

Research Article

The Vicious Cycle of Colonization in the Cinematic Adaptations of *Dune*

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Abstract: This study examines the intricate relationship between colonization and environmental destruction in Denis Villeneuve's cinematic adaptation of Frank Herbert's *Dune*. Drawing on Ferdinand Malcolm's theory of decolonial ecology, it argues that colonial activities in *Dune* not only dehumanize and subjugate indigenous populations, as articulated in Fanon's postcolonial theory, but also severely exploit and damage the planet's environment. The indigenous people, faced with ecological devastation and cultural erasure, initiate a decolonization process aimed at reclaiming their land, identity, and agency while simultaneously working to restore the environment. However, the narrative ultimately reveals the failure of this decolonization movement as a new tyrannical figure emerges, perpetuating the cycle of colonization and exploitation. This study employs a qualitative methodology, combining critical analysis with decolonial and postcolonial theoretical frameworks. Key scenes and visuals in the film are analyzed to explore their symbolic representations of ecological exploitation and resistance. By linking narrative and theory, the study highlights *Dune*'s reflection of contemporary issues surrounding colonialism, environmental degradation, and the challenges of achieving meaningful decolonization.

Keywords: Colonialism, Decolonial Ecology, Dehumanization, Environmental Devastation, Manichean World.



1. Introduction

Frank Herbert was an American science fiction author, most renowned for his epic novel *Dune* (1965) and its sequels. Herbert's science fiction novels have been turned into cinematic adaptations by the Canadian filmmaker Denis Villeneuve, with *Dune 1* being released in 2021 and *Dune 2* in 2024. *Dune* explores themes of ecology, politics, religion, and humanity's future on a desert planet rich in a type of valuable spice. Herbert's work is known for its complex world-building, rich characters, and deep exploration of philosophical ideas. *Dune* portrays a picture of a planet, denominated as Dune, subjugated and colonized by belligerent and ruthless colonial forces [1]. In addition to exploiting and annihilating the environment by harvesting a precious and rare material named "spice", the colonizers also attempt to decimate the natives inhabiting this planet, set in motion by systematic genocide, not to mention abominable dehumanization of the natives at the hands of the oppressors. Moreover, the colonization of the planet has culminated in ecological destruction on an alarming scale. In the narrative under critical scrutiny, the annihilation of the environment is ineluctably intertwined with the colonial and imperial activities of the Padishah empire, to be argued throughout this article.

There exist some articles examining *Dune* from a number of different theoretical vantage points. David M. Higgins's article, entitled "Psychic Decolonization in 1960s Science Fiction", explores how science fiction of the 1960s dealt with themes of decolonization, but through a mental lens. The author of the said paper contends that in lieu of focusing on overthrowing physical colonial rule, these science fiction novels explored the idea of "psychic decolonization", which entails freeing the mind from internalized oppression and limitations [2]. Higgins argues that some stories, while seeming to address decolonization, actually reinforced Western dominance by drawing the readers' attention to the emancipation of a white male protagonist. Nevertheless, science fiction of the 1960s still offered a valuable and immaculate exploration of mental liberation, even if it was not always deployed in perfect alignment with the objectives of anti-colonial movements [3].

Another article, entitled "Good Colonizer, Bad Colonizer: *Dune* and the Sixties", analyzes the complex colonialism themes in Frank Herbert's novel *Dune*. It argues that *Dune* presents two colonizing forces: one resembling the USSR and another reminiscent of 1960s America [4]. While the novel does not offer a clear-cut "good" colonizer, it does portray the struggles of the indigenous Fremen against these ruthless and belligerent outside powers. The article brings to the fore the book's connection to the real-world context of the 1960s, a time marked by decolonization movements and debates regarding American foreign policy.

Furthermore, the article "Reimagining Colonialism: *Dune* Within Postcolonial Science-Fiction" purports that Frank Herbert's *Dune* can be comprehended through a postcolonial lens. It highlights how the novel reflects colonial structures, with Arrakis as a colonized planet and the Fremen as the indigenous people. The resource exploitation (spice) mirrors real-world colonial practices. To put it in a nutshell, the article suggests that *Dune* provides a rich and fruitful ground for diving into the complexities of colonialism and resistance in science fiction.

