The Context: Journal of English Studies
Volume 12, Issue 6, September 2025
ISSN: 2349-4948
www.thecontext.in

Article

The Silence of the Colonized Cosmos: Trauma and Epistemic Resistance in Frank Herbert's *Dune* and Denis Villeneuve's Cinematic Adaptations

Dr. Prasanta Ghoshal

Faculty, Sir Gurudas Mahavidyalaya, Kolkata, West Bengal, India;
ghoshal.prasanta12@gmail.com

Accepted version published on 5th September 2025

DOI https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17060272

Abstract: In this paper, the complex function of silence in Frank Herbert's groundbreaking science fiction novel *Dune* (1965) and Denis Villeneuve's film adaptations, *Dune* (2021) and *Dune: Part Two* (2024), is addressed through a postcolonial and decolonial theoretical framework. Through the intersection of trauma theory, Freudian psychoanalysis, and modern decolonial theory, this research demonstrates how silence operates as both symptom and symptomatology of colonial trauma and as an epistemic strategy of resistance. Fremen from Arrakis are exemplars of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's inaudible subaltern and practitioners of Walter Mignolo's epistemic disobedience at the same time. The paper contends that although Herbert's novel offers a nuanced critique of colonialism in the form of the paradox of silence, Villeneuve's adaptations threaten to reproduce the same colonial logics they aim to subvert through cultural sanitization and aesthetic appropriation. The essay continues to examine how hyperspace travel is both empire infrastructure and allegory of traumatic dislocation, illustrating that the trauma of colonization appears not merely in bodily violence but within the very structures of imperial connectivity and temporal dislocation.

Keywords: colonialism; trauma; silence; decolonization; resistance

Colonial history is a rich tapestry embroidered with threads of trauma, since the imperial project deliberately injures not only the physical terrain and bodies of the colonized but also language, memory, and representation itself. Frank Herbert's influential science fiction novel *Dune*, published in 1965, builds the desert world Arrakis as a metaphorical map of colonial exploitation, ecological destruction, and the

ISSN 2349-4948

deliberate silencing of indigenous voices. Denis Villeneuve's film reinterpretations of the novel *Dune* (2021) and *Dune: Part Two* (2024)—these grounding themes take and elongate both visually and aurally, reviving them to answer the questions of today's debates over decolonization, environmental devastation, and the long-lasting psychic traumas of empire. At the very center of both the novel and the films is what may be referred to as the silence paradox: a condition in which silence is at once both a symbol of embedded trauma, an act of compelled erasure, and a performative withholding that actively resists domination. Through positioning the world of *Dune* in conversation with trauma theory and decolonial philosophy, the silences that underpin this imagined world can be read as both an irreparable wound that has been caused by the violence of history and as a strategic weapon used in resistance against indigenous subjection. In order to decipher the compounded nature of this silence, the analysis initially stems from Cathy Caruth's seminal scholarship on trauma theory, as it serves as a critical perspective for reading the psychological aspects of colonial engagements.

According to her landmark text *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Caruth asserts that trauma is not an event per se but "an experience that defies being integrated into consciousness" (Caruth 4). The traumatic moment is "experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known," (4) and thus is beyond the grasp of consciousness until it "imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor" (4). That grasp of trauma constitutes what Caruth terms a fundamental silence—a lag in time between the moment of trauma and its later representation, between broken memory and articulate language. This ubiquitous silence serves at once both as a symptom of psychic damage and the very indicator of the continued presence of the traumatic experience in the psyche of the survivor. In Herbert's *Dune*, colonial trauma makes itself known exactly through such calculated silences. The Fremen, oppressed by centuries of Harkonnen rule and systematic imperial exploitation, live in a scrupulously crafted society in which much remains consciously unsaid. Their survival is predicated ultimately on strategic silence and on withholding vital information, and their very deepest wounds are found in precisely that which cannot be spoken of in a safe space within the repressive terms and mechanisms of empire.

