

RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE IN FRANK HERBERT'S *DUNE* SERIES

by

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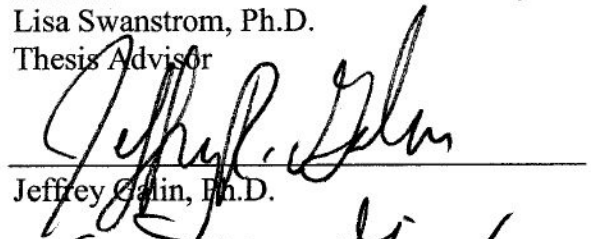
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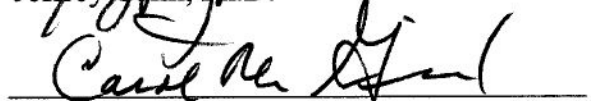
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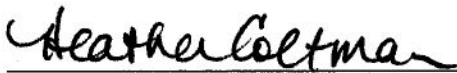
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ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines the first two novels of Frank Herbert's *Dune* series, *Dune* and *Dune Messiah*, in order to consider these two novels from the framework of postcolonial theory and analyze how religious violence becomes a source of subjugation, military power, and colonialism within the works. The three chapters of this thesis chart the creation of a colonial project through epistemic violence, physical power, and cultural control enabled by religion. This thesis argues that, in the *Dune* novels, religious violence functions as a colonial project that closely resembles the goals of real-world colonial enterprises, and the failure to manage this colonial project by those who initiated it shows that the effects of colonial projects based on religious violence are dangerous and uncontrollable.

DEDICATION

This manuscript is dedicated to my family, without whose love this project would have never been completed, especially my nephew and “little ruler of the universe,” Wesson Wolf. I also dedicate this work to two friends: Monica Sedore, whose support and assistance was invaluable throughout the writing process of this manuscript, and Aaron Fitch, whose encouragement carried me through this project’s most challenging moments.

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INTRODUCTION

Science fiction is a genre with transformative potential, allowing authors to recontextualize technological, cultural, or social issues in order to pose questions about those issues. Science fiction narratives can transpose a problem to a futuristic literary universe, modifying the problem in order to create a critical perspective on the issue. The depiction of religious violence in science fiction is no different, as authors are able to exaggerate or reconfigure violent aspects of religion, placing them in a new context in order to critique the violence it engenders. While not all portrayals of religion in science fiction involve violence, those that do are quite memorable; Frank Herbert's *Dune* series, which centers on the religious violence created by godlike figures who literally interact with their universe, is a landmark work in establishing the credibility of science fiction as a literary genre.

With the rising popularity of science fiction as a genre and its examination in scholarly journals, works such as *Dune* can be read from a critical standpoint. The works can be placed into a variety of critical traditions, and science fiction literature often critiques institutions from a postcolonial standpoint that studies and critiques the influence of colonialism, challenging the systems that hegemonic cultures use to subjugate people. Science fiction does not always escape stereotypical depictions of religious violence, however, and the genre does not entirely avoid recapitulating hegemonic, colonial portrayals of religious violence. Colonial portrayals of religious violence depict it as a tool of radical resistance used by those the dominant group views

as different and dangerous. The *Dune* novels, in fact, often rely on such portrayals to characterize the Fremen people of the planet Arrakis, a culture that survives in the harsh deserts covering the world.

This thesis focuses on religious violence within the first two novels of Frank Herbert's *Dune* series: *Dune* and *Dune Messiah*. The two novels that open the series tell the story of Paul Atreides, the young son of an Imperial house who rises to power on the desert planet of Arrakis by employing the disenfranchised Fremen people of that planet as a religious army¹. Paul's narrative provides many images of religious violence, associating it both with marginalized cultures who use it to resist hegemony and with colonial forces who use it to subjugate entire planets.

