original lines: “do not reconcile until existence returns to its moving cycle, the stars to orbit, the birds to their song, the sands to their grin and the martyr to his awaiting daughter”.⁷² Thereupon, these lines resonate well with the overall message of the poem which is defiance and an insistence on disapproving reconciliation. The notion of the impossibility of reconciliation is amplified as it matches the impossibility of returning from death as it shows through “the return of the martyr to his waiting daughter”. This unyielding impossibility of reconciliation holds a lyrical weight reminiscent of revolutionary elegies vowing a declaration of unwavering condemnation of peace accords, talks and normal deals with the colonizer.

• Conclusion

Amel Dunqul’s “*Do Not Reconcile*” is considered as a shooting denunciation of neocolonialism, deceitful peace accords, and the disloyalty of Arab solidarity to stop colonial crimes. Invoking the theme of pre-Islamic tribal revenge, Dunqul hypothesizes a poetic agenda that transcends historical memory, connecting the massacre of Kulaib to contemporary struggles against imperialism. The poem’s resurgence in graffiti during the Arab Spring and Palestinian uprisings highlights its durable significance as a manifesto of resistance, rejecting resonating reconciliation with dictators. Surpassing the aesthetic dimension of poetics, the poem is a declaration of resistance and a refusal to submission to the dishonest peace of tyrants and fake traitors. Produced originally in 1976 as a condemnation of Egypt’s Camp David Accords with Israel, its fury outdoes its instant setting, developing into a worldwide yell against all shapes of betrayal, colonial, dictatorial, and neoliberalism. The poem’s recovery during the Arab Spring, the Palestinian Intifadas, and Egypt’s 2013 military coup yield its perpetual relevance. Therefore, Dunqul’s words return due to the persistence of injustice and had to remain as an enduring curse upon the colonizers and a rallying cry for the colonized. As such, the poem deconstructs the delusion of reconciliation without justice,

⁷⁰ Ibid

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

revealing its defeat. The Arab Spring, with its devastated anticipations and growing dictatorships, confirmed Dunqul's counsel; uprisings that compromise with the deep-rooted regimes or external colonial powers purely replicates oppression. The poem's verses were scribbled on walls as a scolding to those who traded dignity for hollow strength and stability. Though dictators arrested poets and artists to rewrite history, Dunqul's disclaimer outlived them. Stretching from Cairo's graffiti to Gaza's protest hymns, '*Do Not Reconcil'e* became a breathing text, applied by new generations. Its lines implicated not only political betrayals but also the economic dependence that followed.

The poem emphasized that true resistance is a moral contract imposing a refusal to forget. Dunqul's relic verse symbolizes this, certifying that the names of the victims and the criminalities of their eradicators are never obliterated. The poem's wrath against Camp David found its voice duplicated in today's normalization contracts, where certain Arab governments embrace Israel while Palestinians horrific genocide continues. Henceforth, Dunqul's threatening: "History will spit upon your names" appends each leader who shakes hands with the tyrant colonizer. The poem withstands the endurance of injustice and tyranny and will always be sustained in history as a promise of no reconciliation, no forgetting and no peace without justice. Finally, '*Do Not Reconcile*' is a call to intergenerational opposition. The poem's importance lies in its refusal to allow history be rewritten by the tyrants, vowing instead on the certainty of justice as Dunqul infers "there shall rise one who will kindle the fire fully and bring truth from the rupture s of the impossible".⁷³

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⁷³ Ibid.

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