Colonialism in *The Expanse*

*A study of otherness, diaspora, and language in *The Expanse*

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Abstract

This essay examined postcolonialism in the first two novels in The Expanse series, *Leviathan Wakes* and *Caliban’s War*. Using otherness, creole language, and diaspora, this essay argued that *The Expanse* used three groups to demonstrate postcolonialism, showing that the Belters are the oppressed group and Earth oppressors. The conclusion of this essay is that there are several instances of postcolonialism in these novels, and the Belters are the oppressed group.

Key words

science fiction; postcolonialism; *The Expanse*; the Other; creole; diaspora
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1 Introduction

In 2011, two American authors, Ty Frank and Daniel Abraham, decided to start writing a science fiction book series together. The result of their collaboration was *The Expanse*, nine novels and nine short stories and novellas published under the pen name James S. A. Corey over the course of a decade. The book series started with *Leviathan Wakes* in 2011 and ended with *Leviathan Falls* in 2021. This book series also became a TV show in 2015, and it became quite popular, and recently ended its six seasons run in 2022.

To make it easier going forward, there will now be a small summary of the book series. In *The Expanse* Earth is the colonial power, in that they control the Belters who live in their colony in the asteroid belt. Mars, on the other hand, is a former colony of Earth that became independent and is now an enemy of Earth. Mars also have a more powerful navy than Earth. In this essay, I will argue that *Leviathan Wakes* and *Caliban’s War*, the first two novels of the series, examine various postcolonial themes. Corey uses the power dynamics between the three groups to show inequality and oppression. With Belters as the oppressed, Earthers as the oppressors, and Martians as the third group, which is a former colony of Earth but still holds power over the Belt. In this essay, there will be a focus on three concepts that occur within postcolonialism. The first concept that will be discussed is the Other using Jessica Langer and Patricia Kerslake texts about the subject. In *The Expanse* it is the Belters who are seen as the Others, and they are oppressed by Earthers and Martians. The second concept that this essay will examine is diaspora with the theories of Kevin Kenny and Jessica Langer the Belters are forced to stay where they are due to the gravity on planets, and they
can never go back to Earth. In the diaspora part of the analysis, there will also be a part about W.E.B du Bois theory of double consciousness of the Belters. In the final part of this essay, there will be a discussion about language. Using Monika Mondor and Ashcroft et al. to discuss creole language and code-switching. The Belters have their own language called Belter Creole, which is a Creole language made up of several European languages.

There has not been much previous research into *The Expanse* book series, and the research that exists is only on the first two books: *Leviathan Wakes* and *Caliban’s War*. The research that exists is mostly intertextual and relates to one of the main characters, James Holden. For instance, De Armas discusses how James Holden and another character, Josephus Miller, have qualities that are similar to the main character in Miguel de Cervantes’ seventeenth-century novel *Don Quixote* (144 – 149). In *Leviathan Wakes*, the *Don Quixote* references are carried over to the setting in that – there are also some references to windmills in relation to the ship Rocinante, as Don Quixote faces windmills he perceives as monsters in the novel *Don Quixote* (De Armas 146 – 147). Another part from *Don Quixote* is his horse, called Rocinante, which is also a part of *The Expanse*. It is the ship’s name that the main crew uses throughout the book series. Another literary character Holden has been compared to is Caliban in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. Judith Lanzendorfer wrote an article that discussed the characters in *The Expanse* and in Shakespeare’s play *The Tempest*. In her article, Lanzendorfer discusses how James Holden is similar to Caliban from *The Tempest* in the second Expanse novel, which is called *Caliban’s War*. Caliban in *The Tempest* is a monster, and he is the son of a witch. He is described by his oppressor Prospero as “not honoured with a human shape” (Shakespeare 1.2.283-284). In Lanzendorfer’s article she argues that Holden
has changed between *Leviathan Wakes* and *Caliban’s War*, the Eros incident changed him both physically and mentally. Singh argues that the monster Caliban in *The Tempest* is oppressed by Prospero, and it is acceptable because he is not human (28 – 29). In several of Shakespeare’s plays, the concept of the Other is prominent, where it can be a woman or something that is not human, like Caliban (Singh 71). In *Caliban’s War*, Caliban might refer to the hybrid monster that the scientist made from an infectious molecule, called the protomolecule, from an alien species, or it might refer to how James Holden changed between *Leviathan Wakes* and *Caliban’s War*.