While there are scholarly examinations of science fiction from postcolonial perspectives, critical attention on religious violence in science fiction studies is often a secondary concern. Critical studies of science fiction focus on aspects of religious violence as one facet of larger colonial or postcolonial narratives in science fiction literature, analyzing it in consideration with a host of other factors. As religious violence has garnered more attention worldwide, particularly since the events of September 11, 2001 and America's recent wars and political interactions in the Middle East, a closer study of the portrayal of religious violence in science fiction is timely. Though the first two *Dune* novels were published in 1965 and 1969 respectively, critical analysis of the novels can provide insight into fictional portrayals of religious violence in media today. One only has to think of television shows like *24* that center around a

¹ While the entirety of the *Dune* series provides a number of images of religious violence, the novels span 2,500 pages and thousands of years within the setting's timeline. The story of Paul Atreides described in the first two novels provides a more compressed narrative that can be examined more closely within the limits of the project, as *Dune* and *Dune Messiah* cover his two-decade rise to power.

terror plot concocted by religious fundamentalists to notice how common these portrayals have grown in recent years. Considering the lack of in-depth critical coverage of narratives of religious violence in science fiction and preponderance of contemporary portrayals in modern media, specific study is needed on texts such as the *Dune* novels that deeply explore this topic of religious violence, and this thesis aims to shore up the critical conversation surrounding this topic while considering the theoretical framework of postcolonial theory.

While science fiction is viewed as a progressive genre for its frequent focus on social critique, religious violence is almost uniformly portrayed as negative within science fiction texts. Narratives such as Octavia Butler's *The Parable of the Talents* associate it with subjugated cultures that use it as a form of resistance against colonial oppressors who portray them as fanatic, dangerous, and savage. Such narratives depict a hegemony with the goals of traditional real-world colonial projects that connect religious violence with the Third World or other real-world marginalized groups. These colonial cultures portray marginalized groups as dangerous because of their difference from the dominant culture. Contemporary SF texts that deal with religious violence often question colonial assumptions, but this does not mean they escape the problem of stereotyping religious violence by portraying it as associated with specific peoples that resemble real-world cultures. While Butler's text portrays colonial religious violence as negative and the resistance of the subjugated religion as positive, any portrayal of religious violence in science fiction can run the risk of portraying that violence in a stereotypical fashion.

Not all SF texts associate religious violence with marginalized groups, however. In texts such as Sherri S. Tepper's *Grass*, it becomes a tool of subjugation by the hegemonic forces of Sanctity, Earth's ruling religion. These cultural influences are backed by physical threat, as the faction controls scholars who spread their religion and military forces necessary defeat rebellion. Texts such as these portray religion as a tool of oppression and subjugation by colonial cultures without providing a view of other influences. While the subjugated characters may also practice a religion that is expressed in a more positive light, the oppression they are subjected to often stems from practicing that religion in defiance of hegemony. Essentially, religion becomes fuel for violence, rather than a method through which the subjugated people can liberate themselves from oppression.

Most valuable for critical analysis are SF texts that portray religious violence in a varied fashion, exploring the negative effects it can have in different contexts. This thesis focuses on *Dune* and *Dune Messiah* because these novels portray the construction of a colonial project based on religious violence: it is first used as a tool of resistance by the marginalized Fremen, then a method of liberation from their imperial oppressors, and finally as a system of domination once those same Fremen become the ruling class of the universe. The Fremen of the first novel appear to be an almost stock image of a culture based on religious resistance to the ruling class, while the empire they launch through their rise to power in the second novel more closely resembles a colonial force. In the first two novels of the series, the Fremen move from the position of the oppressed to the position of the oppressor as Paul Atreides rises to power and transforms the Fremen into the ruling class of human society. The brutal jihad sparked by his

ascendancy to Emperor becomes a campaign of religious violence used to colonize the universe as a new social structure forms on planets claimed by Paul's armies. In all its forms, religious violence runs out of control in the novels, and characters who attempt to channel it find they have unleashed an unstoppable force. Science fiction texts may associate religious violence with groups that resemble real-world people, but religious violence in the *Dune* series becomes an unstoppable colonial project that not even its initiator, Paul, can manage.

