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WEAPONIZED NARRATIVE AS A SOCIALLY SYMBOLIC ACT IN FRANK HERBERT'S NOVEL *DUNE*[1]

Abstract: Literary critics have previously discussed Frank Herbert's *Dune* with regard to eco-criticism (Ellis, 1990; Herbert 2003), historicity (DiTommaso, 1992), and state power (Minowitz, 1997; Viberg, 2019). This paper will aim to unveil narrative power structures surreptitiously established and perpetuated by the Bene Gesserit sisterhood, a seemingly apolitical religious order operating behind the scenes. The methodological approach will stem from Frederic Jameson's definition of narrative as a socially symbolic act as well as Foucault's theory of power/knowledge. Coupling Marxism to Lacanian psychoanalysis, Jameson proposed three interpretative horizons, shuffling semantic structures of the text around its ideologically charged core. On the other hand, Foucault argued that power was at the center of all social interactions, seeking to control the very forces of life and set them into productive coordination on the basis of knowledge. Since the Bene Gesserit wield storytelling in a deliberate, premeditated, and surgically precise manner, discourse can be observed as the control mechanism of a shadow, elitist political organization over an unsuspecting populace. Thus, the paper will strive to elaborate on the power of narrative in shaping social as well as political realities in *Dune*.

Key words: *Dune,* socially symbolic act, power/knowledge, weaponized narrative.

1. Introduction

A deciding turn in narratological studies was precipitated by a French literary theorist, Roland Barthes, when he proposed the plurality of interpretative codes, revealing and demystifying multiple meanings of a story. One could even argue, as Allenby (2017, p. 65) does, that it was precisely his works that initiated other branches of humanities into narratological studies: "social scientists and humanists began to appreciate that stories structured reality, created and maintained identity, and provided meaning to people, institutions, and cultures". A similar hermeneutical approach was adopted by Paul Ricoeur, whose theory suggested that narrative discourse transfigures physical events into narrative, providing coherence and structure to our experiences. Hence, narrative can be seen as a crucial human

trait, channeling meaning between an individual and society. In addition, narrative is integrated in and formative of reality itself, to such an extent that Wittgenstein (2002, p. 68, 3) proclaimed that "the limits of my language mean the limits of my world" as well as that "what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence". It is through storytelling that "we endow experiences with meaningfulness, and literature increasingly relies upon this capacity of narrative" (Godzich, 1984, p. xvii). Without stories, one could conclude, there would be no civilization, no culture; and art, specifically literature, could be proposed as its most suitable operating medium.

Yet, if in the spirit of Plato's *Cratylus* we turn to the etymological foundations of the lexeme *narrative* in order to discover its "true name", we shall find that it is derived "from *gnarus*, meaning *knowing*" (Harper, entry: "narrative"). From this definition, *knowledge* pops out as a "fellow guest"[2], tenuously positioned at the kernel of narrative. Consequentially, its latent presence has instigated strenuous philosophical discussions ever since Plato declared that philosophers are exclusively qualified to rule his utopian city, for it is them who possess and use knowledge. As Reeve (2004, p. xiii) comments in his preface to Plato's *Republic* (2004):

> "philosopher-kings unite political power and authority with philosophical knowledge of the transcendent, unchanging form of the good (the good-itself) […] What the philosopher-kings do is construct a political system—including primarily a system of socialization and education—that will distribute the benefits of their specialized knowledge of the good among the citizens at large".

An interesting argument suggested here is the coupling of knowledge and governmental power which, in turn, exerts control over its citizens. The subtle interplay of knowledge and narrative implied in its etymological structure is further convoluted by introducing the concept of power, a subject more relevant, poignant, and current than ever. The urgency of this issue was thoroughly discussed in 2017, when the Center on the Future of War, operating under the Arizona State University, published a collection of essays edited by Brad Allenby and Joel Garreau (Allenby & Garreau, 2017, p. 5) introducing the academic world to the "weaponized narrative" which "seeks to undermine an opponent's civilization, identity, and will by generating complexity, confusion, and political and social schisms".