Despite research that has highlighted political issues in the book series, there has to date not been any published research that has focused on the books regarding colonialism and postcolonialism. However, there is one chapter in the book *The Expanse and Philosophy: So Far Out Into the Darkness* where the TV series is discussed in relation to postcolonialism. In the previously mentioned book, many other themes are discussed, e.g., politics, humanity, ethics etc. Most of the previous research on *The Expanse* was more on the TV series than on the book series. In Bellamy and O’Brien article, they examine how *The Expanse* built their world by looking at the geopolitical situation in the world now. One example they give is that there are many groups in the world today that do not have access to clean water (Bellamy and O’Brien 518).

Futher, spaceships in *The Expanse* have special names, and some of the names have a deeper meaning in the story. Some of the names of the ships have a literary or historical meaning. One that I previously discussed was *Rocinante*, which is the main ship in the novels, and the name comes from the novel *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Servantes. Then there
is the Canterbury, which started as a colony ship to bring people to the colonies in the Belt from Earth. It was later repurposed as a mining ship that mined ice from the rings on Saturn to bring water to the people who lived in the Belt (Leviathan Wakes 7-8). The name of this ship is most likely a reference to The Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer. Which was a collection of stories following a group of people on a pilgrimage to Canterbury.

2 Theory

In this coming theory section, there will be a presentation of the concept of postcolonialism in literature. There will also be a discussion of previous science fiction texts that use postcolonialism as a concept. As will be discussed, postcolonialism and science fiction have been used together and researched before. Many pieces of science fiction literature touch on the subject, and many researchers have already published articles and books about postcolonialism in science fiction.

To start, there will be a discussion on the definition of science fiction. Science fiction was first described by Hugo Gernsback in the 1920s. Many scholars have tried to define science fiction, but they have not come up with one definition for the genre because it can contain many different things. In Paul Kincaid’s article “On the Origins of Genre” he discusses the fact that there is not one definition of science fiction but there are many definitions of the genre (412). Science fiction novels can take place in many different places; they can be on Earth, in space, on a spaceship, or even on a foreign planet in another galaxy. Frequently, people force fantasy and science fiction together; however, they are quite different genres. Fantasy involves fantastical elements like magic and dragons, while science
fiction involves science of some type, whether it be physics, engineering, or social science (Roberts 3). Instead of one easily defined big genre, science fiction has many sub-genres, e.g., hard science fiction, soft science fiction, space opera, dystopias, etc. The sub-genre space opera was created in 1941 and, in the beginning, had negative associations in comparison to television soap operas. However, now it is used to describe “interstellar conflicts between clearly defined ‘good’ and ‘bad’ sides” (Sawyer 505).

A common theme in science fiction is colonialism and postcolonialism. Colonialism is when a country or group takes control over another country or region. When this happens, they take their resources and the natives too (Loomba 19 – 20). Colonialism did not start with European colonialism in the 16th century. The Roman Empire, for instance, stretched far when it was at its biggest; the Aztecs in South America oppressed groups in the vicinity of Mexico in the 15th and 16th centuries; and parts of Asia were colonised by the Vijaynagar Empire between the 14th century and the 17th century (Loomba 20 – 21). Even older science fiction novels discuss colonialism. In Frankenstein, there are some instances. For example, when Doctor Frankenstein chases the monster, he is saved by a ship that is on its way to explore the North Pole. Another character wants to go to the colonies in Asia to make a fortune and become successful (Rieder 128). Another example is a short story by Washington Irving from the beginning of the 19th century. In this text, a group of aliens from the moon arrives on Earth and colonizes the people on Earth. The aliens think that the people on Earth are savages and not as intellectual as them, and therefore they do not deserve the planet. As with most attempts to colonise another group and land, the people on earth are not happy with
this and try to convert them to their way of life. The people of Earth are then permitted to live in the desert in Arabia or in the cold landscapes of Lapland (Rieder 24).

Additionally, colonialism in science fiction usually occurs when humans need to find a suitable home for humanity as Earth is no longer an inhabitable planet. Humans therefore travel out into space to find similar planets to live on. In the genre of science fiction, one important thing about colonialism is that no matter how far humans venture out into space, they will always compare everything to humans and to Earth. The air quality, the soil, the creatures, etc. will be compared with what they are used to (Kerslake 12). In The Expanse and Philosophy, Schwartz discusses Mars point of view, in the TV series and how it compares to Earth and the Belt (159). One example of colonialism in science fiction is Kage Bakers novel The Empress of Mars, which was first published in 2009. In this novel, a British company colonised Mars and sent misfits and outcasts there to terraform it. When the colonisation did not go according to the company’s plan, they left the colonists there to survive on their own. This is similar to the Mars and Earth’s relationship in The Expanse.

