



Orientalist Stereotypes Reflectd In “Dune” By Frank Herbert

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Abstract

This study examines Dune by Frank Herbert as a work of postcolonial criticism through Edward Said’s theory of Orientalism, focusing on how Western–Eastern power relations are constructed and justified within the narrative. Using a qualitative methodology based on close reading and textual analysis of the novel, the research identifies orientalist binary oppositions that position the East as inferior and the West as naturally authoritative. The findings reveal that the Fremen are consistently represented through four orientalist stereotypes which are barbaric, exotic, fanatic, and timeless, which frame them as physically powerful yet culturally and politically backward. In contrast, Paul Atreides embodies Western rationality and authority, enabling him to gain epistemic power by interpreting Fremen ideology, manipulating prophecy, and exploiting religious fervor to facilitate imperial domination; although Dune acknowledges Paul’s awareness of the devastation he causes, the novel ultimately reinforces orientalist structures by portraying colonial authority as necessary, inevitable, and civilizing.

Kata Kunci: orientalism, orientalist stereotypes, west, east, binary opposition.

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INTRODUCTION

Literature functions both as a mirror of society and a site of ideological struggle, particularly in its representations of colonial and postcolonial relationships, which are central concerns of postcolonial criticism. This critical approach challenges universalist claims that regard literature as timeless and culturally neutral, arguing instead that such claims often privilege Eurocentric norms while marginalizing non-Western experiences. Drawing on Edward Said’s (1979) theory of Orientalism, this study examines how Western discourse constructs the East as exotic, inferior, and in need of control, a pattern evident across popular culture and literature. Frank Herbert’s *Dune* exemplifies these dynamics through its portrayal of the Fremen, whose desert culture, religious practices, and resource-rich homeland echo stereotypical representations of Middle Eastern societies. While Houses Atreides and Harkonnen are depicted as technologically advanced and politically dominant, the Fremen are framed as mystical, tribal others whose land and resources are repeatedly exploited, reflecting colonial power imbalances. Previous scholarship, such as Jacob’s (2022) analysis, further highlights parallel between *Dune* and historical orientalist narratives like T. E. Lawrence and the Arab Revolt. Although fictional, *Dune*’s representations can shape readers’ perceptions of Eastern cultures, prompting this study to investigate whether the novel ultimately reinforces orientalist ideologies of Western dominance or offers a critique of colonialism and its cultural assumptions.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research methodology to examine Orientalism in *Dune* by Frank Herbert, drawing on Creswell (2014)’s approach to understanding complex social

meanings and supported by cross-case analysis to highlight recurring West–East power dynamics. The primary data source is the novel *Dune* (ACE Books), chosen for its rich depiction of interstellar politics, imperialism, religious fanaticism, and orientalist representations, particularly through the binary opposition between the Fremen and the protagonist, Paul Atreides, in line with Said's (1979) theory of Orientalism. Data were collected through documentation and repeated close readings, involving the identification, highlighting, classification, and reduction of relevant sentences, dialogues, narrations, and symbols. The analysis applies descriptive qualitative and comparative methods to categorize orientalist stereotypes which are barbarism, fanaticism, exoticism, and timelessness and to examine how these stereotypes are constructed and subsequently exploited by the main character as a means of colonial domination. Findings are presented informally through detailed textual explanations supported by direct quotations, contextual interpretation, and theoretical integration, demonstrating both the stereotyping of the East and the narrative mechanisms through which colonial authority is legitimized

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Findings and Discussion

This part contains the analysis to the answer of the first problem of the study. After reading the novel, analyzing and identifying the Fremen, this study finds that there are four types of orientalism stereotypes experienced by East (people who are considered inferior by the west), those are: Barbaric, Exotic, Fanatic, and Timeless. These classifications do not act alone, rather they collaborate to form an explicit picture of the Fremen as a people who are characterized by violence, exotification, false beliefs, and stagnation in history. Through the application of environmental description, body imagery, religion, and imperial forms of knowledge, the narrative represents the Fremen as the Eastern other, both admired and feared, powerful but requiring Western interpretation and domination. The following subsections cover each of these stereotypes individually and reveal how these stereotypes reinforce a larger ideological system that legitimizes the Western authority, particularly via the character of Paul Atreides.

Barbaric

Said (1979) argues that Western depiction of the East often depends on a contrast between the civilized and the savage. He stated that, "the Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, different thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, normal" (Said, 1979, p.40). This contrast allows the West to define itself as the enforcer of reason and order. In *Dune*, the binary is replicated via its depiction of the Fremen, whose desert planet and the tribal civilization provokes admiration and fear. Their strength is celebrated, but it is represented as an instinctive and primitive, a quality that requires control by the reasonable outsider, Paul Atreides. This notion is described early in the beginning of the novels when Yueh discusses the Fremen with Paul, who read them prior to their arrival on Arrakis.

[1] "By all accounts," Yueh said. "They compose poems to their knives. Their *women are as fierce as the men*. Even Fremen *children are violent and dangerous*. You'll not be permitted to mingle with them, I daresay.", Yueh, finding in these few glimpses of the Fremen a power of words that caught his entire attention. *What a people to win as allies!* (Herbert, 1965, p54).

