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History and Historical Effect in Frank Herbert’s Dune

The historical universe of Dune was created by Frank Herbert in order to establish and define the various structures and institutions of the Imperium. These in turn underpin the many themes which weave throughout the novel, as well as providing a solid historical grid by which Paul Muad’Dib and his actions can be assessed. By examining the effects of the history of the Imperium and the idea of prescient history, this essay will argue that history and historical effect play essential roles in the grounding and development of the numerous plots in Dune, while also advancing the "Vitality struggle" as a major theme in the book.

Herbert believes that history is a linear and progressive process, whose effects, while not always predictable, are nonetheless logical and understandable. The Butlerian Jihad provides a good illustration of this. It is referred to it as "The Last Jihad" (TERMS: RICHESE), thus implying that it was not the only one to have occurred to that point, and we know that Paul himself foresaw a coming crusade in many of his precognitive visions. This apparent incidence of multiple crusades should not be taken as being representative of a theory of cyclical history. Indeed, Herbert’s treatments of the diverse religious traditions and the politico-social history of all aspects of the Imperium clearly reveal the evolutionary nature of his vision of history. Herbert must have realized that the persistence of certain ideas and events in history is indicative of the sporadic maturation of the race rather than an endless cycle of devolution and evolution. The Butlerian Jihad is simply the most important event in the rich and varied setting of Dune, consistent with Herbert’s own conceptions of progressive history.

Herbert also believes that humans are inherently unequal. In Dune
this fundamental imparity stems from the Jihad’s general and insidious effects upon every level of Imperial society, the hierarchical "faufreluches" and military systems, and the different types of training that various groups within the Empire receive. Under the hierarchical system of Imperial society, some lives have a diminished value, others a greater value, and those of "humans" (as opposed to less aware "people") exceptional worth. These twin leitmotifs of inequality and feudal hierarchism in history are dear to Herbert:

I now know...that all humans are not created equal. In fact, I believe attempts to create some abstract equalization create a morass of injustices that rebound on the equalizers. (Herbert, "Dangers," 99-100)

Indeed, the deepest and perhaps most salient statement of the entire novel reflects this thought:

Figure 1 (The Butlerian Jihad and the Vitality Struggle) and Figure 2 (The Development of Religious Traditions)

My father [Paul reflected] once told me that respect for the truth comes close to being the basis for all morality. "Something cannot emerge from nothing," he said. This is profound thinking if you understand how unstable "the truth" can be. (166/203/207)

1. The Butlerian Jihad (201-108 B.G.) is the key to the nature of the Imperium before the Arrakis crisis, the broad effects of which are detailed in Figure 1. This chart should provide a guide to the more elaborate discussions of the particular ramifications of the Jihad given below, even though general topics such as "humanness" and "concept of inequality" cannot be as rigorously defined as they appear to be. It is essential that the sum of the effects of the history of the Imperium be understood in the framework it provides for the plots and themes in Dune and in the way it creates and supports the third major theme.

The Vitality struggle is the conflict between the philosophy of the Imperium and that of Arrakis and is a struggle that involves a difference in degree rather than in methodology. As Octavianus rose to prominence and power within the institutions of the old Roman Republic while laying the foundations of the Empire, so too did Paul Atreides come to rule an empire by operating within the system. The amount of control an empire needs naturally
encourages a lowering of race consciousness and a slowing of history, it would be a grave mistake to regard Paul Muad'Dib as totally eliminating such inertial forces in the history of empires.

2. Feudalism and Technology. The Butlerian Jihad brought Imperial technology to a specialized and codified halt. By forcing human minds to develop, the Revolt ultimately promoted religion over science and technology, and humanness over machines and artificial minds. All aspects of the technology of the Imperium were compartmentalized: the index of acceptable machines, the concentration of higher-order mathematics within the limited confines of the Spacing Guild, the virtual banishment of atomic energy (and probably research), and the continued use of millennia-old technological terminology. This codification and specialization is most readily seen in the military, which has finally overcome the legacy of the longbows of Crécy, where the death-knell was sounded for personal combat on the battlefield as both military practice and social privilege. The limited nature of war in the Imperium, encompassing such rigid structures as kanly, the Dictum Familia, and the rules prescribed by the Great Convention, was augmented by both the development of the personal field-generating shield and the reintroduction of the value of the human factor in combat. élan is useless if soldiers use longbows or lasguns, but lasguns are fatal in a universe dominated by the "Holtzman Effect." Consequently, Dune reintroduced the grand conceptions of personal combat and heroic elitism, the presence of crack forces such as the Sardaukar and the Fremen, and the inclusion of personal weaponry like the kindjal, the slip-tip, the shigawire garrote, and the maula pistol.