Furthermore, one of the most prominent scholars in the field of science fiction studies is Darko Suvin, who has used the term “cognitive estrangement” to define science fiction as “a literature that places readers in a world different than our own in ways that stimulate thought about the nature of those different, causing us to view our own world from a fresh perspective” (Booker and Thomas 4). In its early days, science fiction was seen as an immature literary genre, and it was not until the middle of the 20th century that science fiction started to receive academic attention. Because of the genre’s exploration of new and alternative forms of life and society, research on science fiction often draws on Marxist
theory as well as gender and queer theory and critical race theory (Bould 1–2). According to John Rieder, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* is known as an important novel in the emergence of the genre of science fiction. Also, some scholars have said that *Frankenstein* was one of the first science fiction texts that was written in English (Rieder 39, 153). Even though it was first published at the beginning of the nineteenth century, it was categorised as a gothic romance novel. It was not until the late nineteenth century, when it was printed again, that it became even more popular and seen as science fiction (Rieder 39).

Within postcolonialism, Edward Said is an important scholar, and his book *Orientalism* was a critique of the western view of the East. According to Said, it was the Europeans who made the Orient; the Europeans needed something to compare themselves to. Something that was Europe’s opponent (Said 1). Said popularised the terms Orient and Occident to describe groups or regions from the East and from the West (5). Characters from the East are usually portrayed as violent and evil in movies and books (Said 287). On the other hand, characters from the West are usually the protagonists and heroes (Said 49). In the past few years, authors from non-Western countries have started using their perspectives and histories to make the West the strangers (Booker and Thomas 124). Said’s concepts of Occident and Orient have been criticised for being too focused on Europe and Asia. Laura Chrisman argued that colonised groups in other parts of the world are overlooked in Said’s text (Loomba 36).

Furthermore, a concept within postcolonial studies is the notion of ‘the Other’, and this concept is also important within science fiction literature. The concept of ‘the Other’ has been central ever since the plays in ancient Greece that made the concept of ‘self’ an
important theme. Without a ‘self’ there cannot be ‘the Other’. There must be two points, one central (the Self) and one in the periphery (the Others) (Kerslake 8–9). In science fiction literature, ‘the Other’ can be a benevolent creature or something malevolent. According to Malmgren, ‘the Other’ is either a creature that humans can see themselves in and be able to communicate to some degree with or a highly intelligent being that is not at all human-like and therefore an entity that will never be able to fully understand and communicate with (19). Hoagland and Sarwal argue that the concept of ‘the Other’ works in both science fiction and postcolonialism because it is a way of justifying exploitation and murder, regardless of if ‘the Other’ looks like a human or an alien (10). In science fiction, authors often use the “otherness” of other groups to differentiate Earthers from aliens. In many science fiction books, this means that “the others” look and behave very differently than the protagonists, who are usually from Earth or, at the very least, look like humans. Aliens in science fiction are usually humanoid but differ in some way, whether they are intellectual, cultural, or emotional (Langer 82). This can also be seen in The Expanse, where the Belters and the Martians look slightly different from the people from Earth.

Furthermore, in many science fiction novels, aliens are seen as the Other to humans Self. Aliens have been a common theme in science fiction almost since it started. However, the depiction of aliens has changed over the years. In early science fiction like H.G. Wells book War of the Worlds the aliens from Mars are portrayed as predators with tentacles that plan on eating most of the humans on Earth (Disch 187). Orson Scott Card and Robert A. Heinlein both had aliens that looked more like insects (Disch 195). In Ursula K Le Guins novel The Left Hand of Darkness the aliens are humanoids but androgynous (Disch 190).
Additionally, diaspora is also a common concept within postcolonialism. This word is common when people talk about colonialism and the forced movement of groups. However, it was originally used to talk about the displacement of Jewish people in the 3rd century, when they were forced to move from Israel and were seen as “the other” and strangers for centuries. Nowadays, people use the word diaspora to describe the movement of large groups of people from their land. The movement can be due to war, violence, or forced removal by other groups (Langer 56). Many groups that have been displaced might want to return home. However, this is not always possible. One example of this is the Armenians who were forced to leave in the 7th century C.E. (Kenny 6-7). Even if the Armenians wanted to return to their homeland, they did not have a well-defined land to return to, so instead they created a nation-state for themselves (Kenny 61). Langer argues that diaspora and science fiction literature are a way of seeing where humanity is going by looking into the past (80). That diasporic double consciousness, where people who have been forced to leave their homes have two separate cultural identities (Langer 71).