This thesis is by no means meant to be an indictment of religion or its portrayal in science fiction as a whole, nor does it aim to produce general claim that all science fiction literature either reinforces or criticizes colonial stereotypes. I examine Frank Herbert's *Dune* series because of the novel's focus on religious violence serves to critique abuses of power enabled by colonialism. As the *Dune* series is a landmark of science fiction, it can be used as an example of the treatment of religious violence within the genre. The progression from epistemic violence that reshapes Fremen culture, physical violence used a tool of resistance against the Imperium, and colonial religious violence that enforces the structures of Paul's empire shows that in the *Dune* novels, religious violence functions as a colonial project. As Paul loses control of that colonial project, I argue that the *Dune* novels portray religious violence as dangerous and unmanageable, reminding readers that cultural transformations based on this violence are nearly impossible to undo. Paul's failure to stop the violence he created, even with access to superhuman powers, is a warning about the threat posed by religious colonialism.

Critical Framework: Orientalism

Postcolonial theory provides a number of useful concepts when examining religious violence within literary works, and science fiction scholars have engaged with postcolonial theory in a variety of ways. It is especially valuable for analyzing portrayals of the Fremen in the *Dune* series, who are heavily associated with the Orient and religious violence. Edward Said's *Orientalism* functions as a central text for this thesis, as his analysis of Western depictions of the Orient will serve as a theoretical touchstone for similar depictions of the other in the first two *Dune* novels. Said defines the Orient as "the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies ... its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other" (1). Depictions of the Orient in European literature adopt the traits of Orientalism, a term employed by Edward Said to describe the way that literature, history, and politics are defined by and reflect hegemony. As the *Dune* novels portray marginalized cultures through the colonial gaze of competing empires, postcolonial theory allows this thesis to examine those texts from a critical perspective that considers this unbalanced power relationship. Depictions of the Fremen in *Dune*, the first novel of the series, mirror a classical European imagining of the Orient. The Fremen recall descriptions of the Orient that make them "[appear] lamentably underhumanized, antidemocratic, backward, barbaric, and so forth" (Said 15), at least to the collection of noble houses that rule the universe. Said's text is particularly useful for examining the depiction of religious violence in *Dune*, the first novel of the series, as the nomadic Fremen tribes of the planet survive in a hostile desert setting, their lives governed by a violent, tribal religious culture that has been manipulated by an outside force. In many ways, they are

a science fiction depiction of the Orient based on real-world stereotypes of the Middle East, and their Zensunni roots (a religious philosophy within the *Dune* universe created by a combination of Islam and Zen Buddhism) connect them to those regional cultures². The narrative focuses on Paul Atreides, a young, imperial white male, who enters the marginalized Fremen culture and becomes their religious leader – an example of Orientalist fantasy.

Said's text describes these fantasies of the Orient, a fictionalized version of the East created by Western literature and history. He notes that "The Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience" (1-2), a place of fundamental difference from Western culture. This also describes the Fremen of the first novel, *Dune*, who survive on the fringes of society with a social structure separate from that of the rigid class distinctions of the Imperial houses who have come to take Dune's riches. Arguing that the West creates a distorted representation of the East through its narratives, Said offers an example of Orientalism through a character from Gustave Flaubert's *Salammbô*, noting that "There is very little consent to be found, for example, in the fact that Flaubert's encounter with an Egyptian courtesan produced a widely influential model of the Oriental woman; she never spoke of herself, she never represented her emotions, presence, or history" (6). Flaubert's character became a model of the interaction between the East and the West in Western literature, as Said notes that Flaubert "spoke for and represented her" (6). This description functions as a critical example of "the pattern of relative strength between

² Though it is never explicitly stated within the series, details within the novels suggest that the Fremen are indeed the direct descendants of Middle Eastern cultures and Islamic religion in this far future universe. While this thesis does not attempt to prove that suggestion, I will point out these details when they help illustrate the similarities between Orientalist portrayals of the Middle East and Islam and depictions of the Fremen by ruling classes within the novels.