Giang Duong Phuc's thesis, entitled "Frank Herbert's *Dune* from the Ecocritical perspective", analyzes Frank Herbert's *Dune* through an ecocritical lens [5]. In this thesis, the environment is considered a formative influence, shaping the intrinsic qualities of the indigenous inhabitants. Conversely, these inhabitants leave their mark on the environment, demonstrating a reciprocal interaction. A comparative exegesis is undertaken, drawing a comparison between the Fremen and Harkonnens' lifestyles and environmental practices. The Harkonnens function as an allegory for humanity's exploitative tendencies, prioritizing self-gain over ecological responsibility. Herbert's narrative appears to advocate for adopting the Fremen approach – one of harmonious co-existence with the planet, minimizing disruption and destruction. The text emphasizes the need to abandon practices detrimental to the environment, and instead, emulate the Fremen's methods of resource conservation.

While some of the articles, mentioned above, have probed into the colonial and environmental aspects of the narrative, they have failed to examine the inextricable interconnection between ecological destruction and deleterious colonialist and imperialist activities, nor have they analyzed the narrative by virtue of Fanonian postcolonial terminology and theory. To fill this gap in the literature, the current article will strive to scrutinize the adaptation through the theoretical lens of decolonial ecology, articulated by Ferdinand Malcolm, bringing the inextricable interrelationship between the destruction of the environment and the process of colonization to the forefront. Moreover, efforts will be made to illuminate the anticolonial movement of the natives depicted in Villeneuve's adaptations from the vantage point of Fanonian postcolonial theory. It will be concluded that the anticolonial

resistance is intended to emancipate not only the environment but also the natives themselves and their colonized society. Initially, the interrelationship between the colonial activities and ecological devastation plaguing Arrakis will be dived into, after which the focus of the critical study will shift onto the ruthless oppression and dehumanization of the indigenous population at the hands of the colonizers. Furthermore, attempts will be made to examine the natives' decolonial movement, aimed at liberating not only the environment and society. It will be clarified that the said movement does not bear any fruit, for the colonial system remains unchallenged and unchanged inasmuch as a new tyrannical figure, Paul Atreides, replaces the previous one, thus the perpetuation of colonialism and the failure of the decolonial movement.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Colonial Activities and Ecological Destruction

The world's history is divided into two separate realms, namely, colonialism and environmental issues. The said division between these two theoretical fields is denominated as "modernity's colonial and environmental double fracture" by Ferdinand Malcolm [6]. On the whole, this split keeps the discussions of deleterious colonialist and imperialist activities separate from those revolving around the environment. We see this in environmental and social justice movements. These groups both protest and theorize about the issues that they are concerned with; however, they do not seem to communicate with each other. In the grand scheme of things, people of color are largely absent from "the arenas of environmental discourse production" [6]. Ferdinand Malcolm posits that this "double fracture" constitutes the central and underpinning problem of the ecological crisis [7]. Therefore, by foregrounding this concept, one can achieve a radical transformation in the conceptual and political facets of the issue.

Modernity's way of thinking, which separates humans from nature (think "us vs. them"), has caused a big problem for the environment. This separation puts humans in charge, and this "mastery of nature" approach has led to pollution, disappearing species, and a warming planet. It's not just the environment that suffers, though. This way of thinking is also linked to social problems like unequal treatment of men and women, poverty, and even people being treated as "disposable" objects [7].

To address the issues emanating from the fracture between the realm of environmentalism and that of colonialism, Ferdinand Malcolm has put forth the concept of "decolonial ecology" [8] [9], averring that remedying the environmental problems requires breaking free from the legacy of colonialism, analogous to the act of escaping the hold of a slave ship. The fight against climate change and pollution is inseparable from "political, epistemic, scientific, legal, and philosophical struggles to dismantle" [9] the colonial systems that continue to oppress people of color, especially women, even in the modern world.