Additionally, W.E.B. Du Bois used the term double consciousness to describe how African Americans have two cultural identities. One side is the American and the other side of themselves is the African. How African Americans try to fit into the world of the people who do not see them as their equal (Du Bois 9). The concept of diaspora and that of double consciousness are closely linked and are concerned with how people from marginalised groups navigate between different cultures: their own and that of the oppressors. In Samir Dayal’s article “Diaspora and Double Consciousness”, he thinks that Du Bois definition of double consciousness is too restricting, and he proposes that double consciousness can be
“less a ’both/and’ and more of ‘neither just this/ nor just that’”. Meaning that Dayal believes that culture can be a mixture and one individual can belong to several opposing cultures at once (47).

Lastly, in many colonised societies, English became the main language between people who did not speak the same language. Pidgin languages grew out of these situations; these languages are characterised by simplified grammar and vocabulary from the main language. After a pidgin language comes a creole language, where the next generation has adapted the pidgin language as their first language with some more complicated grammar and vocabulary (Mondor 174 -175). In the short story “A Spot of Konfrontation” by Brian Aldiss the characters use pidgin language to understand each other. In this short story, they use a mix of European languages and Japanese to communicate (Mandala 57 -58). As will be shown later, in The Expanse, the Belters, the oppressed group, have a language called Belter Creole. It is a mixed language that uses many different languages from the people who first moved into the Belt several generations ago.

Another related aspect of language from a postcolonial perspective is code-switching. This is where a person uses parts of different languages in the same sentence or conversation, and it is common in communities where there are multiple languages present (Ashcroft et al. The Empire Writes Back 71; Mondor 184). In some science fiction media, code-switching is common. In the TV series Firefly, the characters switch between English and Chinese in the same sentences since, in that universe, it is the USA and China that are the superpowers (Mandala 39). As we will see in the analysis part of this essay, the Belters flawlessly use both
English and Belter Creole in the same sentences, and they have no issue with understanding each other.

3 Analysis

This part of the essay will be an analysis of *Leviathan Wakes* and *Caliban’s War* from a postcolonial perspective. This section is divided into three different parts: otherness, creole language, and diaspora. In the first part, there will be an analysis of the otherness and oppression in the books, and there will be a focus on the Belters, who are the oppressed group in the novels. The second part will be a discussion about the diaspora in the books, how people from different groups can move, and about double consciousness. The third and final part will be about the language that the Belters have created, called Belter creole, and about the Martian accent.

3.1 Otherness

There are different types of colonies: a colony can be a settler colony or a colony of occupation. If the colonisers control and administer the colonised group, it is a colony of occupation. However, if the colonisers remove them, i.e., murder, the colonised group and the colonisers become the majority of the population, it counts as a settler colony. Later, the new generations become a hybrid culture; parts of the old country and the current country mix into a new culture (Ashcroft et al. *Key Concepts* 236-237).

As we saw earlier, Loomba’s definition of colonialism is when a group takes control over an area and its resources (20). This definition can be used to describe how Earth
colonised the asteroid Belt several hundred years before the events of *Leviathan Wakes*. The humans from Earth took control over both the area and the resources that could be found in the area. One of the major reasons that humans moved out to space was to mine the minerals in the asteroids (*Leviathan Wakes 7*). The humans who moved to the Belt to start the colony later identified themselves as Belters, and after several generations, they do not see themselves as Earthers. They harbour great contempt and see Earth as their oppressor. When a Belter named Paj loses his arm in an accident on the Canterbury, he says: “’fuck the Inners, and fuck their magic Jell-O. I’d rather have a good Belter-built fake than anything those bastards grow in a lab. Just wearing their fancy arm probably turns you into an asshole’” (*Leviathan Wakes* 10). Most Belters do not like the people from Earth at all. Paj does not want to have anything that an Earther has made, even if it is better than what a Belter can make. In *The Expanse*, the Belters and the Martians are the Other, and the Earthers are the Self, the ones that the other groups are compared to. Jessica Langer states that otherness in science fiction can be cultural differences or physical differences (82). In *The Expanse* there is some physical difference between the groups, but the cultural differences – food, language, and religion – are also important. The physical differences will be discussed later on in this section.