East and West, and the discourse about the Orient that it enabled” (6), as the West is able create knowledge of the East through these accounts. Said’s description of this discourse closely matches the experience of the Fremen throughout the series, who rise up against the Empire and eventually depose the Emperor himself through the manifestation of Paul Atreides, their messiah, a man from another culture who happens to be the son of a noble house and a direct representative of the Empire. Paul’s “messiah” status in Fremen culture is based on religious legends inscribed in Fremen society by the Bene Gesserit, a group of scholars who control the Imperium’s education system. The Fremen come to power through the assistance of the colonizer, and instead of maintaining their own culture and identity, they transform into the new colonizers, adopting hierarchical customs very similar to the empire of the Corrino dynasty that preceded theirs. In a classic depiction of Orientalism, the Fremen are used as a tool for Paul’s rise to imperial power, adopting Imperial customs into their own culture rather than being liberated from their oppressors.

Said’s text also notes, however, that Orientalism is constructed around “the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures” (7). Oriental accounts construct Western identity as “better” than the Eastern identities that they study, and while this is certainly the case during the era of the Westernized Corrino Imperium of the first novel, *Dune Messiah* criticizes the Fremen empire that arises in the second novel as Paul’s priests use distorted images of Fremen culture to maintain power over colonized worlds. Paul’s empire becomes an even more oppressive colonial project than the one that preceded his, and the issue of Orientalism in the series becomes more complicated, transforming into a critique of

colonial structures as a whole as Paul decides to destroy the empire he has created by working in conjunction with a conspiracy against his rule.

Subaltern Studies

Orientalist literary depictions alter the knowledge of those who read them, distorting their ideas, but can also alter the cultures it describes, transforming knowledge within those cultures. The concept of epistemic or ideological violence, which Gayatri Spivak defines in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* as “a complete overhaul of the episteme” (Spivak 266), will be valuable for this thesis in order to clarify that religious violence includes more than only physical violence. Paul and Jessica transform culture through control of religious legends, relying on epistemic violence to turn the Fremen into a military force capable of putting Paul on the Imperial throne. Spivak quotes Michel Foucault, who defines the episteme as “the ‘apparatus’ which makes possible the separation not of the true from the false, but of what may not be characterized as scientific” (qtd. in Spivak 288), essentially controlling what counts as truth within a particular culture. Spivak argues colonial projects enact an “overhaul of the episteme” (288) that redefines “superstition” (288) and “legal science” (288), essentially transforming a culture’s religious beliefs and scientific knowledge by creating a definition of truth that serves the colonizer’s goals.

A number of groups within the *Dune* universe practice epistemic violence in this fashion. This thesis demonstrates that the matriarchs of the Bene Gesserit use their Missionaria Protectiva system to revise religious myths, and that Paul and Jessica play upon those myths to transform the Fremen into an army. Religious violence reaches a peak during the height of Paul’s empire in *Dune Messiah*, when his priesthood

transforms the myths surrounding Paul into a colonial system designed to maintain Imperial power. The field of subaltern studies as defined by Spivak is therefore valuable when examining depictions of epistemic violence in the *Dune*, and the colonial system that violence enables in *Dune Messiah*. Spivak critiques epistemic violence by pointing to examples of “the remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as Other” (266) as the major component of that violence. Rather than portraying this system as a monolithic, homogenous project, Spivak argues that colonialism operates on a variety of fronts, even being spread by colonized groups themselves. In *Dune* and *Dune Messiah*, religious colonialism is constructed in a similar way, operating through the Missionaria Protectiva, the Fremen rise to power, and the Paul’s expansionist priesthood.

Spivak also considers the question of whether people marginalized by these systems of epistemic violence can “speak” in the legal, political, and cultural world, discussing their attempts at social, political, or cultural voicings. She looks at how the colonial cultures, through ideological violence and the ability to control knowledge and narrative, can silence those speech acts, rewriting the event. In her examination of Bhubaneswari Bhaduri, a member of a political independence movement in India who committed suicide after being asked to take on an assassination attempt (306- 307), Spivak argues that she was “[silenced] by her own more emancipated granddaughters” (309). Rather than “laying the blame for the muting on the *colonial* authorities” (309), she points out that the colonial project has extended so far that even members of her own colonized culture silence her, preventing her from speaking even within the context of her own culture. Spivak’s analysis is useful when examining the repressive religion