Allied with this is the personalization of warfare itself, where the emphasis has shifted from the largely unavailable superior technology to personal battle training. Socio-political rank determines the quality of training received by individuals or armies within the Imperium, as the basic concepts of feudalism are taken to an extraordinary length. Herbert thus devotes much attention to descriptions of new levels of physiological and psychological combat training, to the idea of subtle, often paralinguial House or group codewords, and to the growth of battle language. These developments lead to a difference in the fighting capabilities of the troops and thus to the connective plot of Dune, which unfolds in three ways: in the Padishah Emperor's plan to use the Sardaukar in conjunction with the House Harkonnen in order to thwart Duke Leto's advanced martial training program, in Leto's counterplan to recruit the Fremen to nullify Sardaukar superiority, and in Paul's eventual victory through his use of Fremen in battle
against Imperial and Harkonnen troops. This plot, intertwined with the major themes of the book, quite clearly reveals the Vitality struggle to be one of degree, since Paul worked within the historical techno-military system while executing his coup d’état.

3. Faufreluches: Social, Political, Economic. Feudalistic house/clan societies are historically unstable over any prolonged length of time. Faufreluches, then, imposes the artificial stability needed to maintain the rigid structure of the Imperium. It brought society, politics, and economics into its compass, influencing and affected by the codification and stagnation of the techno-military field, but does not include religion. The best definition of faufreluches is the terse "a place for every man and every man in his place" (TERMS: FAUFRELUCHES).¹⁰ For Herbert, faufreluches is a historical language—a language of society, politics, and economics.¹¹

Faufreluches fosters the inequality which underpins the idea of personal value. Thus arose the emphasis on training the body to produce more value and the (primarily Bene Gesserit) search for extremely valuable humans. The cream of the Imperial family and the families and chief retainers of the Great Houses are extremely well-trained, even beyond the extraordinary capabilities of the Sardaukar or the Fremen.¹² Herbert uses many examples to stress this point. Referring to the pre-Jihad computers, the mentat-Assassin Piter de Vries scornfully remarks to the Baron Harkonnen, "You yourself, Baron, could outperform those machines" (15/18/18). Paul has little trouble killing an experienced Fremen warrior (240-44/295-300/300-05), and Feyd-Rautha shows his mettle by going the distance against Muad'Dib (386-89/476-80/482-86). Feyd himself is the product of both an intensive juggling of bloodlines (409/504/508-09) and a superb training program. Simply put, the nobles and some Bene Gesserit are better trained than even the Fremen or the Sardaukar; but as both the latter are far superior to the bulk of the Atreides or Harkonnen armies, so those troops are themselves beyond the typical Landsraad recruit, all of whom surpass the average planetary populace at the base of the faufreluches.

Paul represents the zenith of this training. He has been taught by a Bene Gesserit (Prana/Bindu and the Way), a mentat (hyper-computation and the use of mnemonics), warmasters (personal combat and battle tactics: Fremen battle tactics under Muad'Dib "smacked of Halleck himself...and Idaho...and even of Hawat" [304/373/379]), and a Duke (politics and leadership). He is at the apex of the pyramidal faufreluches, even down to his superior genetic history. Hence another plot in Dune is well grounded, as Paul needs and uses this training in his encounters with and during his rise amongst the Fremen, not excepting his gaining of
Liet-Kynes’ timely assistance and eventual alliance.

While the medieval faufreluches emphasizes a homogeneity of the rules of conduct for the Imperium, it equally stresses the strict differences between its power groups. The Great Convention demands the ever-present formal preamble, "The forms must be obeyed" (TERMS: GREAT CONVENTION), yet faufreluches insists on rank and place. Herbert outdoes himself in this regard with his subtle and often indirect references to the tyranny of oversimplification: neither Duke Leto (63/90/85), nor Baron Harkonnen (191-92/232-33/238-40), nor even Staban Tuk (207/254/259-59), despite their respective intelligence services, knows anything about the Fremen; Jessica is a fully trained Bene Gesserit adept, yet is unable to decipher Harkonnen battle language (151/187/190); Thufir Hawat, despite three generations of service to a powerful duke, doesn’t even begin to suspect the powers of the Bene Gesserit (120-25/149-54/150-57); and the Sardaukar, the Guild, the Bene Gesserit, the Fremen, and even the Suk Medical School (Feyd-Rautha: "Everyone knew you couldn’t subvert Imperial conditioning!" [16/19/19]) all seem to have known the absolute minimum about each other. As we shall discover, the result of this rigid diversity is to promote a dangerous compartmentalization of the gene pool, which is a significant piece of the Vitality struggle. While learned specialties should not affect the genes of the learners, the strictures of Imperial society, as exhibited in these sub-groups, mean that horizontal social and genetic movement is extremely limited and that vertical movement was nigh impossible. For example, it would be unlikely that a "pyon" on Arrakis would ever have enough money to leave the planet and thus would be isolated by rank, specialization, and location. Even a Great House is bound by the Emperor and the Landsraad to its particular fiefdom.