The decolonial ecology centers around the experiences of Black Africans brought to the Caribbean as slaves, acknowledging the trauma of forced displacement and bondage as well as aiming to reclaim their dignity. Furthermore, decolonial ecology recognizes the role of gender within this experience. The separation by sex in the slave ship highlights the varying ways Black men, women, and children were oppressed. It fully aligns with feminist, particularly Black feminist, critiques that expose the complex web of racial and gendered oppression within nation-states [10].

In the cinematic adaptations of *Dune*, colonialist activities, ruthless oppression and liquidation of the natives, and ecological devastation are ineluctably intertwined with each other. Thus, political and social injustice cannot be analyzed without taking the ecological issues into consideration, hence the inseparability of the arenas of environmentalism and colonialism.

The natives are the representatives of the environment, as they tend to respect the natural resources, different ecosystems, and creatures, hence supporting biodiversity. They have adapted themselves to the desert and the harsh surrounding environment and, therefore, advocate for an eco-friendly way of life, thus refraining from endangering the non-and-more than-human. The way they lead their life is thus compatible with the nonhuman beings that inhabit the planet. Furthermore, the indigenous people are also privy to the power of the desert as well as the way in which it operates; therefore, they can very easily wield its power against the oppressors.

The colonizers, however, recklessly and cavalierly engage in highly destructive and exploitative activities that are extremely detrimental to the sustainability of the different existent ecosystems on the planet, hence the concomitant ecological devastation and the endangerment of biodiversity. As Chani, one of the Fremen, mentions at the outset of *Dune I*, the merciless colonizers tend to ruthlessly and inconsiderately "ravage" the indigenous people's lands in front of their "eyes". The primary cause

of ecological destruction on Arrakis is the excessive and careless extraction of a rare and precious substance denominated as spice, which is of overarching significance throughout the galaxy. Spice, otherwise known as *mélange*, is a "psychoactive chemical" [11] that transcends the realm of a mere commodity. It is the linchpin of interstellar power dynamics, a complex agent shaping political landscapes and dictating the flow of control within the Padishah Emperor's vast domain. *Mélange* extends human lifespans, fosters heightened awareness, and grants a degree of vitality. This makes it invaluable to the Spacing Guild, whose Navigators rely on its transformative properties to fold space and navigate perilous interstellar routes. Without spice, safe and efficient travel between planets would be impossible, effectively severing the very fabric of the galactic empire. According to Liet-Kyne, an imperial scientist and ecologist tasked with studying the harsh desert planet and understanding its ecology, the initial scheme that the empire had in regard to altering and taming Arrakis was to transform the planet into a lush paradise, employing the huge amount of underground water available underneath its surface. However, after stumbling upon the spice and discovering its great value, this plan was jettisoned, hence the colonizers' decision to mine the planet for spice instead:

KYNES: Do you know what this place is? It's an old Ecological Testing Station. They were meant to tame the planet. Free the water locked beneath the sands. Arrakis could be a paradise. The work had begun. But then we discovered the spice! And suddenly no one wanted the desert to go away (Spaihts and Villeneuve, 2021, 91).

Due to the prominence of this substance, the colonial forces, therefore, tend to constantly and recklessly mine spice from the desert, bringing the environment of the planet to the brink of destruction. Therefore, as this is subjugated and colonized world, they feel responsible for neither the future and well-being of the planet nor for the individuals that inhabit it, hence their propensity to take their exploitation of Arrakis to the extreme without being concerned about the inevitable consequences of their actions, nor do they give back anything to the natives in exchange for all the spice that they extract for their financial gain: STILGAR: You are Outworlders, come for the spice. You take it, giving nothing in return (Spaihts and Villeneuve, 2021, 50). Due to the Harkonnens' excessive mining of spice, estimated at "10 billion Solaris" on a yearly basis, they have obtained an inordinate amount of wealth, hence becoming more affluent than the emperor himself, which attests to the deleterious nature of the colonizers' avarice.