Their silence becomes, therefore, not a passive void of voice but an active presence—a conscious choice that holds within it the gravity of historical pain as well as the germ of future struggle. The psychological complexity of the Fremen's conflict is further shed light on by the theory of "repetition compulsion"(Freud 23) proffered by Sigmund Freud, providing a vital paradigm for explaining the circular, cyclical nature characteristic of existence on Arrakis. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud states that trauma tends to be repeated through compelled reenactment, usually without the knowledge or even the consent of the traumatized individual (20). For the Fremen, this psychological process appears as generation upon generation enduring identical rounds of oppression: their desert home relentlessly plundered, their valuable water supplies taken and exploited by strangers, and their citizens repeatedly massacred and oppressed. The quietness that envelops and circumscribes these ongoing violence acts is anything but passive or static; rather, it operates as a shielding armor that at once

ISSN 2349-4948

conceals the wound and counteractively refuses the empire's insistent demand for total legibility and transparency. This silence as a strategy operates as a complex survival mechanism, a process of repetition that holds queerly together in its very breaking apart both the urgent preservation from total loss of important cultural knowledge and the psychic organization necessary for resisting. The Freudian structure allows one to comprehend the Fremen collective psyche and their naturally cyclical way of life on Arrakis, in which the history of the planet is not a direct chronological progression but rather an endless repetition of traumatic conquests. The Fremen are not merely a people oppressed by a traumatic historical heritage; they are a culture that has been fundamentally formed and defined by the ongoing psychological dynamics of surviving, enduring, and finally overcoming the trauma. Their whole cultural machinery is a living, breathing memorial to their common, shared psychic trauma, compulsively reenacting precise actions and elaborate rites that are at the same time both expressions of communal bereavement and calculated acts of cultural and political subversion of imperial power. This symptomatic silence is the very basis of Fremen society on Arrakis and becomes inextricably linked with what Freud described as the repetition compulsion that governs traumatized subjects to keep reenacting their original trauma.

Their whole social hierarchy is based on an extreme lack of water, a life-giving element which has been scientifically manipulated and controlled by the Imperium for its own exploitative ends. As a result, the Fremen live in a world where each word that is spoken and every bodily movement has to be precisely weighed and deliberated, where the most critical communication is often conducted through non-verbal means, and where the most essential information about survival and rebellion has to remain completely concealed from imperial observation and exploitation. The Fremen stillsuit, which is presented by Herbert as a sophisticated technological garment that effectively recycles and preserves body moisture, is a symbol of strength for this whole system of forced silence and inward turning (Herbert 16). Far more than just a functional tool for survival in the desert, the stillsuit is an introversion forced upon one, a compulsory closing off of one from the outside world in a bid to survive within an environmental and political framework consciously engineered to kill native life. This turning inward is more than just a defensive strategy; it is an all-consuming, compulsive action that organizes all aspects of Fremen life. The Fremen's deep respect for water manifests itself in an elaborate sequence of ritualistic acts—the ceremonial spitting that signifies respect, the ritual practice of mourning the dead by reclaiming their body water, and the scrupulous protection and hiding of immense underground water stores—that serve both as functional survival practices and as symbolical reenactments of their history of artificially inflicted scarcity and obstinate resistance against imperial authority. Through a Freudian interpretive framework, these ritualistic, repetitive actions uncover themselves to be essentially compulsive in nature, allowing the Fremen to reenact eternally and, in some psychological sense, increasingly come to terms with the amassed pain of their traumatic past. Water becomes a metaphor for all that has been deliberately lost to imperial exploitation and all that needs to be vocally defended now from further appropriation, and the intentional silence that defines this valuable resource among outsiders as an active manifestation of psychological repression and a

constant, unspoken re-staging of the historical need to conceal essential survival information from the ever-present danger of the colonizer. The asymmetry of trauma for perpetrator and victim then complicates this rich psychological terrain.