depicted in *Dune* and *Dune Messiah*, particularly Paul Atreides' empire in the second novel, which spreads the "Atreides religion" to much of known space, conquering many worlds and wiping out countless opposing religions. During the Atreides reign, his priesthood practices colonialism cloaked in the guise of Fremen culture, relying on religious authority to ensure the submission of defeated planets. In *Dune Messiah*, religious violence is associated with the Qizarate priesthood, a kind of postcolonial Fremen society who spread Paul's culture to planets colonized by the Jihad, denying them the ability to speak or have any kind of unique culture other than the hegemonic religion they have constructed.

Organization

The three chapters of this thesis chart creation of Paul Atreides' religious myth through the epistemic violence of the Bene Gesserit, the manipulation of that myth by Paul and Jessica to restructure Fremen culture into an army, and Paul's guilt-ridden attempts to destroy the colonial empire those actions have created. As the first two novels progress, religious violence becomes a vehicle for a great movement in human culture, essentially dividing the first two novels into three separate groupings of religious violence. The first chapter focuses on the first novel's opening section, in which the Bene Gesserit use epistemic violence through a system of religious manipulation known as the Missionaria Protectiva. This manipulation creates a discourse that the Bene Gesserit use to implant a messiah myth in Fremen culture, preparing the Fremen for the coming of a "Mahdi." This myth is to be fulfilled by a prophesied genetic superhuman the Bene Gesserit call the Kwisatz Haderach, the goal of their centuries-long breeding plan. Paul Atreides seems to fit the legends the Bene

Gesserit have implanted within Fremen culture, and as he is betrayed by the very empire that he is a part of, he relies on those legends to turn the Fremen into an army that can avenge the downfall of his house.

The second chapter analyzes the physical violence of parts two and three of *Dune*, covering the rise of the Fremen from a tribal culture to a powerful resistance movement against the Corrino Imperium. By exploiting the previously mentioned religious legends implanted in Fremen culture by the Bene Gesserit, Paul uses the Fremen to overthrow the Emperor and claim the throne for himself. Paul and his mother Jessica cement themselves in Fremen culture by assuming the religious mantle the Bene Gesserit created to become powerful figures in Fremen society. Over several years, they turn the Fremen into a fanatic army willing to die for their “Mahdi,” and bait the Emperor himself into coming to Dune to wipe out Fremen resistance once and for all. During a vicious battle, the Fremen army overpowers the Imperial forces and Paul takes the throne. This chapter chronicles the rise of the Fremen from a subjugated culture to an army powerful enough to overthrow their oppressors. Paul and Jessica intensify and transform the epistemic violence previously created by the Bene Gesserit, transforming that violence into the driving force behind the Fremen Jihad. As Paul and Jessica alter Fremen culture, they create the basis for a new colonial empire, and as Paul ascends the throne, his Fremen armies launch a Jihad across the universe in the name of their messiah.

The third chapter examines Paul’s unsuccessful efforts to undo the Atrides colonial project in *Dune Messiah*. Twelve years after the first novel, Paul’s empire controls most of the known universe, and his Jihad has wiped out countless other

cultures and religions. He hates the colonial religious violence that he has created, and though Paul is able to undermine the physical violence of the Jihad without chaos, his success at ending his own empire is only mixed. To this end, he attempts to discredit his own godhood (and by extension, his colonial project) in order to bring an end to the Jihad and the hegemonic empire created in its wake by using prescience to work in covert cooperation with a conspiracy against his rule, manipulating events so that a nearly successful assassination attempt physically blinds him. His prescient visions remain, however, adding to the religious aura surrounding his rule, until they are dissolved by the birth of his twin children, who Paul had not “seen” in any of his visions of the future. Paul realizes his failure when he ensures their survival against an assassin present at their birth by seeing through his own son’s eyes, a moment that confirms that his supernatural abilities have passed on to his children. His ability to see into the future fades, and he secretly escapes into the desert at night, now truly blind, opting to follow Fremen customs that state the blind are to be abandoned in the desert. Paul’s abdication of the throne brings an end to the violent Jihad he initiated, but the colonial Atreides empire passes on to his children, who assume control of his government when they come of age and continue to enforce the structure of the Atreides empire.