The link between faufreluches and the stagnation of technology is the enigmatic Spacing Guild, whose historical relationship with the Imperium is fundamentally symbiotic. Space travel is monopolized by the Guild,14 which controls most aspects of inter-planetary banking, economics, and military policy. In fact, it was a Guild-B.G. compact that placed Shaddam IV on the throne with his promise to keep the spice flowing and to continue to allow the Bene Gesserit breeding program. This leads to a primary plot-line whereby the fact that the compact did not allow Shaddam to have sons meshed perfectly with the Bene Gesserit design to place on the throne the Kwisatz Haderach supposed to result from the union between Feyd Harkonnen and Leto’s "daughter."15 The plot thickens, of course, when Jessica presents Leto with a son instead of a daughter.
The Spacing Guild also provides an excellent illustration of the Vitality struggle. Spawned by faufreluches, codification, and stagnation, it is a force that had specialized for so long that it had become a parasite, unable to exist independently of the life upon which it fed.... They [the Guild] might have taken Arrakis when they realized the error of specializing on the melange awareness-spectrum narcotic for their navigators.... Instead, they existed moment to moment, hoping the seas in which they swam might produce a new host when the old one died. The Guild navigators, gifted with limited prescience, had made the fatal decision: they'd chosen always the clear, safe course that leads ever downward into stagnation. (377/465/472)

Paul, however, does not use a different awareness-spectrum narcotic (the Water of Life being a more potent form of the ecologically similar melange), nor does his prescience differ in essence from that of the Guild navigators (although Paul sees more clearly, due to his mental training, his Bene Gesserit past, and the potency of the Water), so that the Vitality struggle proves once again to be one of degree. Paul does not escape from the system when he becomes the Prophet, but instead adjusts his homeostasis and that of his affected radius by a significant number of vitality and risk factors. Strangely, of all the power groups and institutions in *Dune*, it is only the parasitic Guild that could break methodology, since it has the absolute ability to move defeated or renegade Houses "outside the system" (15/18/18) or to Tupile, thus completely severing those Houses from the restrictions and demands of faufreluches.

Faufreluches, too, leads to degeneration (83/102/103), and this again fits into the Vitality struggle. Paul's unwanted blood-crusade will bring change and new tests for humanity to survive—Leto remarks that "Arrakis makes us moral and ethical" in a *vital* sort of way (83/102/104). Paul Muad'Dib, being the knife edge of that Arrakis istislah encompassing aql and its verifier, the tahaddi al-burhan, becomes the human gom jabbar in the conflict between the compartmentalization of faufreluches and "the need of the race to renew its scattered inheritance, to cross and mingle and infuse their bloodlines in a great new pooling of genes" (158-59/196/199). Like the Guild, Faufreluches is the "clear, safe course" that leads "ever down into stagnation" (175/214/218), while "Arrakis teaches the attitude of the knife—chopping off what's incomplete and saying: 'Now it's complete because it's ended here'" (137/169/172). Herbert maintains law in the faufreluches by uniting it with economics, politics, and society: on Arrakis the law is religion.

4. *Religious History.* An overview of the historical development of the religious traditions in *Dune* appears in Figure 2, of which the
key parts are the lines that directly affect "ARRAKIS." As the Missionaria Protectiva reinforces Fremen religious conventions, so too does Pardot Kynes’ ecological views have a profound effect on the Fremen perception of their future: the former transformed an autochthonous Kwisatz Haderach-like idea into the concept of Lisan al-Gaib, the Voice from the Outer World; the latter uses the latent Zensunni concept of the sihaya and fuses it with the open-ended predictions of dry-land ecology to generate a Fremen hope for paradise in three to five centuries’ time. Moreover, just as the Panoplia Propheticus and Kynes’ theories affected the Fremen, so they also pave the way for Muad’Dib. The Ichwan Bedwine, already laden with the rigors of a religion focused by hardship, the memories of forced wanderings, and the need for survival (cf. the Kitab al-Ibar), absorb the concept of a Mahdi from the Outer Void, who would descend to lead the faithful out of bondage. The old Imperial planetologist knows with absolute certainty that the table is being set when he warns his son, "No more terrible disaster could befall your people than for them to fall into the hands of a Hero" (221/271/276).

Herbert’s molding of religious history facilitates the evolution of both the ecological theme and the theme of the dangers of a superhero, as well as providing an elaborate backdrop for many of the lesser sub-plots. The major reason for Arrakis’ suitability as a receptacle for Herbert’s collection of religious traditions is that he makes the planet into a living embodiment of the conception of a total amalgamation between law and religion. Compare:

Rom. 13.1-2 (RSV): Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. (2) Therefore he who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.

Qura’n,20 S.4 A.80: He who obeys The Messenger, obeys Allah: But if any turn away, we have not sent thee to watch over them.

S.17 A.96: Say: "Enough is Allah for a witness between me and you: for He is well acquainted with his servants, and He sees (all things)."