This scene where Yueh describe the Fremen emphasises on the cultural difference and also places the Fremen within a hierarchy in which their violence is treated as natural and uncontrolled, implying the need of control by a more civilized, external authority which are the Atreides. This commentary carries both respect and unease. Said explains that the nineteenth-century Europeans often used similar language to describe the East as "civilized man fallen

again into a savage state” (Said, 1979, p172). This statement implies that such people could be valued only once their violence was disciplined by Western guidance. In *Dune*, the Fremen follow this pattern as the Atrides need the Fremen strength, but distrust their unrestrained obsessions.

This barbaric image is also reinforced by the Desert which the Fremen lives in. Said writes that “the desert and the oasis were their typical symbols of an alien and dangerous world” (Said, 1979, p190). In *Dune*, Arrakis is described in those same terms, a vast and hostile environments filled with mysterious wonders. *Dune* describes the Arrakis as a dry, windswept place where a man could walk until the skin cracked on his body. It was described in *Dune* during the conversation of Jessica and Yueh upon their early arrival in Arrakis.

[2] “The sky’s so dark,” she said. “That’s partly the lack of moisture,” he said. “Water!” she snapped. “Everywhere you turn here, you’re involved with the lack of water!” “It’s the precious mystery of Arrakis,” he said. “Why is there so little of it? There’s volcanic rock here. There’re a dozen power sources I could name. There’s polar ice. They say you can’t drill in the desert—storms and sandtides destroy equipment faster than it can be installed, if the worms don’t get you first. They’ve never found water traces there, anyway. *But the mystery, Wellington, the real mystery is the wells that’ve been drilled up here in the sinks and basins. Have you read about those?*” (Herbert, 1965, p77)

This conversation between Jessica and Yueh brings out even more the orientalist construction of Arrakis as a barbaric and unfriendly place where people cannot exert their dominance. The focus on the water shortage and the recurrent mentions of the environmental threat place the desert in the role of the enemy, instead of the indifferent terrain. This hostile environment influenced the Fremen in such a way that they become a part of their nature. The description of the landscape removes softness and culture, while the hard, violent remains. This fact was described by Liet-Kynes (the planetologist of planet Arrakis) during his conversation with the Atrides.

[3] “Are there any plants down there?” Paul asked. “Some,” Kynes said. “This latitude’s life-zone has mostly what we call minor water stealers—adapted to raiding each other for moisture, gobbling up the trace-dew. Some parts of the desert teem with life. But all of it has learned how to survive under these rigors. If you get caught down there, *you imitate that life or you die.*” “You mean steal water from each other?” Paul asked. *The idea outraged him, and his voice betrayed his emotion.* (Herbert, 1965, p136).

This observation constructs Fremen’s brutality and naturalize it by presenting it as a biological and geographical necessity. While Paul expresses the opposite morality by condemning their brutality. In this regard, the desert and Fremen’s brutality contrast to the home place of the Atrides, planet Caladan, that is remembered with longing and nostalgic wonders by the Atrides. This instance of longing is represented in this example below.

[4] They heightened her feelings of confusion. She shuddered, glanced at the slit windows high overhead. It was still early afternoon here, and in these latitudes the sky looked black and cold—*so much darker than the warm blue of Caladan. A pang of homesickness throbbed through her.* (Herbert, 1965, p65)

The contrasting nature of the two, a fertile and sustaining environment, the one that is dry and barren, is reinforced by the longing of Jessica toward Caladan, thus establishing an implicit correlation between the environment and the character development. The gloomy, chilly sky of Arrakis as seen in the passage above reminds us of the feelings of homesickness and dislocation experienced by Lady Jessica, and therefore as a way of reminding us that the alien environment creates mental unease in the outsiders and at the same time validates the

hardened attitude of the Fremen as a survival strategy in their environment. Upon the time of his death, Duke Leto also recalls the joy moment he had in Caladan. As shown below.

[5] Leto stared across the table, wondering why he waited. The tooth would end it all quickly. Still—it had been good, much of this life. He found himself remembering *an antenna kite up dangling in the shell-blue sky of Caladan, and Paul laughing with joy at the sight of it. And he remembered sunrise here on Arrakis colored strata of the Shield Wall mellowed by dust haze.* (Herbert, 1965, p212)

This scene explains how the memories of Caladan for Duke Leto are used as an emotional refuge at the threshold of death, which further highlights the symbolic opposition between Caladan and Arrakis. Faced with the inevitable truth of his death, the recollection by Leto of a pleasant, intimate scene, Paul laughing under the shell-blue Caladan sky typifies the previous planet as the seat of family warmth, naivete and emotional bounty. This memory is a sharp contrast of the political violence and betrayal in progress on Arrakis, thus hinting that Caladan represents an abandoned notion of harmony that is impregnable to the imperial and colonial struggle in spice. At the same time, the fact that Leto remembers the sunrise over Arrakis at the same time represents the unwilling acceptance of his fate and the truths of his chosen path, thus portraying Arrakis as an environment of stark beauty and sacrifice. This contrast allows a construction that the environment does not only form cultural identity but it molds the emotional and moral landscape of his characters, particularly when they face moments of profound vulnerability.