As has been stated before, the Belters are the people who live in the Belt. In the Belt there is less gravity than on the planets. One major thing that sets the Belters, Earther and Martians apart is their appearances. The Belters are tall and skinny, and in several passages in *Leviathan Wakes*, they are said to be over two meters tall. The Belters have evolved to this because they have very low gravity, so there is nothing that is compressing them. Therefore,
their bones have grown much more than they can do on Earth. They also have problems with forming muscles, and most of the Belters can never set foot on a planet with high gravity like Earth or Mars. This makes them fragile, and it is not easy for them to move to different environments. The people of Earth and Mars may see the Belters as fragile because of this, and that gives them another way of seeing them as something that is not human and oppresses them.

In *The Expanse*, series the Earthers are a mix of different nationalities and not a uniform group as the Belters or the Martians. James Holden is described as “[a]n Earther, maybe in his early thirties. Pale skin, blue eyes, dark short-chopped hair.” (*Leviathan Wakes* 45) by a Belter, Josephus Miller. Because the Earthers are the norm and the thing that the other groups are compared to, they do not have the same body type or accent.

Even though James Holden has lived in space for several years, when *Leviathan Wakes* starts, he will never get used to the way the Belters look: “Seven years in the Earth’s navy, five years working in space with civilians, and he’d never gotten used to the long, thin, improbable bones of a Belter. A childhood spent in gravity shaped the way he saw things forever” (*Leviathan Wakes* 9). This quote shows how an Earther, Holden, still thinks that they are strange looking in comparison to Earthers. The Belters are strange looking, even though he has already spent a big part of his life with them. Holden thinks that they are not part of the same group, he sees Belters as the Other. Even though Belters look similar to humans, the proportions of their bodies are strange. Holden sees Belters as the Other and himself as the Self, because that is what he is used to, and he compares everything to Earth. In postcolonialism, there cannot be an Other if there is no Self. The concept is based on
binarism; something has to be considered “normal” for something else to be “strange” (Kerslake 8-9).

Although they originate from Earth, Belters are seen as an entirely different group of people from humans. They are, as it were, ‘the other’, whereas humans are ‘the self’. In her discussion of the oppression of the Belters in the TV series, De Cristoforo compares the relation between Earth and the Belt to historical colonialism: “the exploitation of the Belt’s resources – both natural and human – is a form of colonialism grounded in the belief that Belters aren’t, in fact, fully human.” (142). It is easier to oppress a group of individuals if you do not look at them as equals, if you choose to see them as ‘the other’. There is thus a similarity here between the way Corey depicts the Belters and the way in which people in history have colonised and treated other people. When the Europeans colonised large parts of the world, they took both humans and resources from the land they conquered, forcing other humans to work. Like the Belters, who after generations in space have no other place to go, they are forced to mine elements for the Inners.

In *Leviathan Wakes*, the Belters are still a colony of Earth, and they are treated as non-humans by them. For example, the Eros incident, when some scientists from Earth found the alien protomolecule, they thought it was totally acceptable to test it out on millions of innocent Belters. The scientist found out that the protomolecule thrived on radiation. Therefore, they confined mostly Belters on one of the oldest space stations, Eros, and they trapped people on it and released radiation and the protomolecule (*Leviathan Wakes* 274). The Earther scientists knew what would happen to the people on the station, but the lead scientist defends their actions by saying:
This is the most important thing to ever happen to the human race. It’s simultaneously proof that we are not alone in the universe, and our ticket out of the limitations that bind us to our little bubbles of rock and air … A million and a half is small potatoes. What we’re working with here is bigger than that. (Leviathan Wakes 417)

This just shows how Earth sees the Belters as expendable in a way that indigenous people and slaves have been used for medical experiments. Later in Leviathan Wakes, this group of scientists is even compared to Josef Mengele who performed experiments on the Jews in World War II, and Genghis Kahn, who conquered and murdered countless individuals in Asia and Europe in the 13th century (Leviathan Wakes 424). Similar to how Hoagland and Sarwal claim that the reason the Other works in science fiction is a way to justify murder, if humans do not see the other group as human, they can use them however they choose to (10). In this part of Leviathan Wakes, it is used to justify using innocent people for an alien experiment. The scientists actively decided to use Belters for their experiment and not do it to people from Earth or Mars. Because they do not consider them human. They consider them more like animals.

Because it was originally people from Earth who moved to the Belt and to Mars, all the infrastructure was built for a person who was a normal sized Earther. Many things are now not ideal for the people who use them. Tycho Station is one of the oldest stations in this universe and was built by the first Belters. It has rings that circulate the station and room for several thousand families (Leviathan Wakes 179). Because it was built by individuals who looked like Earthers, some doorways are smaller than the average Belter, adding to their discomfort (Leviathan Wakes 269 – 270). The space stations and domes were built to
accommodate people from Earth. However, it is not used by Earthers anymore. It is not the Belters who have to live in them and use them, but they are not made for people who have their physique, i.e., long and skinny.