"The Religion of Dune" (408/503/508): When
religion and politics ride the same cart, when that cart is driven by a living holy man (baraka), nothing can stand in their path. (390/481/488): We Fremen have a saying: "God created Arrakis to train the faithful." One cannot go against the word of God.

Paul himself is the nexus of this fusion, being at one and the same time Duke Paul Atreides and the Fremen Prophet Paul Muad’Dib.21 The conflict between the society/politics/economics/law of Fauvelanches (represented by the Padishah Emperor) and the religion/law of Arrakis (Paul) culminates in the Arrakis coup and its aftermath, and, as a result, constitutes a fundamental part of the Vitality struggle.

5. The Search for Humanness. The final historical effect of the Butlerian Jihad is the search for humanness. It has been said that "the Butlerian Jihad was the birth agony of a new science of the subjective" (O’Reilly 58). This new science explores the development of human physiological and psychological potential as opposed to the largely forbidden artificial minds and thinking machines. It develops primarily as three mental schools: the Guild (mathematics and navigation), the mentats (computation and analysis), and the Bene Gesserit (politics and genetics). Since the mentats and the Guild are inherently parasitic service institutions, it is the Bene Gesserit who deserve our attention, inasmuch as it is they who attempt to shatter the limits of the question "What is it to be human?" and thus to define the shifting concepts of consciousness and awareness.

The sisterhood’s plan is to lift Homo sapiens from animal awareness to people, to humans, and then to trained humans and perhaps beyond. Their credo is summed up by the thoughts which float through Paul’s mind during his prana-bindu exercise (4/5/5) and by the words and meaning of the Litany against Fear (7/8/8). Their techniques include learning methods ("every experience carries its lesson" [53/64/66]), an intensive training regimen (the Voice, the Way, Prana/Bindu, hyper-awareness/Truthsaying), an extensive education program (about poisons, narcotics,22 politics, and genetics), and a comprehensive breeding strategy designed to facilitate their quest for humanness. All this is aimed at producing a human gom jabbar, the Kwisatz Haderach.

The Bene Gesserit’s purpose is explicit: "we...sift people to find the humans" (9/10/10). It is also faulty. As Paul remarks:

You [Bene Gesserit] saw part of what the race  

http://www.depauw.edu/sfs/backissues/58/ditom58art.htm
needs, but how poorly you saw it. You think
to control human breeding and intermix a
select few according to your master plan!
How little you understand.... (382/471/478)

In setting the B.G. and their mating index against the Fremen and
their genetic jihad, Herbert creates a historical contrast. In the
course of the Vitality struggle, *Arrakis is the gom jabbar of the
Fremen*; any Fremen, consequently, is by definition human. The
Missionaria Protectiva's ideal of humanness combines with the
existing Fremen hyper-sensibilities about survival to raise the
Fremen to a new level of humanness. Herbert thus leads us to one
of the most crucial statements in the novel: Paul's response to
Liet-Kynes' question about the possible use of an Imperial
Ecological Testing Station on Dune: "To make this planet a fit place
for humans" (177/216/221).

The search for humanness and the B.G. training and education
policies also provide Herbert with a solid historical grid for the
other plots and themes of *Dune*. It is Bene Gesserit training which
enables Jessica to find and hold a niche for herself and Paul with
the Fremen. She opens and exploits the shari-a to snare the Shadout
Mapes (43-46/52-56/53-57) and Stilgar (235-36/289-90/293-95), guards
gainst Paul's becoming a casual killer like Piter (244/300/306), and
ultimately buries any doubts about her son's place in the legend as
the Lisan al-Gaib by taking the Water of Life from Chani and
becoming a Reverend Mother (282-83/347-48/353-54). Even so, Paul
realizes that his mother has been the ever-present Bene Gesserit
hand guiding him towards the unwanted jihad: "My mother is my
enemy. She does not know it, but she is. She is bringing the jihad.
She bore me; she trained me. She is my enemy" (257/316/321).
Jessica herself finally understands that she has been playing a part
in a too-long historical search for humanness:

I suddenly see how I've used you [Paul] and twisted you
and manipulated you to set you on a course of my
choosing . . . a course I had to choose—if that's any
excuse—because of my own training. (347/428/433)

With that, the circle closes, and the task of revitalizing the gene
pool of the species passes to Muad'Dib from the Bene Gesserit.

6. *Prescient History*. Prescience is used by Herbert to chart
historically the development of Paul Muad'Dib, marking the
progress of active history beyond the effects of the Butlerian Jihad.
As Paul's level of awareness rises, the magnitude of his
understanding of historical cause and effect correspondingly
expands; as the future Kwisatz Haderach he will be able to see that more and more people travel the golden road from animals to fully aware humans, thereby increasing the collective understanding of humanity’s place in an organic universe.