In the aftermath of Oxford Dictionaries' decision to choose "post-truth" as the Word of the Year in 2016, contributing authors attempted to deconstruct cultural and political paradigms influenced heavily by information manipulation and purposeful, weaponized use of narrative for mass control. Though this collection of essays focuses primarily on the American cultural climate and the devastating consequences of unchecked proliferation of information supported by technology, for the purpose of this paper we will adopt the term "weaponized narrative" in its general, abovementioned sense. The paper will aim to unveil how narrative power structures surreptitiously established and perpetuated by the Bene Gesserit sisterhood are realized in Frank Herbert's novel *Dune* – one of the most influential science fiction (SF) novels rife with political machinations, Biblical allusions, and

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[2] A phrase coined by Miller in his essay "Critic as Host" (1977).

underlying criticism of statehood practices. We will observe the Bene Gesserit through the lens of Frederic Jameson's theory of narrative as a socially symbolic act as well as Foucault's concept of power/knowledge in order to uncover how narrative can shape social and political reality in general.

2. Where have you been, my blue-eyed nun?

According to the *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (D'Ammassa, 2005, p. 124-125), the publication of *Dune* in 1965 won Frank Herbert a widespread following, both among science fiction readers and with the general public. The novel, first published as two separate serials under the titles *Dune World* and *Prophet of Dune,* is an elaborate interstellar political drama set in a corrupt human empire held together only by commercial necessity for the Spice Melange, found on the planet Arrakis. Various great houses of the empire vie for power over the spice, for "he who controls the spice, controls the universe" (Lynch 1984). When the noble house of Atreides is granted management of Arrakis in place of the Harkonnens, a political scheme to destroy the Atreides family is eventually revealed, spurring the young protagonist Paul Atreides onto the path to becoming the Emperor. Arrakis is perhaps the best known fictional planet in SF and its creator is usually considered one of key figures who set the bar for future works in the genre.

Literary criticism regarding *Dune* has primarily focused on detecting issues that can be put into three major categories: eco-criticism (Ellis, 1990; Herbert, 2003), state power (Minowitz, 1997; Viberg, 2019), and historicity (DiTommaso, 1992). However, academic interest in the Bene Gesserit sisterhood seems to be somewhat limited: few are those who have dedicated any attention to the organization, and those who have, have discussed it mostly in the context of religion (Rudd, 2016; Taylor Howard, 2012) or feminist studies (McLean, 1982; Kennedy, 2021). And yet, in the *Dune* universe, being allied to the Bene Gesserit is synonymous with prestige, power, and influence. The Emperor is never without his Truthsayer, the Reverend Mother Gaius Mohiam, who is feared even by the Harkonnens. The Empress herself is a Bene Gesserit adept who bears only daughters under direct orders from her sisterhood, thus bringing the Emperor's dynasty to a close due to the lack of a male heir. It would, hence, seem that there is more than meets the eye when it comes to this particular "religious group". Therefore, we will put forward arguments for the following hypothesis: what the Bene Gesserit define is neither their religion nor their gender – but power embodied through their narrative functioning as much more than a simple tool of manipulation; it is a weapon.

3. Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act

Frederic Jameson decided to open his *The Political Unconscious* (2002, p. ix) with the exclamation: "Always historicize!" For Jameson, no text is inherently

"fresh" or entire of itself. Instead, it is structurally layered, comprising inherited interpretative traditions, inextricable from the cultural paradigms that have produced it. For Jameson, it is of the utmost importance to establish and properly apply the method by which one should analyze the text. For that purpose, he (ibid, 1) proposes political perspective "as the absolute horizon of all reading and all interpretation". Furthermore, Jameson initiates a dialog with the Lacanian psychoanalytic tradition founded on the concepts of the Other, whose primary manifestation is through Language and the unconscious mind. Lacanian terminology will serve Jameson throughout the book as a tool for expressing, supporting, and illustrating his arguments on literary interpretation as such.

When considering the necessity for such a perspective on historical narrative, marked by the constant struggle between the "oppressed and the oppressor", Jameson writes: "[i]t is in detecting the traces of that uninterrupted narrative, in restoring to the surface of the text the repressed and buried reality of this fundamental history, that the doctrine of a political unconscious finds its function and its necessity" and offers his central hypothesis: "[t]he assertion of a political unconscious proposes that we… explore the multiple paths that lead to the unmasking of cultural artifacts as socially symbolic acts" (ibid, p. 4, 5). History thus emerges as a collection of narratively construed Russian dolls – each story existing within another story, creating an endless chain of narratives held together by cultural, or social symbolism. For Jameson, "master narratives" are embedded into the very foundations of civilization as well as our individual minds through the process of *mediation* or *transcoding*, which is a "device of the analyst, whereby the fragmentation and autonomization, the compartmentalization and specialization of the various regions of social life is at least locally overcome, on the occasion of a particular analysis" (ibid, p. 25). In short, every story, every text, every narrative is marred by a crack through which an underlying, hidden story shines. Such narrative fissures are inherently inserted into our society as well as our individual psyche and are translated through the Symbolic act of storytelling. All narrative belongs to the Other's narrative, to the Unconscious which is by default political. Furthermore, it is language that "manages to carry the Real within itself as its own intrinsic or immanent subtext" (ibid, p. 67).