The Harkonnens, as the Fremen's chief historical enemies and oppressors, become the leading perpetrators and masterminds of this repetitive, cyclical trauma that characterizes Arrakeen life. Their cruel occupation of Arrakis is more than a common military conquest; it is a "ritualized reenactment of historical atrocities"(Herbert 28) that has been honed and perfected over generations of imperial rule. The Harkonnens repeat incessantly their typically loud, overtly violent acts of resource extraction and population control. In contrast, the Fremen are pushed into a condition of passive, internally directed, compulsive repetition based on defensive maneuvers and preservation of culture. This underlying asymmetry demonstrates how their repetitive behaviors are trapped in a self-perpetuating, destructive dialectical relationship that continues the original traumatic structure from generation to generation. The sadistic enjoyment the Baron takes in torments applied to his foes is unmasked as a symptom of some more profound pathological repetition, expressing an endless, boundless desire to exert supreme power that stems from some compulsive, almost instinctual pattern of violence indelibly embedded within the very fabric of Harkonnen identity and imperial practice. The Fremen are thus inevitably trapped in this self-destructive cycle, able to subsist only on the basis of their skill at anticipating and successfully countering this known, cyclical aggression that characterizes their interaction with imperial authority. Their whole lives become organized in terms of constant preparation for the next inevitable attack, in a state of constant, unobtrusive vigilance against the occasional re-emergence of the oppressor—an event which, according to Caruth's theoretical model, can only be comprehended in part and imperfectly until it re-emerges by violent means once again upon them through the process of repetition compulsion. The gigantic industrial complex of the Harkonnens, described by the incessant, mechanistic thrum of giant spice harvesting machinery and brutally effective functioning of their highly technological war machine, generates the very cacophony of this psychological and political repetition.

This industrial soundscape is the sonic expression of an empire that is essentially unable to produce truly new forms of interaction with colonized peoples and lands, but which instead seems driven to repeat over and over again the same old comfortable, tested patterns of violent exploitation and resource extraction that have characterized imperial enterprise for centuries. The Harkonnen style of imperialism is loud, brutal, and overt, with no space for subtlety in its domination. In contrast, the Bene Gesserit, an old and mysterious order intent on controlling galactic destiny through careful, secret manipulation of bloodlines, exercises power with a more subtle and insidious type.

Their power lies not in a perceptible cacophony but in an invisible, silent manipulation of consciousness. Paul Atreides's ability to tap into the Bene Gesserit's enigmatic *voice*, a psychological control manifested through exact vocal modulation and mind control, illustrates how language itself can be an instrument of imperial control,

an advanced force engineered to silence and command others by playing on their innermost psychological weaknesses. Their deepest act of colonization is not physical or auditory but psychological. The Lisan al-Gaib's prophecy, messianic savior who will arrive to free the Fremen, is shown to be a highly developed instrument willingly seeded in Fremen cultural consciousness centuries ahead of Paul's arrival, serving as a latent story seed that can be purposefully triggered at the appropriate time to further imperial agendas (Herbert 34). The masterfully engineered messianic prophecy is a prime example of repetition compulsion unfolding on a civilization-level. The Bene Gesserit, who act as an imperial force even in the guise of independence, have succeeded in programming the Fremen to live and recreate the psychological cycle of waiting for external redemption, a process which necessarily involves their giving up their own collective self-determination and agency for dependence upon an outside savior. The Bene Gesserit's silent, multi-century conspiracy is the ultimate epistemic and psychological act of colonization, in which even the desire for freedom is a weapon turned against the desired. By pre-figuring the story of resistance, the Bene Gesserit guarantee that when authentic anticolonial struggle inevitably arises, it can be directed and manipulated by an outside agent, thus insulating and maintaining their own imperial authority in the disguise of indigenous freedom. The hero Paul Atreides enters this masterfully created universe of calculated sound and intentioned silence as a character who is themselves the quintessential contradictions of the colonial experience—both occupier and occupied, colonizer and colonized, savior and destroyer.