The course of Paul’s journey into hyperawareness is delineated by Herbert through a recurring cycle of consciousness jumps. Paul’s first such jump, which occurred before the action of *Dune* begins, was to his ability to know which of his dreams are in fact truth. (Remember that Paul, because of his genetics and training, is already an unwitting mentat-plus at the novel’s opening.) The next series of awareness leaps happen during his conversation with the Reverend Mother Gaius Helen Mohiam, the first triggered by the death-alternative necessities of the gom jabbar (6/8/8) and the second by her slashing question, "Ever sift sand through a screen?" (9/10/10). The third series is initiated during the wait in the desert for Duncan Idaho and was prompted by his continual proximity to the ubiquitous spice. Here Paul begins by using his mentat-plus intelligence in the hyper-computation of facts and possible futures (149-53/185-90/188-93), and then, driven by the incessant demand for more facts, he literally pushes himself into a higher state of consciousness (154/190/193-94). This is Paul’s first waking dream, where he sees (not just computes) future possibilities. While this soon slips from him, he nonetheless falls back to a new level beyond even mentat-plus and now can occasionally experience flashes of true prescience.

In the Cave of the Ridges, Paul experiences another leap, this time initiated by his eating of the spice-laden Fremen food. For a brief period he understands for the first time the massive inertial weight of the historical forces at work (236-37/290/295-96), and finds that he now has the ability to call up these future memories at will. The penultimate awareness jump occurs during Jessica’s Reverend Mother initiation where Paul receives a more complete knowledge of those historical forces:

> On one side he could see the Imperium,...the Sardaukar raging off their planet to spread pogrom on Arrakis, the Guild conniving and plotting, the Bene Gesserit with their scheme of selective breeding. They lay massed like a thunderhead on the horizon, held back by no more than the Fremen and their Muad’Dib, the sleeping giant Fremen poised for their wild crusade across the universe. (289/356/362)
Paul’s consciousness retreats a bit for the last time after "a meal heavy with spice," onto a plateau where he is unable to distinguish between truth-past, truth-now, and truth-future (305/374/380-81) and desperately needs something to give him the final thrust beyond the limited prescient qualities of melange.

This final thrust is given, of course, by the Water of Life (354-58/437-41/443-47). When Paul emerges from his coma-like state after drinking the Water, he has become the Kwisatz Haderach, the one who (as defined in another place) "can be many places at once" (409/504/508). Now well beyond simple mentat computation and vision, possessing a multitude of past lives, and able to use higher-order mathematics and dimensions to predict the future more accurately than the Guild Navigators, Paul Muad’Dib is history. He has lived, is living, and will live billions of lives, and thus represents an actual living projection of history in the universe itself.

Herbert leaves the exact nature of Paul’s precognitive abilities unclear. Paul realizes that there is no standpoint outside of time in any absolute sense (O’Reilly 31), and this lends a sort of Heisenberg indeterminacy to his vision, in that "the expenditure of energy that revealed what he saw, changed what he saw" (236/290/296). Moreover, there seems to be a touch of the Copenhagen Interpretation present:

Prophecy and prescience—how can they be 
put to the test in the face of unanswered 
questions? Consider: How much is the actual 
prediction of the "wave form" (as Muad’Dib 
referred to his vision-image) and how much 
is the prophet shaping the future to fit the 
prophecy? (222/272/277)

Beautifully echoing this concept is Duke Leto’s last thought before his death, which foreshadows the holistic relationship between his son as the leader of the vital and organic Fremen and the relentless exigencies of Arrakis itself: "The day the flesh shapes and the flesh the day shapes" (145/179/183).

The development of Paul’s prescience forces the novel along a series of decision/nexus points. Paramount among these critical junctures is the seismic movement throughout the book to the coming jihad, which certainly ties in with the much-discussed Vitality struggle. Indeed, throughout the central part of Dune, Paul almost bends over backward trying to avoid the coming holy war. He senses two options, jihad versus an unclear future in which he
would apparently join forces with his grandfather (158/195-96/199). In an effort to circumvent both he puts the plan to Liet-Kynes to enlist Fremen help to prove to the Landsraad Council that the Emperor’s Sardaukar were involved in the Harkonnen attack. Ultimately, this alliance between Kynes and Paul leads to the planetologist’s death and thus opens the door for Paul to attain and eventually surpass Kynes’ spiritual leadership of the Ichwan Bedwine. In addition, as Paul and the story move simultaneously toward the final nexus, the duel with Feyd, the historical process closes around them both, fulfilling the ideas of the Vitality struggle and all the other themes:

Even the faint gaps were closed now. Here was the unborn jihad, he [Paul] knew. Here was the race consciousness that he had known once as his own terrible purpose. Here was reason enough for a Kwisatz Haderach or a Lisan al-Gaib or even the halting schemes of the Bene Gesserit. The race of humans had felt its own dormancy, sensed itself grow stale and knew now only the need to experience turmoil in which the genes would mingle and the strong new mixtures survive. (385/475/482)

7. Conclusion: Paul as Part of the Historical System. We now return to the question of the Vitality struggle: is it a difference in method or merely a difference in degree? Several scholars favor the former theory and prefer either to contrast an idealistic Paul with a decadent Imperium23 or to perceive him as the main driving force of the coming jihad (O’Reilly §4 passim). That neither thesis is correct has already been partially demonstrated. Clearly, Paul is a historically spawned and highly influential catalyst who sparks the awesome inertial forces of history into motion and as such is completely intertwined with the already-present institutions and structures he will use in his rise to godhood.