Caladan functions as the ideological opposite to the harsh and savage landscape of the Arrakis. Caladan represents the space in which the people are more civilized, soft and stable. These descriptions align with what Said (1979) explains about Orientalist thought that often associates the East with landscapes of extremity and endurance. Arrakis functions exactly this way, the desert has become both the cause and the symbol of the Fremen's savagery. The violence of the desert is also a form of shaping the Fremen worldview. Instead of treating the desert as a purely environmental condition, the Fremen personified its violence through the sandworm who they called Shai-Hulud, who they speak with reverence and fear. The reverence of Shai-Hulud is later used by Paul as an assurance that the Fremen will accept them in their tribe as shown during his conversation with Jessica.

[7] She sought to divert him, lowered her hands and said: "We'll find a place among the Fremen?" "The Fremen have a saying they credit to Shai-hulud, Old Father Eternity," he said. "They say: *'Be prepared to appreciate what you meet.'*" (Herbert, 1965, p229)

This paradox of the admiration of the power created through the struggle and the fear of its cruelty resembles what Said (1979) refers to as the noble barbarian motif, he explains that western thought often idealizes primitive people as morally pure because they are distant from civilization. The unity of the Fremen seems to be virtuous, but the virtues are founded on the primitive struggle, not on the moral philosophy. Their society in Dune is depicted as ancient and harsh, perfected through pain but not enlightened by it.

This binary opposition serves not only to distinguish the Fremen from the Atreides, but it also functions ideologically to be used as legitimization of Paul's control and authority toward the Fremen by framing them as a raw potential that requires the West's reasoning to become meaningful action.

Fremen presumed barbarism validate Paul as the civilized figure. In Orientalism, Said explained that "European discourse put the Westerner as the one who knows the Oriental's world as it truly is and therefore can bring order where there is chaos." (Said, 1979, p201). Fremen's instinctive violence is turned by Paul leaderships into organized revolutions,

reflecting how Paul with his intellect are far better than the Fremen's instinct. Paul becomes the intellectual leader who utilize Fremen's primitive force to reach his goal, this also reflects how the Paul seem to master the barbaric Fremen.

Fremen in *Dune* reinforces orientalist stereotypes of the Barbaric other. This can be observed from the planet where they reside, a barren and punishing land that shapes its people into symbols of endurance and savagery. *Dune* reproduces the orientalist obsession with noble barbarism, an idea that purity and strength arise from primitive struggle and it awaits Western guidance to finally become a civilization

Exotic

Exoticism is also identified as a tool for western Orientalism. According to Said, the East was historically imagined by the West "as a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories, and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (Said, 1979, p1). Exoticism subject the East into alluring spectacle to be admired and observed, which is shaped by the Fremen as mysterious desert dweller whose culture, bodies, and environment evokes fascinations through their difference to the other member of *Dune* society. The Fremen are introduced not through personal presence but through description from another character in the story. One such instance occurs early in the novels when the Fremen were mentioned during Paul's conversation with Hawat (Atreides's strategist, called a mentat in *Dune*).

[8] "Like as not I have seen them," he said. "There's little to tell them from the folk of the graben and sink. They all wear those *great flowing robes*. And they *stink to heaven in any closed space*. It's from those suits they wear—call them 'stillsuits'—that reclaim the body's own water." (Herbert, 1965, p44)

This section illustrates how the Fremen are exoticized by a foreigner, and turned into a set of sensations, a collection of cultural peculiarities. The Fremen are described more by the way they dress and smell, or the type of strange technology they use, like the great flowing robes and stillsuits that reclaim the water that belongs to the body. The reinforcement of physical presence and body difference hence, makes the Fremen an object of curiosity and not understanding. According to Said (1979), the East has been a typical construct of the Orientalist discourse, the shallow lines of the East are built in such a way that they anticipate strangeness and spectacle, but has been constructed to avoid taking time to understand the underlying cultural aspects of the East. Therefore, the survival techniques of the Fremen are not portrayed as being sensible responses to an unfriendly world but as being exotic features that distinguish them in the putatively normal, civilized world of the Imperium. In such a way, the Fremen are only shown as a cultural spectacle, which supports their status as the oriental other in the universe of *Dune*.

In addition to variations in sensory perception and bodily shape, the exoticization of the Fremen is also confounded by the fact that they were excluded in imperial epistemic structures and systems of classification. As Said (1979) shows, the orientalist discourse not only depicts the East as aesthetically exotic, but also makes it epistemologically opaque, it creates a space, which cannot easily be examined cartographically, demographically and holistically. In *Dune*, the logic of the modernity of being developed by the Fremen, which is confined to the phenotypic traits of the creature, is carried into its political and demographic invisibility that they are not only phenotypically unusual in their looks and survival techniques but also beyond the institutional processes by which the Imperium delineates and regulates its subjects. As a result, their exclusion out of the official bodies of knowledge turns the Fremen into something mystical but strengthens them as an exotic people as a secret community based in the desert instead of a completely decipherable polity. As shown below.

[9] Dr. Yueh, his teacher, had hinted that the faufreluches class system was not rigidly guarded on Arrakis. The planet sheltered people who lived at the desert edge without caid or bashar to command them: will-o'-the-sand people called Fremen, marked down on no census of the Imperial Regate. (Herbert, 1965, p16)

The Atreides' description of the Fremen as people that was not recorded by the Imperial Regate reinforces their construction as an exotic people existing outside imperial knowledge and administrative control. As Dr. Yueh explains, Arrakis shelters will-o'-the-sand people called Fremen who live beyond the reach of formal authority, emphasizing their perceived invisibility and distance from structured civilization. This absence from census records does not merely indicate political marginalization but transforms the Fremen into a mysterious population that resists categorization, thereby intensifying their exotic appeal.