These first two novels trace the rise of a religious colonial empire that relies on physical and epistemic violence to change the universe. The Imperium and Bene Gesserit Sisterhood sow the seeds of that violence by oppressing the Fremen and altering their religious myths. In the process, they create a cultural movement that becomes a colonial project as Paul is able to not only avenge his betrayal, but take the throne of the Imperium for himself. This sparks a jihad, however, and the Fremen

spread across the universe to colonize countless worlds in the name of Paul, their messiah. Throughout these events, epistemic and physical religious violence intensifies the colonial project, turning the once subjugated Fremmen into a hegemony that resembles – and even surpasses – the original power of the Imperium.

CHAPTER ONE: THE SHORTENING OF THE WAY: RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE
AND THE CREATION OF MYTH

“A beginning is the time for taking the most delicate care that the balances are correct. This every sister of the Bene Gesserit knows. To begin your study of the life of Muad’ Dib, then, take care that you first place him in his time: born in the 57th year of the Padishah Emperor, Shaddam IV.”

--- Frank Herbert, *Dune*

Paul Atreides’ rise to religious power is traced throughout the *Dune* series, but in the first novel, Paul’s status as a “messiah” to the Fremen of Arrakis is uncertain. As the novel opens, Paul is the son of a prominent Imperial House, the Atreides, that has recently been awarded control of Arrakis. On this planet, they can harvest a lucrative drug known only to Arrakis called “Spice,” a substance that forms the backbone of the Imperial economy. The narrative portrays the rise of the Fremen, as Paul transforms them into an army. When Paul first encounters the Fremen he is a colonizer: a member of a galactic empire who has come to harvest the desert planet’s resources. Though Paul will one day become a hero to the Fremen, leading them in a violent war to throw off their colonial oppressors, the opening epigraph of the novel marks Paul’s original relationship to the Fremen: not as a hero, but the heir to an Imperial House that has come to claim their world.

Throughout the first section of the novel, Bene Gesserit manipulation ensures that Paul fits Fremen religious legends that claim a messiah will come to free them from oppression. As the novel opens, Paul’s abilities are tested by the Bene Gesserit, a

secretive, all-female power group who serve as teachers while also manipulating Imperial politics from behind the scenes. By using the Spice, they are able to recall the memories of their female ancestors, an ability they refer to as “Other Memory.” The Bene Gesserit are able to muster considerable influence in all human affairs because of this unparalleled base of historical knowledge, allowing them to control knowledge and culture within the empire by drawing on memories of past events. Their main goal is a long-term breeding plan aimed at producing a superhuman figure capable of seeing into the memories of his male ancestors as well as female, a feat the Bene Gesserit are unable to accomplish. The Bene Gesserit plan to utilize this figure to assume control of Fremen culture (and by extension, the Spice), as his superhuman skills will allow him to fulfill their messiah legends.

The Bene Gesserit employ epistemic violence systematically, using it to control various local populations within the Empire. They accomplish their aims through a “*system of sowing implant-legends*” (*Dune* 47) - the Missionaria Protectiva - planting myths within planetary populations to be exploited in the future. This method consists of “*seeding the known universe with a prophecy pattern for the protection of B.G. Personnel*” (47), allowing them to make use of these religious prophecies as needed to achieve various goals. The Bene Gesserit use this epistemic violence to alter the ways of knowing in various human cultures to benefit themselves. This system resembles Edward Said’s concept of Orientalism, which he describes as “the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively” (3). Said argues that writers and scholars not only falsely represent a