Jameson further proposes three "semantic horizons" or "concentric frameworks" that mark "a widening out of the sense of the social ground of a text" (ibid, p. 61). These horizons are "distinct moments of the process of interpretation," and each one "governs a distinct reconstruction of its object, and construes the very structure of what can now only in a general sense be called 'the text' in a different way" (ibid, p. 61-62). The first semantic horizon is our object of study, or the text, seen as a symbolic act in a "narrowly political" context. The second mode of interpretation "has widened to include the social order" and is "thereby dialectically transformed, and it is no longer construed as an individual 'text' or work in the narrow sense, but has been reconstituted in the form of the great collective and class discourses" (ibid, p 61). In other words, individual texts from the first semantic level of analysis are incorporated into a wider collective dialogue, with an ideologeme as the smallest analytical unit. Jameson further adds that an ideologeme can "manifest

itself either as a pseudoidea – a conceptual or belief system, an abstract value, an opinion or prejudice – or as a protonarrative, a kind of ultimate class fantasy about the 'collective characters'" (ibid, p. 73). The third horizon, the *ideology of form,* is that of general history, broadly conceived as the totalizing code which sustains and transcends the others. It is a transformative narrative system where "the symbolic messages are transmitted to us by the coexistence of various sign systems which are themselves traces or anticipations of modes of production" (ibid, p. 62).

Jameson's critical vision presented in the book is one of movement, of a peculiar flow of a story that is all stories through its culturally integrative stages; and yet, it is never indicative of its self-sufficiency. In addition, an ideologeme, charged with political power set to be sprung into action, is the axis on which all discourse relies and maintains its structural integrity. Jameson's musings on ideology, power, and storytelling could be said to have been anticipated by Frank Herbert almost twenty years before the publication of *The Political Unconscious*. By giving breath to the Bene Gesserit, Herbert effectively created a political organization seeking (and attaining) control across multiple planets of the universe through surgically precise use of narrative and its immanent power. One might even argue that of all the tools of manipulation Herbert imbues the Bene Gesserit with, Missionaria Protectiva is by far the most potent.

3.1. To protect and to control

The "Terminology of the Imperium" defines Missionaria Protectiva as "the arm of the Bene Gesserit order charged with sowing infectious superstitions on primitive worlds, thus opening those regions to the exploitation by the Bene Gesserit" (Herbert, 2018, p. 904). In essence, it is a discursive project aimed at sowing seeds of legends in nascent societies across the universe. This narrative practice was cleverly designed as a means of personal protection and survival – if a Bene Gesserit sister found herself in danger, she could exploit her knowledge of the Missionaria Protectiva in order to manipulate the natives whose culture had succumbed to their carefully planned influence. However, protection of a sister is not the program's sole goal – through establishing narrative control over an unsuspecting populace, the Bene Gesserit can gain a political foothold and exercise control over a planet's society, thus gaining additional power.

One of the earliest inklings of the Missionaria Protectiva's presence on Arrakis can be discerned upon the Atreides' arrival to their new fief, when the Fremen welcome Paul chanting "Mahdi", likening him to the prophesized messianic figure. But as Herbert notes, "their shout was more a question than a statement, for as yet they could only hope that he was the one foretold as Lisan al-Gaib, the Voice from the Outer World" (Herbert, 2008, p. 87). Lady Jessica is acutely aware that the Bene Gesserit have weaved a thick web of legends and superstitions, shaping Fremen religion as well as their social structure: "[s]he must've been good, that Bene Gesserit of the Missionaria Protectiva. These Fremen are beautifully prepared to believe in us" (Herbert, 2008, p. 239). But, in order to secure their place among the Fremen,

Paul and his mother have to prove their compatibility with the legend's basic tenants, and Lady Jessica is resolute in wielding her knowledge of the Missionaria Protectiva in order to comply with the Fremen's expectations. Faced with the ultimate test of her abilities, Lady Jessica extrapolates the narrative embedded in the Fremen collective subconscious and applies it directly to her immediate need for safety and influence:

> "She knew the cant of the Missionaria Protectiva, knew how to adapt the teachings of legend and fear and hope to her emergency needs. […] *Our Missionaria Protectiva seldom fails. A place was prepared for us in this wilderness*" (Herbert, 2008, p. 247-248, original italics).