The desert planet Arrakis presents a poignant illustration of resource mismanagement. Water, the very essence of life, is rendered scarce by the arid environment. This scarcity elevates its significance to a position of paramount importance, not just for human survival but for the delicate ecological equilibrium of the planet. However, the colonizing forces, driven by avarice for the valuable spice *mélange*, exhibit a blatant disregard for this precious resource. Their practices reek of reckless wastefulness, jeopardizing the well-being of the indigenous Fremen population, the intricate web of desert life, and ultimately, the long-term viability of Arrakis itself.

In the adaptations of *Dune*, the colonizers are responsible for excessive water consumption. Spice production, the cornerstone of Arrakis' economic significance, is inherently water-intensive and, therefore, requires a huge amount of water. The exact mechanisms remain shrouded in mystery; however, the incontrovertible and inevitable repercussion of spice extraction is a significant depletion of this vital resource, that is to say, water. As Duong Phuc has clarified, in the spice production process, two substances are required, namely "sandworms' larvae and water" [12].

In addition to profligate consumption of water in the spice production industry, the colonizers also cultivate a number of "date palms" on Arrakis, which are not indigenous to the environment and ecosystem of this arid desert planet and thus demand an inordinate amount of water to grow. As a consequence, the sheer volume of water required to sustain this plant is staggering, with estimates suggesting that a single plant consumes an amount equivalent to the needs of a hundred Fremen:

*PAUL I didn't know date palms could be found here.
RESIDENCY GARDENER These aren't indigenous. Imported a long time ago. They can't survive without me! Each one of these drinks every day the equivalent of five men. Twenty palm trees. A hundred lives. (Spaihts and Villeneuve, 2021, 41)*

Such prodigal and reckless consumption of water on the colonizers' part stands in stark contrast to the Fremen's frugal water utilization and cautious water-harvesting techniques. Due to being exposed

to the harsh desert environment for many centuries, Fremen have perfectly acclimatized themselves to it; therefore, they have gained the ability to survive on such an inhospitable planet as well as learn how to use natural resources, especially water, more thriftily so as not to jeopardize the future of their home planet. In effect, the colonizers' blatant and egregious disregard for the sanctity of water violates and even offends the cultural and social values and beliefs of the natives, who regard water as a sacred and precious substance, hence the very essence of life. As Giang Duong Phuc has argued in "Frank Herbert's *Dune* from the Ecocritical perspective", for the indigenous population living on Arrakis "who had to adapt to the harsh and unforgiving environment of Arrakis for thousands of years, conservation of water is of the utmost importance" [13].

The colonizers' flagrant unconcern about water conservation fosters a sense of environmental exploitation. Their irresponsible and outrageous actions reek of abysmal resource mismanagement, hence having the potential to trigger a cascade of grave ramifications. The depletion of water not only threatens the Fremen's way of life but also disrupts the delicate balance of the desert ecosystem. In essence, the colonizers' short-sighted pursuit of profit jeopardizes the long-term sustainability of Arrakis. The Fremen's struggle for survival is not just a fight for liberty and freedom, but also a desperate attempt to preserve the ecological balance of their home planet.

2.2. Colonization, Dehumanization, and Decolonization

According to the lights of Fanon, decolonization is not a peaceful handover of power, but a necessary brutal and "violent" process [1], which entails a complete dismantlement of the colonial social order, that is to say, a shattering and unraveling of the repressive colonial structures that have kept the colonized people subjugated and downtrodden [2]. The process of demolishing the colonial system precipitates the established hierarchy into disarray, with "the last" becoming "the first", that is to say, the formerly powerless natives emerging as the new rulers [14]. Fanon purports that violence is thus inherent in this process. According to Fanon, the violence used by the colonized is not merely a response to physical oppression but also a response to the psychological destruction wrought by the colonial rule. Through violence, the colonized regain their agency, subjectivity, and humanity. Moreover, he goes on to argue that it is this very violence that ultimately gives birth to a new nation free from the shackles of colonial rule and tyranny.