Being as tall as Belters but wide like Earthers, Martians look like a mix between the two. In the second novel of the series, *Caliban’s War*, Martian Navy gunnery sergeant Bobbie Draper is first introduced. She is described as a woman of over two meters in height and weighing over 100 kilograms. Her height is probably due to the lesser gravity on Mars, but Bobbie believes that her weight is due to her Polynesian heritage (*Caliban’s War* 10). Martians are the humans who have grown up on Mars. In the early days of Earth’s settlement on the planet, they were a colony of Earth. However, before the beginning of the book series, they had gained their independence.

For Martians, working hard, joining the navy, and terraforming Mars are the most important things. Their view of Earthers’ work ethic is flawed, having been taught that Earthers live off the government and get money for nothing. Bobbie sees Earth in the beginning as “a civilization in decay. Lazy, coddled citizens who live on the government dole. Fat corrupt politicians who enriched themselves at the expense of the colonies” (*Caliban’s War* 160). Bobbie’s views of Earther’s change drastically in *Caliban’s War*, and so does her view of Mars and Martians. In the beginning she is a nationalist for Mars, and she does not see the shortcomings of her beloved nation. The Martians’ reason for thinking that the Earthers are lazy is because they get air, water, and produce food much easier than they do on Mars, where most people are part of terraforming the planet so they can live outside their domes (*Leviathan Wakes* 160, 164).
Also, after her encounter with some young Earthers who tell her what it is like to live and work on Earth, Bobbie realises that she has been lied to her entire childhood on Mars (Caliban’s War 164 – 165). Martian priorities are hard work and to terraform Mars and make it habitable. They look down upon the Earthers and see them as socialists because they get a sum of money from the government to study. Bobbie’s views on Earthers change when she meets people from Earth and learns that not everything the Martian government has said about Earth is true. (Caliban’s War 163). Schwartz compares Mars with the United States arguing that Mars was a colony that became independent from Earth while the United States gained independence from England in the 18th century. He later goes further with his comparison when he discusses how Mars was modelled on today’s United States of America.

In both the United States and Mars, they value hard work and how they want to explore the universe (Schwartz 153 – 154). Similar to the way people from the United States see Europe, that Europeans do not like to work hard, and people from Europe are socialist. So, in The Expanse, if Mars is an analogy for the United States, then Earth is an analogy for Europe. This allegory also works with the colonialism perspective. Historically, Europeans have colonised large parts of the world, similar to the way Earth colonised space and then forced people to work for them.

Furthermore, Mars gained its independence before Leviathan Wakes. The way Mars gained its independence from Earth is not described in the books but only hinted at. There are several short stories connected to the series. In one short story called “Drive” Mars is still a colony of Earth, and a group of Martians discuss how it is to be a colony. In this they compare themselves to America and Earth to England in the 16th century.
Mars is America’ Tori said, waving his beer expansively. ‘It’s exactly the same’ ‘It’s not America,’ Malik said.

Not like it was at the end. Like the beginning. Look at how long it took to travel from Europe to North America in the 1500’s. Two months. How long to get her from Earth? Four. Longer if the orbits are right.’ (Corey Memory’s Legion 3).

This shows the contempt that the Martians have for Earth. Their anger toward Earth grows stronger towards the end of the story when Earth sends armed ships to Mars to make sure that they do not gain their independence (Corey Memory’s Legion 11 – 12). This is also similar to history. America wanted its independence from England, but England did not want to give up America, and then the independence war began. As with the independence war in America, Mars is strong enough to fight Earth and eventually gain their independence from them.

3.2 Diaspora

Earthers live in Earth’s gravity, which humans are evolved for. This makes it easier for them to travel to the Belt and to other planets in the universe. This is something that the other groups have an issue with. Because of this, some Earthers can have slight issues when they visit places with lower gravity. For some, it takes time to readjust to lower gravity. One example of this is when a security officer on Ceres who is originally from Earth tries to walk away angrily, but because of the lower gravity, it looks as if he is bouncing away instead (Leviathan Wakes 41).
Within diaspora, return to the homeland is a major part. However, the Belters cannot leave space and go back to Earth. Due to their bones and muscles, they cannot go to places with higher gravity. The Belters, who have lived all their lives in space, are forced to stay in space, and they can never go to a planet. They must always fight for clean air and water, while on Earth there is free air everywhere and running water (Caliban’s War 164). As Kenny discusses the diaspora and nation states (61) the Belters made a place that they call their home. Even though it is not a physical land, it is a place where they feel like they belong. They also have a group called the OPA that takes care of them, similar to a government.