[10] "I gave you Duncan Idaho's head count on the sietch he visited," Hawat said. "It all fits. If they had just two hundred and fifty such sietch communities, *their population would be about five million*. My best estimate is that they had at least twice that many communities. You scatter your population on such a planet. (Herbert, 1965, p418)

Hawat's later calculation, which estimates the Fremen population at five million or more based on scattered sietch communities, further highlights the gap between imperial perception and reality. Said argues that the West often imagines the East "as a place of not only distance but difference" (Said, 1979, p121), and this logic operates clearly in Dune, where the Fremen are exoticized precisely because they remain unseen, uncouned, and unknown. Their existence beyond official records turns them into a secret embedded within Arrakis' sands, reinforcing Orientalism's tendency to frame the East as a hidden and enigmatic world awaiting Western discovery and interpretation.

Further, this exoticism extends to their physical appearance. When Paul first confronted a Fremen, the text that describes the Fremen put emphasis on the blue within blue eyes which appeared to him as an almost unnatural trait of their spice, deprived lives. These eyes are repeatedly mentioned as one striking part of the Fremen that pulls them apart from the other society in Dune, described repeatedly as glowing, shining, making them impossible to ignore. With the example below.

[11] Jessica whirled, stared down at a knobby, gray-haired woman in a shapeless sack dress of bondsman brown. The woman looked as wrinkled and desiccated as any member of the mob that had greeted them along the way from the landing field that morning. Every native she had seen on this planet, Jessica thought, looked prune dry and undernourished. Yet, Leto had said they were strong and vital. And there *were the eyes, of course—that wash of deepest, darkest blue without any white—secretive, mysterious*. Jessica forced herself not to stare. (Herbert, 1965, p68)

The text shows the exoticisation of the Fremen, which is mostly devoted to their physical appearance, particularly the repetitive focus on their ocular features. The description of the character Jessica focuses on the blue that is the deepest and the darkest blue with no white, which makes the irises of the Fremen seem visually shocking and something unusual as compared to other people living in the imperium. According to Said (1979), the Eastern body has been a predetermined object of fascination in orientalist discourse, where physical characteristics are transformed into a marker, and not a part of lived experience. This literary device is further supported through the correlation of the unique eyes with the surrounding visuals of aridness, old age and secrecy, later in making the Fremen look both weak and mysteriously powerful. As a result, the Fremen corporeality becomes a place of exotic spectacle, which creates curiosity and interest and, at the same time, does discourage any actual knowledge or empathy.

Said argues that Orientalism has fascination with transforming the East as an object of spectacle, they are to be seen and not to be understood. The Fremen thus become exoticized from the shock of others from their appearances. Herbert also exoticize the Fremen through the manner of their movements and survival practices. When Stilgar's troops first arrived and met the Atrides, their stealth is described as uncanny and supernatural. As shown below.

[12] In the sudden silence that followed the calling voice, the hoopwheel face of the second moon—faintly ivory blue—rolled over the rocks across the basin, bright and peering. Scrambling sounds came from the rocks—above and to both sides...*dark motions in the moonlight. Many figures flowed through the shadows.* (Herbert, 1965, p313)

The Fremen are also exoticized by Herbert based on their movement and survival customs making them seem to be inseparable with the desert itself. At the very first time when Stilgar appears, people that surrounded him are not called speaking people but dark movements in the moon and figures that moved in the shadows. The story focuses on silence, multiplicity, and motion instead of identity or intent instead of making the Fremen a social actor, the story makes them a visual phenomenon. Based on the representations of the oriental, the Eastern cultures have been portrayed as aesthetic objects of viewing where visual perception is more important than historical or cultural interpretation (Said, 1979). Here the disciplined stealth of the Fremen is presented as something uncanny and there is no distinction between the presence of the human and the landscape. Their survival acuity is therefore enacted as an outlandish desert ballet as opposed to expounded as rational tactics, which supports their creation as a mysterious and unknown folks in the imperial gaze.

The Fremen's religious rituals compound this exoticism, The Water Life Ceremony, the reverence of the sandworms, and their invocation of prophecy all refers to paint a picture of a people living in mystical symbolism. When Paul witnessed a Fremen burial, the narrative dwells on a solemn strangeness.

[13] *They gathered every drop of his water... chanting low under the desert stars.* (Herbert, 1965, p254).

The scene put emphasis more on the atmosphere, chants, the stars and the silence more than the meaning of the burial. As Said notes, the west often reduces eastern religious practices into "an aesthetic performance, mysterious, and sensual" (Said, 1979, p188). Exoticism of the Fremen is not merely a matter of portraying them as a culturally different people or physiologically different, but it also involves the description of the most valuable commodity in Arrakis, spice. Spice or also called *melange* is an object that generates fascination, desire, and apprehension and, therefore, turns the desert into a place of economic exploitation and a place of metaphysical allure. In the orientalist discourse, the East has been repeatedly presented as a treasure trove of rare materials and veiled riches and its primary purpose is what can be mined and not the people (Said, 1979). Arrakis and the Fremen repeats this paradigm and appoints spice as the point of imperial power, thus making Arrakis exotic with its abundant spices.