Central to Fanon's theory is the conceptualization of the colonial world as a Manichean one, forcibly divided into two distinct realms, namely those of the colonizer and the colonized [6] [7]. The colonizers deem themselves to be the superior, civilized force, while the colonized are degraded and dehumanized, hence relegated to the arena of the "savage" [15], the barbaric, and the other; in other words, the colonized are deemed to be the "absolute evil" [16]. This dehumanization justifies, in the minds of the colonizers, the acts of extreme violence and brutality perpetrated against the natives. Fanon exposes the petrifying and discombobulating reality that the colonial forces are given the *carte blanche* to murder and torture the colonized without a twinge of conscience, for the colonized are viewed as subhuman beings [16]. Far from being merely random or haphazard acts of cruelty, this violence presents itself as a systemic tool deployed to maintain colonial control and power.

The colonizer's resentment, however, emanates not merely from this racialized division but also a deep-seated terror. The colonizers have built a world of "opulence" on the backs of the colonized and "slaves", a world of wealth extracted from the very land and resources they have pillaged [17]. They live in a state of constant apprehension, dreading the day when the natives will revolt and attempt to reclaim their rightful land. This fear manifests itself in the form of a relentless assault on the colonized people's culture, religion, and language. The colonizers seek to efface and annihilate any sense of identity_ or a historical background_ that might empower the colonized to resist and struggle for the emancipation of their homeland.

Fanon argues that such relentless abuse, exploitation, and dehumanization inevitably lead to a boiling point. The colonized, stripped of their dignity and forced to live in abject and abysmal poverty and condition, erupt in violence. Such violence, often portrayed as "savagery" [14] by the colonizers, is not given birth by a passion for violence itself but rather by a desperate hankering for salvation and emancipation. It is the colonized people's only weapon and course of action against a system that has stripped them of their humanity. To put an end to the cycle of violence during the decolonial period, the colonizers tend to call on the colonized to be "reasonable" [8].

Fanon meticulously dissects the Manichean worldview that the colonizers tend to impose upon the colonized, exposing the hypocrisy inherent in the colonizer's self-proclaimed "civilizing missions" (x). This mission, according to Fanon, is a sham, a justification for the violence and exploitation that

are the hallmarks of colonialism. The colonizers present themselves as a beacon of order and progress to a savage land, veiling and, at times, eradicating the sophisticated cultures and rich histories that existed before their arrival. Fanon emphasizes that this rigid division between the colonizer and the colonized is a construct, a tool for maintaining control. It is crucial to dismantle this binary in order to envision a future where both colonizer and colonized can exist as equals. Fanon also avers that the Manichean structure embedded in colonialism creates a violent mentality in the colonized due to economic disparity and racial discrimination. This mentality fuels dreams of destroying the colonial system. As the colonized individual is devoid of voice and cannot do anything to the colonizer in reality, he thus withdraws into his fantasy world in which he concocts mental images of smashing the colonial structure to pieces.

Fanon's background in psychiatry allows him to inquire into the profound psychological impact of colonialism on the colonized. He explores the concept of the "inferiority complex" [15], which he argues is systematically instilled in the colonized by the colonizers by making them "confess the inferiority of their culture" and themselves [17]. The colonized person internalizes the colonizer's view of them as inferior, leading to feelings of self-loathing and alienation. This internal conflict manifests in a variety of ways, including a yearning to "assimilate" [13] into the colonizer's culture, even if it means rejecting one's own. Fanon emphasizes the significance of the colonized individuals' reclaiming their cultural identity and rejecting the colonizers' imposed sense of "inferiority".

3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, utilizing a critical analysis framework to explore the intersection of colonialism and environmental degradation in Denis Villeneuve's cinematic adaptations of *Dune*. The methodology is designed to examine the narrative through the theoretical lenses of decolonial ecology and Fanonian postcolonial theory to uncover the intricate relationships between ecological destruction, colonial exploitation, and the resistance of indigenous populations.