His nuanced exploration of Fremen culture works to render the essential paradoxes of this silence all the more complex and ethically ambiguous. Paul's prophetic visions, which Caruth would identify as constituting the reiterated imposition of trauma upon consciousness, are an overpowering din of possible futures that overwhelm his consciousness with data he cannot completely process or consolidate. He desperately attempts to sail and dominate these prophetic dreamings, to seize and command the silence of the unknowing future, but in attempting this search for premonitory mastery, he ends up unwittingly a primary site of violence and imperial reproduction. The future's silence unfolds not as a quiet emptiness or void but as a horrific, traumatic space filled with innumerable holy wars waged in his name, sowing death and devastation throughout the known universe. Eventually, Paul's path through the text embodies not actual decolonization or freedom but the imposition of a new, more refined kind of imperialism that is even more totalizing than that which came before.

He deliberately takes and exploits the very silence and collective trauma of the Fremen as his most forceful political and military weapon, employing their cultural vulnerability and messianic desire to forge his own power and solidify his position as galactic emperor. His actions are a dark embodiment of how a colonizer can gain not only from plundering a people's resources but from intentionally taking advantage of their psychological need to relive trauma as a vehicle for propagating and sanctioning his own imperial control over them. The work is a deep and disturbing critique of anticolonial resistance that lays bare the inherent weaknesses of movements based on outside salvation over native self-emancipation.

ISSN 2349-4948

Frantz Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, disagrees that violence can be a corrective and even "liberating" (Fanon 23) force that can topple entrenched colonial apparatuses and reclaim dignity for colonized people, but only if that violence arises spontaneously within the colonized themselves and is not controlled by external agents with agendas of their own (23). The Fremen resistance in Herbert's work at first glance seems to adhere to this Fanonian paradigm, with their combat against Harkonnen troops illustrating the type of revolutionary violence that Fanon calls the key to psychological and political emancipation from colonial oppression. However, the novel's final course charts the intrinsic failure of this seeming decolonization process, whereby Paul's ascension to power does not lead to authentic Fremen emancipation but to the advent of another "tyrannical figure" (66) that continues what critics have established as the "vicious cycle of colonization and exploitation" (67) in alternative leadership. The institution that the Fremen had struggled so fiercely to defend and hold on to through centuries of calculated silence and cultural resistance is progressively dismantled by the very process that had promised to set them free and restore their autonomy. Their fate now becomes wholly contingent upon the messianic leader who had pledged deliverance but provides a new kind of domination clothed as freedom. This tragic result essentially calls into question any easy reading of Paul as a true liberator or true friend, rather confirming the complex critique of the messianic drive in politics and the perils of the charisma of leadership offering facile solutions to knotty historical dilemmas (Herbert 289). Silencing in *Dune* operates, though, not solely as an expression of oppression or a means of erasure and domination.

It also works as a self-aware, volitional refusal- a deeply political act of resistance that ultimately aims to break the seemingly infinite cycle of traumatic repetition that has characterized Fremen life for generations. The most tactically effective expressions of this resistant silence take place through particular acts of defiance by primary Fremen figures, most notably through the figure of Stilgar within both the novel and Villeneuve's initial film adaptation. Stilgar's strategic withholding of information about the true size, strength, and military organization of the Fremen populace is a masterpiece of strategic play that performs several functions of resistance at once (*Dune*). By purposefully permitting the Imperium to undervalue and downplay the real level of Fremen strength and organization, he successfully guards his people against being targeted too early by the imperial powers while also setting in motion the very important foundation for their ultimate victory over their rulers.

This strategic silence is not the helpless muteness of passive victimhood but the calculated, willful restraint of seasoned fighters who know that unguarded disclosure of power can be deadly to insurgent forces. Furthermore, the regular occurrence of huge sandstorms in both the novel and films serves as an environmental resistance—a quiet rebellion waged by the world itself against imperial incursion. These storms ruthlessly turn off sophisticated imperial technology in a systematic manner while at the same time offering defensive cover to the Fremen, who have learned to evolve their culture and survival techniques in coordination with these natural events instead of working against them. In such critical moments, silence turns from being just a symbol of historical trauma into a powerful, autonomous entity that can actively rework power

ISSN 2349-4948

dynamics and defy imperial dominance. In *Dune: Part Two*, Chani's climactic moment of rebellion offers arguably the most potent instance of silence as active resistance and refusal of imperial narratives.