[13] "Few products escape the CHOAM touch," the Duke said. "Logs, donkeys, horses, cows, lumber, dung, sharks, whale fur—the most prosaic and the most exotic...even our poor pundi rice from Caladan. Anything the Guild will transport, the art forms of Ecaz, the machines of Richesse and Ix. But all fades before *melange*. A handful of spice will buy a home on Tupile. It cannot be manufactured, it must be mined on Arrakis. It is unique and it has true geriatric properties." (Herbert, 1965, p58)

The exposition by Duke Leto outlines spice as the foremost commodity in the Imperium, as of more worth and necessity than all other items. Comparing the most down-to-earth items to the most exotic, Duke Leto softens the boundary separating the ordinary and the

extraordinary, and later re-establishes spice as a unique and unparalleled item. This form of rhetoric makes Arrakis a place of invaluable riches and this is relatable to orientalist discourses that diminish the Eastern places to the source of rare resources. In this construct, the importance of the planet will not be explained by its residents but rather by the preferential dependence of the imperial resources which can be extracted only on the territory of the planet.

Nevertheless, spice is not only a symbol of economic need, but it is also theorized as a substance that runs through the human body and redefines human life. In contrast to other products of imperialism, spice cannot be taken without some resultant impacts. It is so widespread on Arrakis that it creates an irreversible connection between the land and its people. This relationship is reminiscent of orientalist figures of speech that depict the East as both alluring and corrupted in that it holds the potential to change yet it can, at the same time, lead to loss of autonomy.

[14] “The spice,” he said. “It’s in everything here—the air, the soil, the food, the geriatric spice. It’s like the Truthsayer drug. *It’s a poison!*” ... “*A poison—so subtle, so insidious...so irreversible. It won’t even kill you unless you stop taking it.* We can’t leave Arrakis unless we take part of Arrakis with us.” (Herbert, 1965, p226)

When Paul describes spice as a poison, the exotic nature of this substance is made complicated by the revealing of its malicious power. The drug proposes its user a power of heightened awareness and the ability to live longer at the same time the drug entraps the organism in a state of dependence. It is this duality that reinforces the exotic narrative through putting Arrakis in a place where danger and desire cannot be separated. With reference to the orientalism of the East, as Said puts it, the East is often perceived as a source of knowledge that comes at a cost of self-control (Said, 1979). Similarly, spice stimulates consciousness but at the same time makes no withdrawal possible. The Fremmen, who are born in spice, are therefore shown to be biologically altered by their surrounding.

The effects of these biological changes go beyond personal experience to enter into the domain of politics and military issues. The spice enhanced bodies of the Arrakis dwellers weaken the traditional approaches to imperial rule. The control mechanisms which have been proven effective on other planets of the Imperium do not work well on the planet where the poison itself demonstrates the deviating physicochemical behavior. Therefore, Arrakis is a space in which there is internal logic that does not systematically obey the external authorities. [15] “Arrakis has another advantage I almost forgot to mention. Spice is in everything here. You breathe it and eat it in almost everything. And I find that this imparts a certain natural immunity to some of the most common poisons of the Assassins’ Handbook.... We cannot kill off large segments of our population with poison—and we cannot be attacked this way, either.” (Herbert, 1965, p.126)

The observation provided by Duke Leto helps to understand that the pervasive nature of melange brings about more visible biological effects than symbolic or mystical transformation. Since spice is consumed and breathed in on a daily basis, resistance to some poisons commonly used in political assassination is gained and so high levels of mass poisoning become useless on Arrakis. This observation does not mean that the planet is morally superior but simply points to the strategic and biological uniqueness of the planet as compared to other imperial localities. Traditional leaders of the empire which rely on covert violence are not dependable in such a situation, which further solidifies Arrakis as a space with unusual rules to be followed. An orientalist perspective on this image is that it constitutes the ideation of the East as a place where Western domination processes are either ineffective or require amendment. As a result, the spice still remains as a dangerous and a transformative power, but

at the same time, it is the cause of the destabilization of the imperial hegemony as it reforms the frames of controlling.

Overall, the exoticization of the Fremen in Dune is a comprehensive and massive exercise of Orientalism that reduces a complex and multifaceted society into a spectacle characterized by difference, mystery and danger. Through its use of suggestive images of physical bodies, gesture, rites, and landscape the story again and again represents the Fremen as objects to be seen, but not as an object to be understood. The fact that they were consciously excluded in imperial knowledge systems, such as census data and governmental classifications, only adds to portraying them as an unknowable and inscrutable group and thus contributes to the epistemic obscurity according to Said (1979) that characterizes Eastern representation. This foreign outlook is also projected onto the planet Arrakis itself, most prominently in the description of spice as a valuable commodity and a corrupting influence, which replicates the world as a place of imperial desire as opposed to it being a reality lived in. As a result, the elements of the cultural, religious, and biological features of the Fremen are transformed into aesthetic objects and tools of action, as opposed to being addressed on their own terms. Finally, the West in Dune continues an orientalist paradigm by repositioning the Fremen and their landscape into a space of fascination and exploitation whereby the difference is used to justify an act of imperial intervention and domination.