4. Finding and Discussion

4.1. Colonial Dehumanization and Culture Distortion

In *Dune 2*, the imperial forces have not only subjugated the planet Arrakis, exploiting its natural resources, as elaborated earlier, but they also have debased the inhabitants or citizens thereof, regarding them as not merely secondary citizens but as "animals" [7] or disposable beings that can be easily dispensed with without any consequences. According to Fanon, the colonized are normally dehumanized and reduced to the status of animals by the colonizers, who tend to employ "zoological terms" [8] or bestial language as a means of stripping the natives of their humanity. The process of dehumanization is quite pivotal to the colonial power and discourse, as it is deployed to justify the atrocities perpetrated against the natives. In other words, it would be brutal and inhumane if the colonizers liquidated human beings; however, if the natives were to be reduced to the level of animals, then the colonial state's armed and disciplinary forces would not be plagued by pangs of conscience if they took their lives, as they would believe that they are merely annihilating nonhuman or subhuman beings. Traces of colonial dehumanization can be observed in the following excerpt from *Dune 2*, in which the colonial military forces have been commissioned to venture into "the deep desert", populated merely by the indigenous population, and decimating them all in cold blood, for the natives are regarded as the ethnic and social others as well as nonhuman beings on the fictitious planet Arrakis, which has been colonized and subjugated by colonizing forces. Evident below is how the colonizers refer to the natives as rats, a type of animal that is deemed to be worthless and pestilent. To put it in a nutshell, the indigenous population has been reduced to the level of nonhuman beings that cause the imperial forces a great deal of trouble by striving to emancipate their world from external enemies.

The brutal maltreatment of the colonized at the hands of the colonizer is evident from the fact that the oppressors attempt to liquidate the natives without an ounce of remorse, which is symptomatic of the way the colonizers view the natives, that is to say, disposable beings for whose welfare and survival the empire does not feel responsible, hence the systematic ethnic cleansing instigated by the colonial forces. That the empire is attempting to destroy the entire race of the natives can be construed from the following excerpt, in which Lord Rabban, the commander of the Harkonnen imperial forces and the current ruler of Arrakis, is enraged by the resistance and decolonial activities of the colonized,

hence commanding his troops to wipe out all the natives once and for all: [Rabban] Rats! Hairy rats! Kill them! Kill them! Kill them all! Kill them all! Rats! (admin, 2024).

To control the planet and keep indigenous population under surveillance, thus locating and exterminating them better, the colonizers have deployed communication systems. The surveillance system thus allows the colonial forces to detect the natives that intrude into the northern region of the Arrakis, taking their lives in a grisly fashion. The colonial panoptic gaze (200-201), in Foucauldian terminology, however, is far from impeccable, for it does not penetrate into the deep south, inhabited by a huge number of Fremen. Due to such cracks and flaws in the surveillance system, the colonizers are not cognizant of the presence of the Fremen in the deep south, believing it to be uninhabitable, even though a cornucopia of natives live there, hence their lack of absolute control and dominance over the planet. In fact, while the number of the Fremen was estimated at 50,000 by the Harkonnens, there exist millions of native people living in indigenous communities denominated as "sietches" (Spaihts and Villeneuve 49) scattered all over Arrakis, which attests to the ignorance of the House Harkonnen.

[Harkonnen commander] Fremen! I can't confirm, my Lord. Communications are hectic in the open sands.

[Rabban] Your orders were to control the whole planet.

[Harkonnen commander] We are.

[Rabban] I see only half of it.

[Harkonnen commander] As you may recall, the South is uninhabitable, my Lord. May I suggest you get some rest? (Admin, 2024)

The colonial rule is thus horribly incapacitated by its inability to keep the natives under surveillance and wipe them out in an effective manner; therefore, it is not capable of suppressing the natives and crushing their decolonial movement, culminating in the defeat of the colonial forces as well as the collapse of Harkonnen House. It represents the fact that colonial rule fails to dominate and manipulate the indigenous people thoroughly, which paves the way for the victory of the Fremen's decolonial struggle.