Following the test, Paul and Jessica become entrenched in the social structure of the Fremen, allowing them to exploit, shape, and maneuver the faithful for their own political goals. If we observe the narrative of the Missionaria Protectiva in Jameson's terms, we will find that it successfully transitions through all three proposed stages of discursive evolution: the political, the social, and the historical. Jameson (2002, p. 62) defines the first analytical level as a "political horizon – in which history is reduced to a series of punctual events and crises in time". It can be interpreted as a record of a series of events in a fictive context, constructed as a plot by an individual; or, in short, it is a story in its most general sense. The prophecy of Mahdi, planted by the Missionaria Protectiva, corresponds to Jameson's political horizon in the sense that it is constructed as the narrative realization of events; however, one important distinction refers to the temporal aspect of the narrative bound not to the past, but to the future: it anticipates characters, their behavior, origin, abilities, as well as the consequences of their actions.

In short, the prophecy becomes a cultural artifact of the Fremen society functioning as a symbolic act through which the tension between two opposing social groups – the Bene Gesserit and the Fremen – can be resolved. Narrative imposes itself as a "resolution of determinate contradictions" (Jameson, 2002, p. 66). Furthermore, the act of seeding the prophecy, establishing it as an esthetic and discursive practice, "is itself ideological, and the production of aesthetic or narrative form is to be seen as an ideological act in its own right" (ibid, p. 64). The introduction of ideology, embodied through the ideologeme, signifies movement from a symbolic function of narrative to the second, social horizon of interpretative practice.

By advancing towards "master fantasy about the interaction of collective subjects, we have moved to the very borders of our second horizon" (ibid, p. 65-66). Jameson's social horizon of literary analysis is concerned with the conflict of "ideologemes" – worldviews constructed within the social class and its relation to other classes, commonly buried deep in our unconscious and brought forth through narrative expression. However, due to the fact that an ideologeme is inherently concerned with politics as an expression of power, Jameson dubs it the "political unconscious". In other words, one is not aware that their beliefs are conditioned by external factors, their social circumstances. Narrative, hence, becomes a playground of ideologemes, a representation of unresolved conflict manifested as tension between opposing discourses. However, these discursive (and perhaps, ontological) clashes

do not play out in vacuum – they emerge within the general unity of a shared master code. In *Dune*, by perpetuating the prophecy of Mahdi, the Messiah, the Fremen society encloses it within its political unconscious, actively (but not consciously) performing what Jameson calls the "rewriting" of narrative – hence, the Bene Gesserit's tool of protection and control becomes the core political and religious belief for the people of Arrakis.

Both the Bene Gesserit and the Fremen operate within a shared discursive code, the cultural discourse centered on the expectation of the One, the Savior. For the Fremen, that is Mahdi, he who shall bring life to Arrakis and lead the Fremen to salvation. The Bene Gesserit, on the other hand, have worked tirelessly for generations waiting for genetically perfect the Kwisatz Haderach. This cultural paradigm based on the expectation of a singular messianic character is crucial to both factions, though their ultimate purpose is entirely conflicting; for, where the Bene Gesserit seek control of their male counterpart in order to gain power over human civilization, the Fremen demand liberation from the harsh realities of life on Arrakis and release from ascetic, rigid control imposed by their survival-centered society. Antagonism between these two social spheres emerges from their opposing relationship with the notion of control and through the shared cultural paradigm or the common code of expectation.