Fanatic

Said observed that one of the most persistent and enduring orientalist constructions is the imagination of the East as irrationally religious and fanatically devoted, a community whose will is governed not by rational mind but by prophecy, ritual, and mystical will. Said (1979) describes that the East is often imagined as a land of prophetic vision and intense religiosity, where faith overwhelms the individual and becomes collective destiny. This construction allows the West to define itself as the one in charge of rationality and restraint, to contrast the Eastern community, which is portrayed as dominated by emotion and belief. In Dune, these stereotypes are reflected by the portrayal of the Fremen whose lives are deeply rooted in prophecy, ritual and messianic expectation. Their faith is shown not as a matter of personal faith, but as an essential and communal force that governs their worldview, behaviour and aspirations.

First instance of fanaticism in the Dune was shown early in the novel during the Atreides arrival on planet Arrakis. Their arrival is marked with the sudden burst out of the Fremen, shouting the name of Mahdi that was directed at Paul. Later, Hawat inquired to Duke Leto about a legend that persists among the Fremen religion.

[16] “Of course, my Lord. You asked what they were shouting, though. It was ‘Mahdi!’ They directed the term at the young master. When they—” “At Paul?” “Yes, my Lord. They’ve a legend here, a prophecy, that a leader will come to them, child of a Bene Gesserit, to lead them to true freedom. It follows the familiar messiah pattern.” (Herbert, 1965, p121)

This scene serves as an example of what Said (1979) describes as the ontological stability of the East. It is Western belief that Eastern cultures remain stagnant and are ruled by an ancient, predictable patterns rather than evolving political thought. Hawat assumes the role of a western expert (person who speaks about the East and for the East) when he dismisses the Fremen spiritual outburst as a familiar messiah pattern. In this regard he possessed the authority to categorize and become the interpreter of the Eastern experience. Said (1979) also commented about the stereotypes of the Eastern mind to prepared to accept what is presented by them as holy without questioning the reason. With the elimination of any element of individual doubt or critical thought, the story makes the Fremen look like a fanatical mob, a people who cannot conceive of themselves without religious anticipation. To this end, they are represented as

inactive players of liberation rather than as a dormant force awaiting the arrival of a Western-born savior who will set their historical course.

The religious depth of the Fremen is further revealed by their obedience to the sayings and rituals in their desert culture. Early chapter of *Dune* contain sayings of Mua'dib as the head of the page, which references to future Paul Atreides recorded by Princess Irulia. One of the sayings was described when Paul discusses the Fremen with Yueh.

[17] "There are two general separations of the people—Fremen, they are one group, and the others are the people of the graben, the sink, and the pan. There's some intermarriage, I'm told. The women of pan and sink villages prefer Fremen husbands; their men prefer Fremen wives. They have a saying: 'Polish comes from the cities; wisdom from the desert.'" (Herbert, 1965, p54)

This opposition between polish and wisdom echoes the Orientalist propensity identified by Said, defining the East as a "holy desert, namely, a place where climatic extremity gives rise to spiritual extremity (Said, 1979, p188). By identifying the desert as a natural, archaic source of wisdom, the story fits the tropes of Orientalism of exotic and timeless. The city is said to have polish, or technically, rational and superficial sophistication, whilst the Fremen are said to have a wisdom, which is primitive and instinctive. This romanticizing of the desert, Said (1979) argues, helps to isolate its people to the modern world, representing them as a people who just have a worship on primitive zeal and not as a people with a modern political identity. Yueh's statement serves to establish a duality where the Fremen are a people of ritual and spiritual essences, which are necessarily different than the rational and structured organization of the polished world. As the Atreides family learns more about the desert, they discover that the Fremen do not view the planet's apex predator as a biological threat, but as a divine entity. It was shown multiple times in *Dune* as follow:

[18] "The Fremen have a saying they credit to Shai-hulud, Old Father Eternity," he said. "They say: 'Be prepared to appreciate what you meet.'" (Herbert, 1965, p229)

This worship on primitive zeal is also further amplified with the Fremen reverences to the sandworm. In the orientalist framework, the Eastern is described as a community that was dominated by their environment that they fail to harness it objectively, and instead turn to worship it. Fremen resilience as a symbol of spiritual submission to a fatalistic worldview is a blend of theological determinism with a fatalistic worldview, as it is not a product of human engineering or evolutionary adaptation but rather a symbol of spiritual submission. Said points out that the holy desert narrative, is used to justify the idea that the East is a place of spiritual extremity, in which its residents are literally possessed by the land (Said, 1979). This rhetorical creation allows Western actors to maintain their role as rational spectators and see the worm as merely a material resource, a biological impediment, but the Fremen are locked in a vicious cycle of primitive adoration, which prevents their achievement of scientific control of their own world and not reliant on the Western intervention. The Fremen's fanatic devotion is primarily shown through Paul's prescient visions of the "jihad" that will be waged in his name. [19] The thought was both reassuring and frustrating. Somewhere ahead of him on this path, the fanatic hordes cut their gory path across the universe in his name. The green and black Atreides banner would become a symbol of terror. Wild legions would charge into battle screaming their war cry: "Muad'Dib!" (Herbert, 1965, p357)

This narrative engages this fanatic devotee trope, Paul's vision presents the Fremen as a secular force whose religious fury is capable of transforming into violent political force, instead of a collection of individuals with minds and goals of their own. Their fanaticism is described not simply as a belief, but as a destructive cultural power ready to be employed by the West. The Fremen construct a generic identity shaped by their shared faith. They commit

to myths outside their history and devote themselves to a faith driven tradition, believing it will allow them to survive. The Fremen's identity as people who are inseparable from spiritual myths is ratified in the narratives of their religious practices, such as rituals, water preservation, burial procession, reverence for the forces of nature, and the projection of their messianic prophecy onto Paul as the saviour.