Moreover, in the adaptation, relying on the Althusserian ideological state apparatus (75-76), colonizers have targeted and distorted Fremen's cultural and religious beliefs and values by the dint of apocryphal and fabricated narratives. To be more specific, the cultural colonization and indoctrination of the natives have been set in motion through the insidious introduction of concocted religious beliefs, to the effect that they will be emancipated and delivered from "evil" by a prophesized messianic figure. The primary function of colonial indoctrination is to keep the natives under control by making them believe that they have to remain complacent and refrain from arming themselves and fighting back against the colonial forces until the mysterious and unknown Messiah, from a world lying beyond the bounds of their own planet, presents himself and rallies them to take up cudgels. As mentioned in the adaptation, should the colonizers desire to "control people", they ought to "tell them a messiah will come". It is worth noting that it is an outsider that has been portrayed as the awaited messiah; therefore, a colonizer, or a possible oppressor, has been endowed with divine power by the colonial discourse as a means of granting him the permission to do whatever he wants. It is thus implied that defying such a sacred figure would be sacrilegious, hence the reprisal inflicted on the person who has perpetrated such a hideous blasphemy.

The religious and cultural indoctrination is thus ineluctably intertwined with the material occupation and exploitation of the entire planet and the individuals inhabiting it. The cornerstone of the colonial propaganda system, the act of inculcating fallacious religious ideas into the natives' minds and manipulating and corrupting their cultural beliefs has thus paved the way for the colonizers' annexation of this world and perpetuation of the colonial dominance for many a century. As one of the resourceful and insightful Fremen avers, the colonizers can rule a nation for many centuries by the virtue of deceptive religious beliefs, manufactured and introduced into a community by the imperialist forces. While some of the natives are enlightened and thus do not repose their hope and trust in a so-called messiah, most of them are entrapped and enslaved by the ideological position hardwired into their minds by the oppressors. Therefore, they take Paul Atreides for the prophesized messianic figure that will liberate them, unaware of the fact that he will certainly be the next tyrannical figure, suppressing and exploiting them all. The indigenous population is thus lost in an endless colonial loop, out of which they fail to snap themselves, as the previous tyrant is merely replaced by the new one,

hence the continuation of colonization. In regard to the perpetuation of colonial rule and the failure of decolonial activities, Higgins has averred that "In *Dune*, Paul Atreides does not ultimately lead the Fremen to rebel against the Empire and decolonize Arrakis in the service of self-determination; instead, he leads a revolution that integrates Arrakis more efficiently into the imperial system".

4.2. Decolonization and Struggle for Emancipation

As expatiated so far, the indigenous people of Arrakis, the Fremen, have been exploited for generations by the Padishah Emperor through the House Harkonnen, whose members mine the valuable spice mélange. In addition to exploiting and destroying the environment of Arrakis, the colonizers have also abused and dehumanized the natives by reducing them to the status of subhuman beings and ruthlessly liquidating them in a gruesome way. In the cinematic adaptations of *Dune*, one can observe an emblematic depiction of the "Manichean" world, divided into the two realms of the so-called civilized colonizer and the depraved native, who is the source of all the "evil" deeds and savagery (Fanon 6). Such exploitation of their planet and systematic genocide perpetrated against them, not to mention the abominable degradation and dehumanization thereof, have triggered the Fremen's deep-seated resentment and fury, thus driving them to fight for their freedom as well as the emancipation of their land. The ensuing decolonization process is accompanied by violence, as Fanon has averred, for it involves not only taking the lives of the colonizers but also the annihilation of their oppressive devices and machines. Due to their aggressive attempts at destroying the colonial structure and liberating their lands from the shackles of an oppressive system, the colonial discourse considers the Fremen to be "dangerous" and "unreliable", disseminated by the propaganda system and the ideological state apparatus, in Althusserian terminology (75-76), of the regime. Their decolonial movement is thus deemed to be irrational and violent, despite the fact that it is the colonizers that have occupied the planet, abusing both the environment and the indigenous people living there in the first place. On the whole, the natives' violence is of a liberating nature and is employed as a means of resistance against the oppressors.

In order to disrupt the colonial economy and put an end to the ecological destruction, the Fremen embark on assaulting and destroying the spice harvesters, deployed to extract the rare substance existent merely on Arrakis, as mentioned earlier in the article. The concomitant result is that the spice production is impeded and the colonial economy gets severely disturbed and debilitated. These machines function as the very symbol of ruthless colonial oppression and dictatorship, hence the overarching significance of the colonized people's rebellious and defiant act of crushing them to pieces. As evident below, the Fremen determine to attack the armed forces and the spice production crew of the colonial regime in the northern parts of Arrakis with the intention of further sapping their power. As Paul puts it, even though it might end up taking their lives, the other Fremen will follow in their footsteps until the entire planet has been liberated. It represents the fact that they are willing to go to great lengths to drive the colonial forces out of their lands:

Stilgar: [deeply inhales] What would you have us do? Huh?