Finally, we arrive at the last concentric framework of Jameson's analysis: the historical horizon. This third interpretative level revolves around the idea of a dominant mode of production, which can be understood as a system of thought or production generated by the dominant social or economic arrangement. The historical level, as Jameson claims, is marked by the tension or clash among modes of production as seen diachronically. Therefore, we will consider the Missionaria Protectiva's historical dialogue with the Fremen society as representative of the conflicting modes of production. On one hand, the Bene Gesserit symbolize order and stability brought forth by feudalism – as an organization formally operating under and through the Empire, the sisterhood imposes control over numerous planets and human civilizations by utilizing premeditated political engagement. On the other hand, the Fremen embody the principles of religious fervor, warmongering tendencies, and chaos that springs from unchecked fanaticism. Entropy versus stagnation, chaos versus stability, unstoppable force pitted against an immovable object. In an attempt to strengthen their control and gain power through narrative manipulation of the Arrakeen, the Bene Gesserit inadvertently incite Jihad, which, in Jameson's terms, can be perceived as a cultural revolution. The essential function of the prophetic narrative has been drastically changed: initially charged with maintaining the Fremen in check, feeding their superstition and garnering their need for a unifying figure in order to keep them pliant to manipulation, the prophecy of Mahdi has been reconfigured to a spark that starts the flame of interplanetary war, instigating a violent succession of the dominant mode of production. Religious fanaticism of the Fremen can thus be understood as an expression of an emerging new mode of production, as it succeeds the feudal rule of the Emperor Shadam IV.

In conclusion, the political ideologeme established by the Bene Gesserit has formed deep roots in the political unconscious of the Fremen. Through the process

of transcoding, Lady Jessica, a Bene Gesserit herself, capitalizes on the ancient legend that has become the master narrative. The final form of the ideologeme is that of a narrative palimpsest, enclosing all three stages of semantic evolution: an initially symbolic act aimed at reconciling the strain between the Fremen and the Bene Gesserit "has widened to include the social order" (mirrored in the social organization of the Fremen which, in turn, mirrors the Bene Gesserit hierarchical structure with the Reverend Mother at the helm), ultimately enabling Paul and Jessica to insert themselves into the Fremen society as "collective characters". Finally, this "protonarrative" branches into the third semantic horizon, a transformative, all-encompassing narrative system speared by Paul's ascension to the throne and culminating in Jihad, which instigates a forceful succession of modes of production.

The Bene Gesserit narrative project becomes a story within the wider circle of Paul Muad'Dib's ascension to power among the Fremen, which is, again, further superimposed by the narrative of the Emperor Paul Atreides, constructing a multitude of cultural artifacts transformed by narrative mediation into the *ideology of form*. Furthermore, if we assume that the case of Arrakis is not a solitary one, it becomes evident that numerous other civilizations of *Dune's* universe could have been affected by the Missionaria Protectiva. Therefore, the program represents the sisterhood's vast, yet generally obscure power to shape individual perspectives, social structures, and ultimately, the course of history as a whole. In their hands, narrative becomes a powerful weapon: the distortion of truth, concealment of intention, and deeply rooted sense of control over a society's future sharpens the narrative into a "self-reinforcing loop" (Allenby & Garreau, 2017, p. 7).

And the sisterhood is acutely aware that their power stems from their narrative: for, as Lady Jessica says, "[t]ongues are Bene Gesserit's first learning" (Herbert, 2008, p. 52). This is a particularly interesting line since it indicates that the weaponized narrative of the Bene Gesserit is *learned*. It presupposes and operates through knowledge – both when it comes to effectively implanting narrative into the collective or political unconscious, as well as recognizing its patterns and utilizing it fully to one's benefit. The knowledge of narrative strategies, as well as complete mastery of it, is the bedrock of Bene Gesserit power. This knowledge, coupled with their deep understanding of human psychology, enables the sisterhood to rise above mere clerical servants of the Empire and become one of the greatest powerhouses of the universe. Since we have previously determined that narrative is etymologically pregnant with knowledge, we will now consider an author who extensively discussed the interdependence of power, narrative, and knowledge – Michele Foucault.

4. Towards Discursive Power/Knowledge

Jameson's aforementioned credo "Always historicize!" echoes sonorously as a reflection of Marxist preoccupation with history, typically portrayed through the lens of class struggle. In the 1950s and 1960s France, Marxist thought and existentialist phenomenology provided the dominant forces in intellectual life, where one author

particularly distinguished himself – Michel Foucault. His initial studies attempted to detect connections between the reconfiguration of discursive fields with the organization of institutions such as asylums, clinics, and hospitals (Rouse, 2005, p. 95). Perhaps the most intriguing idea that Foucault explores is the interplay of knowledge and power, where he juxtaposes massive but infrequent exercises of destructive force (public executions, military occupations, violent suppressions of insurrections) and the uninterrupted constraints imposed through training and discipline. Discipline and training, he claims, can reconstruct the relationship between the human body, knowledge, and eventually, power, resulting in "new gestures, actions, habits, and skills, and ultimately new kinds of people" (Rouse, 2005, p. 97-98):

> [t]he human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it. A 'political anatomy', which was also a 'mechanics of power', was being born; it defined how one may have a hold over others' bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines. Thus, discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, 'docile' bodies" (Foucault, 1995, p. 138).