Once Paul has embraced his imperial fate and overcome the Emperor's authority, and hence placed himself as the new ruler of the galaxy, Chani makes a decision that echoes throughout the rest of the film's ending: she does not accompany him into his victory (*Dune: Part Two*). Rather, she formally turns her face away from the action of his coronation and goes quietly into the desert, performing a powerful rejection of embracing a narrative arc she never selected and never supported. This silent gesture is nothing short of a full rejection of the colonial messianic myth that has pervaded interstellar politics, as an effective statement that the destiny and future course of the Fremen are their own to decide and achieve, and not to be decided or realized by any outside messianic agent, however seemingly benevolent his intentions and divine powers. Chani's intentional silence in this turning point is the emblematic silence of an autonomous will exercising itself over against the absolutizing demands of imperial prophecy and messianic fate. Her move serves as the story's final, ultimate rejection of the compulsion to repeat that has ensnared both empire and Fremen in loops of violence and domination. Whereas Paul opts to fulfill and realize the Bene Gesserit's ancient prophecy, thereby opting to continue the violent, messianic cycle of galactic politics, Chani refuses in no uncertain terms to be a party to this scripted act. She will not agree to being inserted into what Caruth would call the "unclaimed experience" (Caruth 11) of a traumatic past that is being in some sense coercively inscribed upon her people's future through the vehicle of messianic prophecy. Her silence thus becomes a considered, intelligent refusal to be included in the traumatic reenactment, a strong assertion that the apparently infinite loop of colonial violence can and will be broken through conscious decision and collective resistance. This climactic gesture of refusal is evidence of the highest potential of strategic silence as a decolonial practice that can shatter cycles of trauma and imperial reproduction.

Chani's walking away is an instance of what Walter Mignolo would identify as a classic case of epistemic disobedience, a refusal to abide by the terms of colonial discourse even when they appear to offer benefits or advantages (Mignolo 178). Her silence is a way of speech that defines possibilities that cannot be encapsulated in imperial talk or prophetic discourse, making room for futures that are truly open and not predestined by ancient prophecies or current power relations. Refusing to be led by Paul, Chani's silence shatters this cycle. It is an ideal instance of Mignolo's "epistemic disobedience...delinking from Western epistemological dominance" (Mignolo 45) and a claiming of the right to a self-fashioned future. Her silence creates what postcolonial theorists would call spaces of opacity that are beyond the reach of the imperial eye, demonstrating that authentic freedom might be found not in completing a prophecy but in denying it altogether. This potent moment confirms that the most subversive way of resisting colonial trauma can be not to fulfill liberation prophecies but to resist accepting the terms under which these prophecies are formulated, opening up real possibilities for different models of political and cultural organization serving indigenous rather than imperial purposes. The thematic investigation of trauma and

ISSN 2349-4948

silence reaches far into hyperspace travel, which operates in Herbert's universe both as the utilitarian basis of imperial power and as a high-level metaphor for the traumatic infrastructure maintaining colonial control over enormous temporal and spatial distances.

The Spacing Guild, which has absolute authority over all interstellar transport, is the fullest expression of silent power in the Imperium's complicated power structure. Their navigators, exposed to extreme physical and mental alteration by extended exposure to vast amounts of spice, develop the power to control the very fabric of space and time itself, allowing for immediate transport of people, commodities, and military forces throughout the galaxy (Herbert 67). The transformation of the navigators is a literalization of the cost of sustaining imperial infrastructure: their bodies are systematically warped beyond recognition as human, and their minds become increasingly unmoored from normal reality by repeated exposure to hyperspace navigation. Their bodies are the "corporeal, living embodiments of these traumatic wounds" (Herbert 89). The hyperspace journey, represented consistently as a non-linear, deeply disorienting passage through what Herbert refers to as "foldspace" (89), is a basic disruption in conventional spatial and temporal associations that overmatches human consciousness to understand or apprehend completely.