Said notes that for the West, the East often becomes “a holy desert, a place where climatic extremity produces spiritual extremity” (Said, 1979, p188). Arrakis and the Fremen portray this stereotype. The desert plays a part in building the culture in which faith is seen as primal, instinctual, overwhelming and collective.

Paul's character in the Fremen society amplifies this binary opposition. As the western outsider within the logic of western superiority, he becomes what in Said terms of Orientalism, is “the interpreter of the Oriental's dream” (Said, 1979, p67). Paul knows that the Fremen's belief system is not as pure as spiritual devotion, but also can be used as a powerful instrument that can be used for his political ends. His ascend to Fremen's leadership depends on understanding and mastering, not abolishing, their fanaticism and myths. The Fremen's fanaticism thus functions as the narrative point that Paul used to elevate his position as noble exile to prophetic Atreides Emperor. The way Paul utilises the Fremen's blind faith for his military and political power aligns with the orientalist viewpoint that Eastern spirituality can be violent and dangerous, which requires understanding and control of the Western.

In Conclusion, the Fremen's portrayal as fanatical people fit within the framework of Orientalism. Dune depicts their religious identity as ancient, passionate, absolute and potent. It is an emotional force that shapes their collective destiny that awaits a rational saviour to channel it. Their Fanaticism enhances the binary between the spiritual, emotional East and the rational and commanding West. Dune constructs the Fremen as desert people driven by prophecy, devotion to ritual, and messianic expectation, as criticised by Said.

Timeless

One of the most occurring stereotypes of Orientalism established by Said is the image of the East, a domain stuck in timelessness, a community that has not moved on a historical scale of development. Said explains that Western frequently present the East as a “kind of theatrical stage where the living present is made to conform to a mythical, unchanging past” (Said, 1979, p57). Regarding this view, Eastern culture paused to develop, they merely persist to exist. Their traditions appear adamant, ancient, and static in order to present the East as in essence, unable to be historically transformed. This creates a contrast through which the West can present itself as the progressive, modern, and dynamic community. In Dune, this orientalist stereotype appears most clearly in how the Fremen are described as the inheritors of an unbend desert tradition, people whose customs, identities, and belief appears to be unchanged by time and untouched by the imperial modernity. This construction of timelessness can be seen in how the Fremen reverence for Shai-Hulud. Fremen refers to Shai-Hulud during their daily activity. They pray to it for safe passage, they chant its name during burial ceremony, they include its name in their promises. Fremen invoked its name in everything they do as if it is a natural thing to do and it has always been natural to refer to it.

[20] The voice was Stilgar's ringing in the cavern. “Jamis' weapon has been killed. Jamis has been called by Him, by Shai-hulud, Old Father of Eternity who has ordained the phases for the moons that daily wane and—in the end—appear as bent and withered twigs.” Stilgar's voice lowered. “Thus it is with Jamis.” (Herbert, 1965, p350)

Dune frames their religion as mythical lore passed down across generations while remain unchanged. The reverence of “Old Father Eternity” itself reinforces the idea of a god beyond time, and by extension people who saw themselves as part of a spiritual cycle without

end or beginning. Said notes how the East is often described through symbol of perpetuity, ancient gods, ancient custom, ancient desert, which collapse the distinction between past and present (Said, 1979). The Fremen's relationship to Shai-Hulud then positions them inside a mythic sequence that resist historical change.

In addition, the Fremen culture is timeless, because it is described as being closely related to activities that appear to be eternal as opposed to historical. For instance, the Fremen's ritual that revolves around water contain no sense of innovation or adaptation. The community performs a traditional rite whose origins are unnamed and unquestioned.

[21] They're recovering Jamis' water," Chani said, and her thin voice came out nasal past the nose plugs. "It's the rule. The flesh belongs to the person, but his water belongs to the tribe...except in the combat." (Herbert, 1965, p349)

In the water ceremony and Fremen burial practices, Paul asked what the Fremen were doing to in the aftermath of his deadly combat against Jamis. Chani simply explained what they do, without telling why they do it and dismisses Paul's further question by saying "it's the rule", this behavior is treated as sacred and absolute. The ritual is performed because it has always been done and not because it was invented through intellectual discovery. Said mention this orientalist construction as describing the East as a place where traditions are "revered because they are old, not because they are chosen" (Said, 1979, p121). The story of Dune modernises this description by stressing the mystical antiqueness of the Fremen, instead of looking at the origins or evolutionary history of their ways.

This stereotype also shapes how the desert environment is built. Arrakis is relentlessly shown as a topography of permanence, a place which seems everlasting despite the ecological change. The desert is harsh and unforgiving, static, and seemingly outside of history. As reflected by Kynes' explanation to Paul during their meeting.