In addition, Foucault's first volume of his *History of Sexuality, The Will to Knowledge* deals with historical reconfigurations of knowledge intertwined with new forms of power and domination (Rouse, 2005, p. 95). The central idea is the notion of "power" as enforced by a circulation or distribution of knowledge, the type of power which is discursive in nature and which enforces its norms on society. Foucault (1978, p. 59) calls this phenomenon "power/knowledge" and he detects its most poignant expression in the act of confession: he claims that our society has become "a singularly confessing society" in which "one confesses – or is forced to confess". For Foucault (ibid, p. 44), a confession is a ritualistic exchange of discourses or narratives "through questions that extorted admissions, and confidences that went beyond the questions that were asked" where he ultimately reveals that the main goal of this process is the production of truth.

4.1. Veritas Vos Liberabit

In Frank Herbert's *Dune*, the discursive production of truth is of the utmost importance to maintaining political power. The Emperor relies heavily on his Truthsayer, the Bene Gesserit Reverend Mother, to act as his Grand Inquisitor and elicit truth from his subjects. The Truthsayer in Dune's universe is greatly revered and feared for her unique ability to observe the minutia of human gestures and vocal cadence to such an extent that no secret can escape her, as demonstrated in the striking interrogation scene of Baron Harkonen:

> "[a]n old woman in a black aba robe with hood drawn down over her forehead detached herself from the Emperor's suite, took up station behind the throne, one scrawny hand resting on the quartz back. Her face peered out of the hood like a witch caricature – sunken cheeks and eyes, an overlong nose, skin mottled and with protruding veins.
> The Baron stilled his trembling at sight of her. The presence of the Reverend Mother

Gaius Helen Mohiam, the Emperor's Truthsayer, betrayed the importance of this audience. […]
One of the witch's clawlike hands tapped the Emperor's shoulder. She leaned forward, whispered in his ear" (Herbert, 2008, p. 380-381).

This scene masterfully denotes the archetypal imagery of an ancient, mysterious woman, clad in black, looming behind the Emperor (a symbol of masculine power), communicating (in)directly her social ranking. She is (both literally and figuratively) the power behind the throne, with her clawlike hand reaching for authority, grasping it, controlling it with her unquestioned "truth". Not only does she hold significant political sway over the Emperor, the Truthsayer exercises power over the confessor, too, through "the exchange of discourses" (by asking questions and eliciting answers). In addition, she is also the one who controls the process of interrogation through careful observation and "reading" body language – or, as Foucault (1978, p. 62) writes: "the agency of domination does not reside in the one who speaks (for it is he who is constrained), but in the one who listens and says nothing; not in the one who knows and answers, but in the one who questions and is not supposed to know". These narrative-based techniques of truth-extraction are, in *Dune*'s universe, unique to the Bene Gesserit, and are painstakingly drilled into their adepts from a young age. So, if tongues are the Bene Gesserit's first learning, as Lady Jessica suggests, we can argue that tools of narrative manipulation are their second most valuable skillset:

> "'*[n]ow, motivational patterns are going to be similar among all espionage agents. That is to say: there will be certain types of motivation that are similar despite differing schools or opposed aims. You will study first how to separate this element for your analysis – in the beginning, through interrogation patterns, that betray the inner orientation of those under analysis. You will find it fairly simple to determine the root languages of your subjects, of course, both through voice inflection and speech pattern*'" (Herbert, 2008, p. 118, italics in original).

The Bene Gesserit employ speech pattern recognition in order to analyze an individual's psyche and gain an upper hand in the dialectics of power. It is a calculated practice which effectively transubstantiates knowledge into a control mechanism. But the sense of looming danger firmly attached to the Bene Gesserit is further supported by the fact that the sisterhood has another, more palpable narrative weapon in their arsenal – the Voice.