This instantaneous yet traumatic jump through folded dimensions is itself a high-octane allegory of the psychological and cultural experience of colonial trauma—the initial traumatic encounter with imperial violence and the lived experience of colonial temporality that upends customary relations of past, present, and future. The traumatic experience of imperial conquest happens so abruptly and so thoroughly beyond the bounds of everyday cultural experience that it is impossible to fully incorporate into available structures of meaning and comprehension, creating lasting psychic and social expenses that find their way into the lives of colonized peoples well beyond the conclusion of the immediate violence. The Guild navigators themselves are the material incarnations of these incessant traumatic wounds generated and perpetuated by imperial infrastructure, their systematic deformation being the cost that needs to be incurred in order to preserve the empire's ability to move and communicate with ease across expanses of space. Jacques Derrida's theory of hauntology offers further theoretical richness in that it suggests that traumatic events "haunt the present with absences and spectral presences, creating fundamental disruptions in linear temporality" (Derrida 10), which preclude normal integration of past, present, and future into meaningful narrative structures. The hyperspace trip immediately reflects this disruptive temporal experience characteristic of psychological trauma, creating "temporal dislocations" and "ruptures which fracture the continuity of normal experience" (45). For the imperial rulers who stand to gain from this system, hyperspace is mostly power, control, and uninterrupted connectivity, which allows for the continuance of galactic hegemony without great personal expense. For the colonized Fremen themselves, though, hyperspace travel is a deep and constant absence—it is a symbol of the future that has been systematically ripped from them, a political and technological future constructed directly on top of their silenced pain and the brutal exploitation of their home world. The perpetual extraction and movement of spice that

ISSN 2349-4948

enables imperial hyperspace travel at the same time highlights the imposed stagnation and ongoing misery visited upon Arrakis and its native inhabitants and establishes a system in which imperial fluidity hinges solely on indigenous immobility and exploitation. This is the paradox at the core: the very substance that ensures the empire's fluid, unbroken connection is responsible for the fragmentation of the indigenous ecological and cultural landscape. The Arrakis wound is the source of the power of the empire. While Frank Herbert's book offers a sophisticated critique of colonialism in the form of the silence paradox, Denis Villeneuve's film adaptations of the book, for all their stunning visual and auditory appeal, offer a vastly simplified and frequently culturally sanitized account of these highly complex themes.

The movies' handling of Fremen culture shows a strong trend toward what postcolonial critics call "aesthetic appropriation"—appropriation of the visual and aural aspects of non-Western cultures while removing or downplaying systematically the difficult political and religious matters that could complicate audience reception or box office success. In the initial novel, the Fremen are depicted as having a subtle, advanced society with intricate inner cultural traditions, multi-level social structures, and profound philosophical traditions that have been established over centuries of desert evolution (Herbert 178). Villeneuve's movies, on the other hand, are more apt to represent the Fremen as very mysterious characters whose rich culture is reduced to symbolize, for the most part, a type of desert power that can be used in a military sense rather than as a fully realized civilization with its own value system, objectives, and internal structures. The purposeful elimination of overt cultural and religious allusions that link the Fremen to historical Islamic and Arabic cultures in the movies is a deliberate act of cultural erasure intended to render the story more digestible to Western mainstream audiences.