[Paul] What would you do, Stilgar?

[Stilgar] I? I would... [sighs] would strike even further north.

[Paul] Then I will go further north.

[Shishakli] And the further north you go, the more likely it is you die.

[Paul speaking Chakobsa] Then I'll die, maybe you will too. But the others will keep going. And they won't stop until the Fremen are free (admin, 2024).

The most extreme form of violence manifests itself at the end of *Dune 2*, in which the indigenous people brutally and violently attack Arrakeen, the Capital of Northern Arrakis, which functions as the command center of the imperial forces. Not only are the command center and defensive system, including the artillery and the protective shield, bombarded and thus blown to pieces with a great deal of violence and aggression, but also the colonial military forces are liquidated belligerently. It is quite evident that, in wreaking havoc on the command center and taking the lives of the colonizers, the natives give vent to their pent-up fury and hatred, accumulated over many centuries of oppression and exploitation at the hands of the colonizers. The battle ends with Baron Vladimir Harkonnen, the lord of House Harkonnen, getting slain in a gruesome manner, which puts an end to the tyranny and brutality of the Harkonnens. The indigenous people thus bring their take revenge on their oppressors, bringing them to their knees; however, despite the fact that they manage to achieve their objective, hence decimating the colonial forces as well as their longtime nemesis, that is the Harkonnens, their

decolonial movement does not succeed in bringing the colonial rule to an end, Paul Atreides, the so-called messiah and the leader of the resistance, turns out to be the new tyrant who exploits the natives in his personal power struggle. Colonialism is thus perpetuated on Arrakis in a new disguise, with Paul turning into the new oppressive emperor and colonizer.

As one construe from the arguments put forth above, violence is a double-edged sword in the colonial context. While it is used as a means of gaining liberty and freedom as well as breaking their land free of the shackles of the oppressive colonial system by the colonized, it is employed as a *modus operandi* for maintaining control and power as well as oppressing the natives by the colonizer. Therefore, it has both emancipatory and oppressive dimensions.

5. Conclusion

In this study, it was argued that both the society and environment have been subjugated and colonized by the colonizers in *Dune*; therefore, the natives or the colonized initiate a process of decolonization, striving to emancipate their homeland and regain their humanity, agency, and identity as well as liberating and facilitating the recuperation of the environment, exploited and destroyed severely for centuries by deleterious colonial activities, thus the ecological devastation that the natives are faced with. Employing Ferdinand Malcolm's theory of decolonial ecology, it was substantiated that colonial activities and environmental destruction are ineluctably intertwined in *Dune*, as not only do the colonialist and imperialist activities dehumanize the indigenous population, exterminate them, and distort their cultural beliefs by concocting and introducing apocryphal religious ideas and values, as Fanon has argued in *The Wretched of the Earth*, but they also wreak havoc on the environment of the colonized world through excessive exploitation for the sake of financial gain. In *Dune*, given that the colonized world is not the colonizers' native land, they tend to destroy it without even an ounce of remorse and conscience, as they are not concerned about the future and welfare of the subjugated world. They also do not feel responsible for the natives inhabiting that world, for by stripping them of their humanity and distorting their identity, beliefs, and history, the colonizers strive to subjugate and annihilate their past and impose a new identity onto them, not to mention the fact that they also attempt to decimate the natives by virtue of systematic ethnic cleansing with the intention of wiping out the entire race.

As mentioned in the article, despite the natives' attempts at driving the colonial forces out of their homeland, the decolonial movement fails to put an end to the colonization of the planet, as a new colonizer and tyrannical figure, that is to say, Paul Atreides, emerges in *Dune* colonizing and exploiting the natives in his own personal power struggle against the other Houses of the empire. Therefore, the colonization of the planet Arrakis and its inhabitants is perpetuated in the narrative.

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