The Bene Gesserit's command over one's unconscious finds its most poignant expression in the Voice; by extrapolating the powers of suggestion and psychological manipulation, they can dominate a person directly, thus nullifying free will – all they need to do is simply say the Word. According to Mack (2011, p. 44), Herbert establishes the Voice as the Bene Gesserit's "direct access to another character's subconscious" achieved by analyzing and simulating her victim's speech. This echoing simulation of one's own voice, a process Mack describes as "a twisted form of persuasive self-talk", overrides an individual's ability to discern their own free will from that of the external Other. By "reading" people's body language as well as "cracking" their speech code, the Bene Gesserit attain thorough understanding of

a person's subconscious operating systems, forcing their subjects into submission, where "power shifts towards those who understand and deploy narrative […] Power leaks away from the naïve faith in individual rationality" (Allenby & Garreau, 2017, p. 9). Lady Jessica reveals just how sinister the Voice can be by underlining its potential to actively simulate independent thought – if she so desired, the Duke would obediently marry her, and would even be convinced that this was an expression of his own free will. The gray area between an individual's Self and the Other turns into a topos of simulated, narratively imposed reality.

Though they claim that they seek true "humans" in order to "set them free", in the presence of a Bene Gesserit all humans can be reduced to Foucauldian "docile bodies" – "controlled and placed under great scrutiny, in order to ensure that they function efficiently and support the institution which disciplines" (Godamunne, 2011, p. 39). Narrative, either wrung from the individual or forced upon them, becomes a source of physical as well as mental violence. By transforming their discursive practices into a weaponized narrative, the Bene Gesserit are able to attain and maintain power over the Empire's society and beyond.

5. Concluding Remarks

It is no wonder, then, that the Bene Gesserit of *Dune* are notoriously dubbed as "witches" – for they are ephemeral, ancient, and powerful. By juggling knowledge, narrative, and power, they create a weaponized narrative which can undermine entire planetary social systems or galactic empires. Furthermore, their specific abilities of extracting the truth and reading the human subconscious have the potential to shape both individual as well as collective social and political realities. The theoretical approach applied throughout the analysis relied on the common element of placing narrative in a wider, intertextual environment: both Jameson and Foucault underline that narrative cannot be observed separately from the cultural contexts from which it stems, but is a part of an intricate web of social, cultural, and historical paradigms.

On a final note, if we consider our current cultural climate, marked by the age of "post-truth", "fake news", and geopolitical instability, it is perhaps appropriate to underline the need for further discussion on the nature of weaponized narrative. In a post-postmodern age, the circulation of discourses, ideologies, and power is moving on a Möbius strip, and the feedback loop between objective reality and literature is hyper-accelerated, hyper-inflated; hyper is a hyper is a hyper. We should not be so naïve as to believe we are immune to weaponized narrative or that we can escape it. Yet, one thing is certain – we must not allow it to "pass over in silence".

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ОРУЖАНО ПРИПОВЕДАЊЕ КАО ДРУШТВЕНО СИМБОЛИЧКИ ЧИН У РОМАНУ ФРЕНКА ХЕРБЕРТА *ДИНА*

Досадашња критика промишљала је роман Френка Херберта *Дина* кроз призму екокритике (Елис, 1990; Херберт, 2003), историографије (ДиТомасо, 1992) и институционалне моћи (Миновиц, 1997; Вајберг, 2019). Овај рад ће настојати да разоткрије приповедне структуре моћи које успоставља и одржава сестринство Бене Гесерит, једна наизглед аполитична верска организација која дејствује иза друштвених кулиса. Методолошки приступ ослањаће се на Џејмсонову дефиницију приповедања као друштвено симболичког чина, као и на Фукоову теорију о моћи/знању. Упаривши марксизам са лакановском психоанализом, Џејмсон је предложио три интерпретативна хоризонта, где се семантичке структуре текста ротирају око идеолошки бремените осовине. С друге стране, Фуко је тврдио да се моћ налази у сржи свих друштвених односа. Моћ успоставља контролу над свакодневним животним процесима а претпоставља знање као свој постулат. Дакле, будући да сестринство Бене Гесерит барата приповедањем плански, циљано и хируршки прецизно, њихов наративни дискурс се може посматрати као механизам контроле над широким народним масама. Стога, рад ће настојати да разигра моћ приповедања у процесу обликовања како друштвених, тако и политичких парадигми у *Дини*.

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