For instance, by switching Herbert's employment of jihad to the more accepted Western concept of crusade, Villeneuve effectively re-inscribes the entire story in a European Christian context, domesticating its difficult confrontation with Islamic civilization and anticolonialism (*Dune: Part Two*). This linguistic exchange lowers the great cultural and historical connotations of Herbert's original work to what has been called a "token trace" (Said 234), intended mainly "to harmonize with the desert style" (234) and not to address seriously the cultural heritage that initiated the original writing. The films' institutional sanitization is carried over to their casting and production choices, which have been pointed out by critics for the "near total absence of Muslim and Southwest Asian/North African cast and crew" (Spivak 156) in productions that heavily draw upon and benefit from the aesthetic and cultural tropes of these groups. This methodical exclusion is one of the most blatant forms of cultural appropriation, where visual and aesthetic aspects of oppressed cultures are capitalized upon for profit without the active involvement of those societies. By subordinating commercial value and technical competence to cultural duty and fidelity to representation, Villeneuve's adaptations illustrate the manner in which sympathetic readings of anticolonial stories can unwittingly promote colonial interests when they are made within and for imperial cultural markets, which privilege the values of profit and entertainment over authentic engagement with the political imperatives that motivated the source work.

ISSN 2349-4948

The deep, complex examination of the ways in which trauma, silence, and technological infrastructure overlap to dramatize the wounds of colonization and present the possibilities for resistance that open up within colonized communities themselves is the abiding legacy of Frank Herbert's *Dune* and its film adaptations. Colonial trauma is realized across these texts not just as overt bodily violence or overt political repression but as a powerful, ubiquitous silence that produces holes of memory, representation, and cultural transmission while offering the basis for processes of resistance that lie outside imperial understanding and domination. Hyperspace travel, as the fundamental technological infrastructure that makes possible imperial extent and power across intergalactic space, is at the same time an allegory for the disjunct temporality that defines traumatic experience, constructed upon and maintained through the constant exploitation of Arrakis and its native inhabitants. However, silence in *Dune* moves beyond mere absence or negation to take the form of a deep presence—the presence of unyielding resistance, the presence of unshakable refusal to be accepted on imperial conditions, and finally, the presence of new decolonial futures that are truly open in lieu of being fixed by old prophecies or modern-day power relations.

The Fremen's ultimate success in preserving cultural autonomy and ultimately winning through in combat against imperial forces shows that even such technologically superior colonial systems bear within themselves the seeds of their own eventual downfall, especially when colonized peoples build effective means of defending and advancing their own knowledge systems while seemingly following imperial agendas. However, the novel's ultimate trajectory, which shows the transformation of Fremen resistance into the foundation for a new form of imperial power under Paul's leadership, provides a sobering reminder of the persistent challenges facing any authentic decolonial movement. The facility with which the Fremen's centuries of acquired resistance is directed into backing for a new imperial system demonstrates how colonial systems are able to adapt and reproduce themselves even through ostensibly anticolonial movements, especially if those movements depend on outside leadership or become structured around messianic narratives that tend to serve imperial instead of indigenous interests. The analysis of the novel indicates that true decolonization involves not merely the dethronement of specific colonial governments or economic orders but the revolutionary alteration of the epistemological structures and cultural narratives that underwrite imperial power and render colonial domination a matter of course or fate. By interpreting silence as at once a profound wound that colonial violence has caused and an acute weapon employed in defense of native sovereignty, Herbert's novel and Villeneuve's cinematic rendering collectively assert a compelling vision of political potentiality in which the unnamable provides the rich soil for reshaping colonized conscience and constructing alternative modes of political life predicated on indigenous instead of imperial values and agendas.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

ISSN 2349-4948

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: The data sharing policy does not apply to this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Works cited

Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. Translated by Peggy Kamuf, Routledge, 1994.

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translated by Richard Philcox, Grove Press, 2004.

Freud, Sigmund. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Translated by James Strachey, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 18, Hogarth Press, 1955, pp. 7–64.

Herbert, Frank. *Dune*. Chilton Books, 1965.

Mignolo, Walter D. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. Duke University Press, 2011.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Vintage Books, 1978.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, University of Illinois Press, 1988, pp. 271–313.

Villeneuve, Denis, director. *Dune*. Warner Bros. Pictures, 2021.

---. *Dune: Part Two*. Legendary Pictures, 2024.