Mark Siegal attempts to distinguish between an exploitative, non-ecological Imperium and an equilibrious Duke Leto who also happens to be an expert in controlling resource use (67). He posits that all empires have many similar characteristics: they have a large, expanding, and weakly controlled population which has minimal contact with the environment; they use complex technologies and utilize resources from external sources; and they have great sustenance needs which are largely determined by cultural wants, which in turn lead to high expectations of gratification and continued expansion. This is poor history24 and a misunderstanding of the degree of similarity between the ways in which Leto (later, Paul) and the Imperium operate. Leto, Paul, Shaddam, and even the Baron Harkonnen use the same method to gain and wield power: crack troops. The Emperor has his
Sardaukar, Leto and Paul wish to use the Fremen, and ultimately Hawat convinces the Baron that he too should play the game. Moreover, both Leto and the Baron plan to recruit Arrakis’s population ideologically—Leto by exploiting the indigenous concept of the "mahdi" (84/103/105), the Baron by offering Feyd as a savior from the oppression they had suffered under Rabban (193/236/240-41). The tenets of the twin pillars of inequality and feudal hierarchism are driven into every one of the members of the nobility or other power groups, not excepting Duke Leto and Paul. Clearly father and son are in command, for, like the Emperor and any leader of a Great House, they use their resources, human or otherwise.\(^{25}\)

Is Paul a success or a failure? That is a question whose answer must always be completely subjective. Toupance tells us of an original version of *Dune* featuring Pardot Kynes, which was scrapped because Herbert did not wish to provide any final answers (12-13). I believe that this is much the case here in that Herbert is never the absolute arbiter of such universals as "failure." The struggle he depicts between vitality and stagnation involves only degrees of difference rather than any fixed scale of, say, success or failure. *Dune* is a book of a thousand subtle shifts of perspective, acting upon and reinforcing each other in a holistic whole. Thus, Muad’Dib operates on the edge of the historical deluge, changing certain things by degrees in order to channel the floods to his benefit. As he realizes when he rides out the coriolis storm (184/224-25/229, 193-94/236/241-42), historical forces, like the storm, are not easily deflected by resistance. While Muad’Dib is, in some respects, beyond the Imperium, as in being the unique Kwisatz Haderach, he is essentially bound to the strictures of the Imperium in thought and deed by the effects of the Butlerian Jihad on history. The Vitality struggle represents a conflict whereby the differences between the Imperium and Shaddam IV on the one hand and Arrakis and Muad’Dib on the other, while extremely significant, are nevertheless ultimately derived from the same homogeneous effects of the history of the Imperium.

**NOTES**


2. See O'Reilly §4 and Toupance *passim* for their fine treatment of two of the major themes of the novel (ecology and the dangers of a superhero). It is my thesis, however, that these themes emerge from the detailed and "accurate" setting of the story in the history of the Imperium. Miller identifies two motifs ubiquitous in
Herbert’s works: “If man does not achieve a balance within himself and with his environment, existence is merely a version of chaos” (the ecological theme) and “If man freezes an achieved balance, decadence sets in and life yields to entropy” (9). The latter is part of the grounding of the third major theme of the novel, the Vitality struggle. Dune is the quintessential "onion skin" book; as Aldiss notes, it is a "dense and complex" book "which [will] repay careful attention and impress even on a fourth or fifth reading" (316).

3. This essay is concerned only with Dune. It ignores the other five novels of the series, for the bulk of "history" is in Dune alone, and it seems to me, contrary to the design of the original novel, the five novels that follow become increasingly close-ended, introspective, and preachy. This is not to say that they are worthless; on the contrary, all five (especially Heretics of Dune) are powerful and intelligent SF novels. But it is Dune, with a multi-facetedness that is lost in the sequels, that sets the historical stage for all six novels. I have thus resisted the temptation to study the sequels, and, at the risk of losing such valuable material as the Bene Tleilax, the ghola Idahos, the Bashar Miles Teg, and the God Emperor himself, I have not in this essay drawn any conclusions beyond those which can be supported by Dune alone. I have ignored also the highly entertaining Dune Encyclopedia, as it is more a fan's guide to the series than an effective research tool.

4. Ower 137-38. Siegal notes that Herbert’s vision is balanced between deterministic history and the free will of individuals (70).