In addition, there is much discontent within the Belter community towards the Inners, people from Earth, Mars, or the Moon. Therefore, the Belters created a group called the OPA, or the Other Planets Alliance. They are seen as terrorists by the Inners but as liberators by the Belters (Leviathan Wakes 21 – 22; Caliban’s War 46). The group consists mostly of people who were born in the Belt. One of the leaders of this political group is Anderson Dawes, who is born in the Belt and who controls the OPA on Ceres. In Leviathan Wakes, he is shown to have power over most of the station, including space security (191). The other leader of the OPA is a man called Fred Johnson. He was born on Earth and was a colonel in the Earth Navy when he was tasked with stopping a Belter riot at Anderson Station. The riot ended with the deaths of several Belters, and Fred realized that he had done something unforgivable. After this, he moved to space and joined forces with the OPA. In Leviathan Wakes, he is the OPA leader of the Tycho station (96 - 97).
As with Earthers, Martians can travel easily in the universe. There are many Martians in the Belt, and even some on Earth. When Bobbie goes to Earth, she first thinks that it will be easy because the Martian marines have trained in Earth’s gravity, if the war with Earth escalate to a ground war on Earth. Even though Bobbie trained extensively in a place similar to Earth’s gravity it did not go well when she got there. One of the first things that hit Bobbie is the feeling when she could go outside without a space suit. Another thing that strikes Bobbie as different are all the tall buildings and the fact that there are so many people around her all the time. On Mars, they all lived in domes with no tall buildings and few public gatherings (Caliban’s War 161 – 163).

As mentioned before, Ashcroft et al. text discusses different types of colonies. Even though the Belters are settlers in the asteroid Belt, they are not considered a settler colony. Because to be a settler colony, they need to displace the previous inhabitants of the place. However, when the Belters first settle in the Belt, there are no other inhabitants there. Therefore, they can be seen more as a diasporic community that emerged due to migration and not as settlers. The Belters need to have a connection to the place their ancestors originated from, even though they do not like it. The individuals in the Belt would not survive without Earth or Mars.

The culture that Belters have is a mix of some of the culture from Earth and different countries that have created a new Belter culture. They still have things that are not natural in space, for example, copies of animals from Earth (Leviathan Wakes 26). The Belters have what W.E.B. Du Bois called double consciousness. Du Bois talks about how African Americans have a double consciousness, where one part is American and one is African. Du
Bois argues in his text that he wishes they could merge the two sides into one, but without losing the African side too much (9).

However, when it comes to the Belters, Dayal’s definition of the concept fits better. It is not a matter of either or, but more of a mix of cultures (Dayal 47). Individuals do not have to choose one culture that they feel like they fit into, but they can choose things from both of them that they like. The Belter culture is already a mix of different Earth cultures that have become one culture. Additionally, the Belters are humans even if they do not see themselves as such. Even if they have adapted, to some degree, to a life in space, they are still biologically human. They still need all the things that humans need: air, water, and food (Leviathan Wakes 25, 61).

3.3 Creole language

Another thing that sets the Belters apart from the other groups is that they have their own language. This Creole language is a mix of many different languages. There are some instances in the books where the Belters use this language, but it is usually small passages, and the reader understands what they say through context (Leviathan Wakes 15, 401, 466). However, sometimes it helps to know the languages involved. Belter Creole is a language that grew out of the people who first moved to the Belt. It is a mix of many European languages, e.g., Spanish, Dutch, Esperanto, French, etc. Creole languages occur in communities where there are many people who do not speak the same language, and they end up with a mixture of their languages and form a new language. Usually, Creole languages are
more complex languages than pidgin which is simpler language (Mondor 374). In *The Expanse* Belter Creole is a fully fledged language however it is still a simple language with basic grammar. Creole languages have been common in places where colonialism has occurred, and it is the same in *The Expanse*. The people who moved to the Belts had to find a way of communication, and that created the Belter Creole.

Even though the Belters have their own language, Belter Creole, they are still forced to use English when they speak to people who are from the planets. Due to this they use code-switching when they speak.

”Follow que?” Miller asked.

“Bomie vacuate like losing air” the girl said with a chuckle.

“Bang-head hops, kennis tu?”

“Ken,” Miller said.