[22] "Some," Kynes said. "This latitude's life-zone has mostly what we call minor water stealers—adapted to raiding each other for moisture, gobbling up the trace-dew. Some parts of the desert teem with life. But all of it has learned how to survive under these rigors. If you get caught down there, you imitate that life or you die." "You mean steal water from each other?" Paul asked. The idea outraged him, and his voice betrayed his emotion. "It's done," Kynes said, "but that wasn't precisely my meaning. You see, my climate demands a special attitude toward water. You are aware of water at all times. You waste nothing that contains moisture. (Herbert, 1965, p.136)

Liet-Kynes' reflections emphasize that the harshness of this land makes the Fremen strong. This suggest that the Fremen are shaped by the desert that has always been this way, harsh, ancient, and static. Said argues that Eastern landscapes in Western writing often function as "an emblem of antiquity, a reminder that the East is the world of the earliest beginnings but not of progress" (Said, 1979, p91). Through the description of the desert being everlasting and undynamic, the narrative settles the Fremen identity as unchangeable, which is comparable to the permanence of their native land, and hence, suggesting that their culture is simply a direct creation of the eternal nature of the surrounding.

The Fremen's political and social community also reinforces the stereotype. Their sietches (hidden underground settlement), structure of leadership, laws of water and combat traditions are framed as ancient codes passed down without transformation. Even the Fremen prophecy which declares the coming of a messiah is portrayed as an ancient myth existing outside of the imperial history, waiting only to be fulfilled. Hawat explains their legends "to follow the familiar messiah pattern and predate Imperial rule" (Herbert, 1965, p121). This suggests a undeveloped belief system but a narrative implanted so deeply in Fremen society that it appears eternal. Said observes that orientalist texts often reduce Eastern belief systems

into “a timeless cycles of myth and destiny” (Said, 1979, p205) in order to deny their capacity for reinterpretation or evolution. The Fremen prophecy functions this way, it serves as an unchanging truth awaiting activation from West and not as a dynamic tradition.

The sense of timelessness is undermined with Paul’s arrival, depicting him as the figure who enters a world that has remained unchanged for centuries. The Fremen did not react to him with a historical explanation but rather provided a mythic acknowledgement which placed him in a messianic story which predominates their collective recollection. Paul sees himself as a seed falling into the fertile ground of Fremen culture.

[23] “If you’re not the Kwisatz Haderach,” Jessica said, “what—” “You couldn’t possibly know,” he said. “You won’t believe it until you see it.” And he thought: I’m a seed. He suddenly saw how fertile was the ground into which he had fallen, and with this realization, the terrible purpose filled him, creeping through the empty place within, threatening to choke him with grief. (Herbert, 1965, p229)

This metaphor implies that the Fremen exist as a timeless soil, eternal and awaits destiny. In this regard Paul becomes the agent of history in people imagined as an outsider. Said explains that orientalist text frequently stage’s this dynamic, the Westerner represents transformation and modernity, while Easterner represents continuity and stasis (Said, 1979). Paul’s ascend among the Fremen then enhances orientalist temporal hierarchy in which the West brings historical movement to an opposite, unchanging East.

In conclusion, the construction of the Fremen as timeless people reflects one of the essential stereotypes of Orientalism. Dune represents the Fremen as people who live in a desert of antique origin, who follow rituals without any flexibility, and who worship a being who is above time and existence itself, and whose prophecy has already been predicted before the history of its people. Their culture seems to be suspended between their myth and environment, untouched by progress or change. Not only does this romanticize the Fremen, but it also dehumanizes them, turning them into icons of the past, which is the affirmation of the Western dichotomy with the East as a resolute stagnation of the Western action and evolution. In this respect, Dune replicates the orientalist correlation of the East with the timelessness and introduces the Fremen as the people, whose identity is not determined by their historical agency but by the timeless sands of the desert surroundings.

CONCLUSION

This study found that The Fremen are consistently constructed through four major orientalist stereotypes: barbaric, exotic, fanatic, and timeless. None of these stereotypes works to the exclusion of others but rather, they work together to create a logical image of the Fremen, an Eastern other who is strong but backward, exotic yet illogical, spiritually charged yet historically backward. The Fremen are presented as the result of an unforgiving environment and violent and endurance is naturalized to Arrakis, the description of the environment as a hostile and harsh desert makes the Fremen products of a hostile land where survival is instinctive rather than a political decision. This barbaric stereotype is presented by portraying Fremen violence as noble but threatening over and over again, conditioned by desert survival, and not by moral or political choice, which suggests the necessity of outward discipline. Exotic stereotype is created by focusing on the difference of the body, spectacle of the rituals, and mystification of the spice and desert life, which reduces the Fremen to the objects of fascination instead of cultural subjects on their own. Fanatic stereotype is supported with the images of total submission to the prophecy, religious passion, and group religion, which are characteristic of the Fremen as sentimental and easy to exploit. Lastly, timeless stereotype has the Fremen living in mythical time controlled by ancient traditions and immutable oracles that are not

subject to historical change. These stereotyping effects used together are reinforced by the ensemble to form an orientalist worldview where the East is perceived as stagnant, irrational and subject to Western interpretation and control.

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