5. This reference is to the term "Richese" in the alphabetical "Terminology of the Imperium," which appears at the beginning of the hardback editions and at the end of the paperbacks.

6. O’Reilly: "Feudalism is a natural condition into which men fall [Herbert] contends, a situation in which some men lead and others, surrendering the responsibility to make their own decisions, follow orders." Of course every society puts value on human beings, but nowhere is the concept of unequal value so direct, pervasive, and uncluttered as in feudalism.

7. Miller states that, in addition to the mental schools, the Butlerian Jihad also created the major structures of the Imperium: the Imperium itself, the Landsraad, the Sardaukar, CHOAM, and the Spacing Guild (19). There is, however, good reason to believe that some of these institutions predate the Great Revolt. While the Guild was a child of the Jihad, the Landsraad was certainly not: during the C.E.T. years just after the Revolt, the Guild provided free transport for C.E.T. and Landsraad business, the latter continuing "its 2,000-year record of meeting" (406/499/504).

A stickier problem is the date of origin of the Sardaukar and of the formation of the Imperial structure (as a helpful guide, see Figure 2). Herbert writes "There had been Fremen on Poritirin, she [Jessica] saw, a people grown soft with an easy planet, fair game for Imperial raiders to harvest and plant human colonies on Bela Tegeuse and Salusa Secundus" (286/352/358). Inasmuch as Imperial forces established the first human colony on Salusa Secundus (the home of the Sardaukar), this statement implies that the Imperium predates the ascendancy of the House Corrino (88 B.G.), for that ascendancy was won with Sardaukar troops. This is why the Emperor was so afraid of Duke Leto’s and later Baron Harkonnen’s plan to use the Fremen, for they would be using the same method that House Corrino had used to gain the throne; i.e., crack troops against the now somewhat decadent Sardaukar: "By the time of Shaddam IV, while they were still formidable, their strength had been sapped by overconfidence, and the sustaining mystique of their warrior religion had been deeply undermined by cynicism" (TERMS: SARDAUKAR). The decline of the Sardaukar foreshadows the future emasculation of the victorious but stagnating Fremen in the later books of the series.
8. Siegal: "All systems within the novel that combine to create human history are seen to be interrelated, presumably in a complex way" (73).

9. The "opponents of Paul and the Fremen are essentially stagnant...they have no wish to chart new areas of experience.... Paul represents a new idea...he grows..." (Manlove 92-93). Cf. Herbert, "Sparks" 110, 110n1.

10. Compare Lady Jessica’s statement that "Humans live best when each has his own place, when each knows where he belongs in the scheme of things" (122/150/ 153). This is certainly true for the women of the Imperium who, despite Bene Gesserit status, find themselves in a "male-dominated society where even the most ambitious females’ responses are traditional in means and in effect" (Hand 28). Of course, female traditionalism in a feudal society is not an altogether unexpected conclusion. Yet the question does not end there, since the relationship of the traditionalism of Dune's women to its myriad themes and plots is by no means fully explored by Hand. It is a topic worth further exploration.

11. A classic example of this occurs when Paul bows to the Reverend Mother Gaius Helen Mohiam in the manner of "when in doubt of another’s station" (5/6/6). Not only is the greeting indicative of the faufreluches, but the reciprocal understanding of the bow ("the nuances of Paul’s greeting were not lost on the Reverend Mother") can only mean that they are using a form of language. The idea of faufreluches as a historical language and Herbert’s general concern with paralinguistics is superbly examined by Toupance.

12. It should be remembered that the extraordinary worth of the Fremen lies in the fact that they are "an entire culture trained to military order" (230/283/288).

13. A fine analogy is provided by Ower, who calls this "the technologization of human beings" (135).

14. Or was it? There is a neat little two-fold question left hanging in Dune. First, exactly how did the Guild Heighliners function? Disregarding the motion picture, we have little indication in the book on this matter. Paul refers to the "fastest Heighliners," implying velocity (357/441/446) and so not supporting the idea of instantaneous travel. Second, and more curious, if the Guild had a monopoly on space travel by virtue of the Navigators' ability to presciently chart the safest courses, where do the smugglers fit in? They must be interstellar, for Count Fenring, in order to circumvent the guild, uses them as couriers for the Imperial intelligence services. 15. See the "Report on Bene Gesserit Motives and Purposes" (409-10/504-05/ 508-10). Another nagging question: what was Iruan’s Bene Gesserit purpose? Was it to be the royal link between House Corrino and House Harkonnen (i.e., the Kwisatz Haderach)? Iruan herself lets on that she was trained for some type of linkage role ("For this I was trained, Father" [390/481/488]), but the Bene Gesserit did not foresee the Kwisatz Haderach coming a generation early in the House Atreides. So would Iruan have waited until the son of Feyd-Rautha and Lady Jessica’s daughter grew up? Unlikely.