“Now, all new bladeboys. Overhead. I’m out”

“And Bomie?” (*Leviathan Wakes* 18)

In this quote, Josephus Miller, a Belter, talks with another Belter, and they use code-switching with a mix of English and Belter Creole, and they understand each other perfectly. Code-switching is common in communities where people speak multiple languages (Mondor 184). In *The Expanse*, the Belters speak multiple languages and code-switch even within the community. Because the original Belters were forced to communicate with each other and they spoke different languages, they had to create their own language. However, they also
must be able to speak English because they still have to be able to communicate with Earth, their oppressors. Similar to what Mandala proposes in her article, that English and Chinese are the main languages due to the fact that they are the superpowers in that universe (39). English in *The Expanse* is still being used by everyone because Earth is the main superpower. If the power structure in the universe were different, English might not have been the main language that everyone used.

In addition, Martians do not have their own language as the Belters do. Since most of the first people who moved to Mars were from the East Indies, China, and Texas they do have their own recognisable accent. It is described as something similar to the Texan accent, a southern drawl. (*Leviathan Wakes* 28). In *Leviathan Wakes*, there is only one character who is from Mars, and that is it pilot of Rocinante. Alex has darker skin, and he uses words that are common in southern states of the United States. For example, when he is introduced, he starts by saying “Howdy, XO” (*Leviathan Wakes* 28) to Holden. In *The Expanse*, there is not that much focus on the Martians, and therefore, there are not many descriptions of the Martian accent. In the series, there are just a handful of Martian characters. One being Alex Kamal, and the other being Bobbie Draper.

4 Conclusion

The aim of this essay was to argue that the novels *Leviathan Wakes* and *Caliban’s War* by James S. A. Corey examine postcolonialism through three groups: Belters, Earthers, and Martians. The oppressed group is the Belters, and the oppressors are the Earthers. The
postcolonial concepts that this essay has focused on are otherness, creole language, and diaspora.

Firstly, the concept of otherness and oppression is a major theme in *The Expanse*, and that is why it has been the first concept. In *The Expanse*, the Belters are the group that is being oppressed by Earth and, to some extent, Mars. In *The Expanse*, the Belters are seen as the Other by individuals from Earth and Mars. One of the things that sets the Belters apart from the other group is their physical attributes. The Belters look different from the other groups with their tall and skinny bodies. Another thing that sets them apart is their culture. They have their own culture that has been created due to all the different groups that moved there at the beginning of the space colonisation.

Secondly, the concept of diaspora in *The Expanse*. The essay discusses how Belters are seen as a diasporic group that is restricted to space. They have, despite hardship, created their own society and culture in space, and even though they do not have any land, they still have a sense of community, even if they are spread out over vast distances. In the analysis part of the diaspora Du Bois term double consciousness was also discussed. This concept works well when discussing the culture in the Belt. The Belters have a kind of double consciousness, where they see themselves as Belters. However, some of the Belters also try to see themselves as their oppressors.

Lastly, another thing that separates the Belters from the other groups is their language. Belters have their own language, a Creole language that was created when the original Belters settled in the Belt and had to communicate with each other. As with historical instances when creole languages have been used, the Belters were forced to create a new
language so that they could work and live with people with different backgrounds. Creole languages are tied to colonialism and postcolonialism, as is also the case in *The Expanse*. If Belters had not moved to the asteroid belt, they would not have created this new language. Creole languages are often created so that groups of people with different languages can communicate with each other. Belter Creole can also be seen as a way of distancing themselves from Earth and their fight for autonomy and independence.

Postcolonialism and science fiction are not something new, and they have been researched before. However, this essay uses literature that has not been examined using postcolonialism before. Previous research into this book series has been limited to just a few articles about intertextuality. However, there are a few more articles that discuss the TV show that have been mentioned in the introduction. This essay has been limited to the first two books in *The Expanse* series out of nine books in total. There are many other instances of postcolonialism in the other novels that could be researched in the future. However, due to the time constraints of this essay, it would not have been possible to use more novels.

In addition, there are other themes in *The Expanse* that could be used for further literary examinations. Some concepts could be science, gender, war, propaganda, etc. Also, this essay only uses the novels for its analysis. Another future research topic could be to include the TV series in an analysis.

So, to conclude, James S.A. Corey uses the three groups of Belters, Earthers, and Martians to explore postcolonialism in a future world where humans have colonised parts of the galaxy. In their novels, the Belters is the oppressed group, and they are forced to live and work in dangerous environments to mine minerals for the Inners. They use the oppression of
the Belters to show how the groups from the planets feel about the Belters. In the books, it is mainly the Earthers who maintain power over the Belters. In return, the Belters show great contempt for both Earthers and Martians, and they would rather just be on their own in the Belt.
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