16. Herbert: "It's the systems themselves I see as dangerous. Systematic is a deadly word. Systems originate with human creators, with people who employ them. Systems take over and grind on and on. They are like a flood tide that picks up everything in its path." ('Dangers" 97-98)

17. Ower correctly perceives the Fremen as an "organic community," in union with each other and nature, and a counterbalance to the mechanized, materialistic Imperium.

18. Ower: "In divorcing spiritual principle from a temporal context, the syncretism of
the Orange Catholic Bible is ironically condemned to enduring irrelevance” (138). This is simply not true, for “The Religion of Dune” explicitly outlines Paul’s philosophical and religious debt to the Orange Catholic Bible and the Commentaries (408/502-03/506-07). Furthermore, ninety generations after the C.E.T.’s seven-year effort, it could be said that “the Orange Catholic Bible and the Commentaries permeated the entire religious universe.”

19. “The prophetic legends had taken on Arrakis even to the extent of adopted labels...” (38/46/47). This involved the shari-a, the canto and respondu, and the ibn qirtaiba, among others. Most profound, though, is the Fremen adoption and adaptation of the Reverend Mother concept, whose renegade strain on Arrakis used the Water of Life in place of the Bene Gesserit “illuminating poison” to produce the necessary awareness-spectrum narcotic effect which then elicited the release of past memories.


21. Paul employs this dualism throughout the latter third of Dune, but it becomes especially important in the last dozen pages. There Paul promises as an Atreides Duke that Shaddam and his party will be unharmed, but as Muad’Dib sends the Emperor and his retinue off to permanent exile on Salusa Secundus. Correspondingly, as Duke Paul, he promises an earldom, a CHOAM directorship, and the fief of Caladan to Gurney Halleck, yet as the Prophet reserves the right to dispense titles and rewards to his Fremen.

22. Herbert: "The high value of the geriatric spice rests in its life extension for its users" ("Sandworms" 123). A good argument, however, has been raised by Parkinson, who argues that melange is not a geriatric drug in the longevity sense, but rather, in view of the lifespans in the "Almanak en-Ashrat" (411-12/506-07/511-12), a senility-inhibiting narcotic. He notes that “in such a violent society a senility-inhibitor may be a longevity drug” (19). Herbert goes out of his way in the later books to demonstrate that the spice does indeed prolong life physiologically. But if this is true, considering the familial-feudal nature of the Great Convention, why are there no great-grand and great-great-grand relatives in Dune?

This question was answered by Walter E. Meyers, who, in commenting on an early draft of this paper, wrote that the problem of extended lifespans occurred to him and Willis McNelly while they were working on The Dune Encyclopedia. According to Meyers, McNelly mentioned a particular aspect of this paradox (involving lifespans of the Emperors) to Herbert, who replied that the contradictions simply had not occurred to him. As Meyers remarked, "the more complex the plot, the more errors are likely to occur, and Dune has a very complicated plot."


24. As for each in turn: (1) “weakly controlled population”—depending on the available technology, the degree of control an empire exerts on its populace varies. Pre-1867 Canada under British domination was vastly different from Seleucid Judaea. Specifically, the Imperium was in fact ruled by the strictures of faufreluches. (2) “minimal contact”—an irrelevant ethical judgment. Were the people of XVIII Dynasty Egypt more or less environmentally aware than the people of Romanov Russia? (3) "complex technology"—this may or may not be true. In the case of Dune, technology has been marking time since the Great Revolt. (4) "utilize resources"—generally, yes. Yet this is also true in a fractal sense, in that, regardless of scale, any type of civilization (empire or village) will inevitably use some type of external resource. (5) "needs" and "expectations"—methodologically dangerous ethical judgments, considering that in Dune Herbert (i.e., the third-person narrator)
rigorously avoids ever appearing as a supreme arbiter able to provide such absolute statements and answers.

25. O'Reilly: "Still, Leto uses his men. It is always for his purposes, not their own, that they act. They are maintained—and maintain themselves—as followers, not equals" (45). Cf. the propaganda corps of "the Good Duke" (90/110/112) and Paul's later use of his dead father's legend to foment revolt against the Harkonnens.

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Abstract.—This essay examines the complex relationship between the many plots and themes of *Dune* and the history of the Imperium as created by Frank Herbert in the novel. Also, the "Vitality struggle" is put forth as a major theme of the book, as it is an omnipresent and fundamental conflict which significantly shapes the actions and ideas of *Dune*, and is itself determined by the very Imperial history that created it. The Vitality struggle, which involves a difference in degree rather than in
methodology, is the subtle contest between the philosophy of the Empire and that of Arrakis. Paul Muad'Dib is thus a historically spawned and highly influential catalyst who sparks the inertial forces of history into motion, and, as such, is completely intertwined with the existent Imperial structures which enable his rise to godhood. (LDiT)