culture by writing about it, but are able to distort that culture into becoming more like the representation. The Bene Gesserit use the Missionaria Protectiva in a similar fashion, engineering religious myths that mold societies to suit their needs. The Bene Gesserit resemble Orientalist scholars, and as the group responsible for education within the Imperium, this system allows them to appear to a local population as religious figures to take advantage of beliefs their members have previously ingrained, as well as controlling representation of those societies within Imperial culture as a whole. It is important to note, however, that unlike the Orientalist system that Said describes, the Missionaria Protectiva is a willful and deliberate instance of epistemic violence. Orientalism can arise from literary and historical sources based on purposeful misrepresentation, but more often is simply the result of a scholar's misunderstanding of other cultures. The Missionaria Protectiva, on the other hand, is the product of training in languages, historical accounts, and religions intentionally designed to allow Bene Gesserit agents to use this systematic pattern of deception within a variety of different cultures. The influence of this epistemic violence touches many groups within the empire, and "*no place escapes them*" (*Dune* 51) according to Jessica. While the Bene Gesserit use this skill to manipulate knowledge rather than colonize worlds – they do not control specific planets like the Great Houses of the Imperium do - they couple the ability with their other talents in order to muster political power necessary to guide their breeding plan.

The epistemic violence of the Missionaria Protectiva has visited Dune, and the reaction of a Fremen servant shows how powerful that violence can be when it is based on religion. When Paul and his mother arrive during the political takeover of the planet

by House Atreides, they find that legends have been planted specifically for the two within the planet's native Fremen culture. These legends begin to take effect for Jessica as she encounters a servant hired by their house, a Fremen woman named Shadout Mapes. Jessica, who has extensive training in academic subjects by the Bene Gesserit, recognizes the title "Shadout," noting "it's a very ancient word" (*Dune* 53) in a language that is no longer used by most of Imperial society. This revelation seems to trigger a reaction in Mapes, who asks "You know the ancient tongues then?" (53). Jessica informs her that "tongues are the Bene Gesserit's first training" (53) and that she knows "the Bhotani Jib and the Chakobosa, all the hunting languages" (53) that still survive in some of the Empire's subjugated cultures. This seems to confirm a mythical fact for Mapes, who says that this is "just as the legend says" (53). Jessica realizes that the Missionaria Protectiva has touched the native, underclass people of Dune, who survive on the edge of civilization in the dangerous deserts of the planet, resisting the presence of Imperial Houses such as Atreides who mine their lands for the Spice drug. Mapes' reaction to a legend introduced by a Bene Gesserit agent sometime in the past has created a myth that Jessica can exploit.

As the two converse, this epistemic violence protects Jessica from a physical threat presented by Mapes, suggesting a potential to redirect physical violence that her son will later exploit. Jessica notices that Mapes is armed with a hidden crysknife, the famed hand-to-hand weapon of the Fremen made from the teeth of giant sandworms that inhabit the deserts of Dune. As Jessica orders Mapes to remove the blade from her bodice, Mapes tells her that "the weapon was sent as a gift to you should you prove to be the One" (*Dune* 54). Jessica realizes, however, that it is also to be "the means of my

death should I prove otherwise” (54), knowing that the woman is ready to kill her should she fail to live up to the Fremen religious legend. Mapes tests Jessica by asking if she knows what the weapon is and if she “[knows] its meaning” (54), suggesting the spiritual significance that the Fremen attach to their blades. Recalling her academic training, Jessica remembers that a knife is called “Death’s Maker” (54) in Chakbosa, one of the hunting languages she knows, and that this blade is a sacred weapon for the Fremen. She begins to respond “It’s a maker-” (54) before being cut off by a wail from Mapes, “a sound of both grief and elation” (54). This response passes the test of Mapes’ religious legend, revealing that Jessica knows the importance of the holy blade in Fremen culture. Mapes gives her the crysknife as a gift, the weapon representing Jessica’s initial acceptance into Fremen society, and Jessica reflects on “the prophecy – the Shari-a and all of the panoplia propheticus... the protective legends implanted in these people against the day of a Bene Gesserit’s need” (54). She knows that the Fremen way of life has been altered by Bene Gesserit epistemic violence, an influence that has twisted their local religion. She freely employs that violence to defuse the real, physical threat posed to her by the Fremen woman, simultaneously acquiring her service as a kind of “native informant” (Spivak 6) who gives her direct access to Fremen culture. Mapes functions as “a blank, though generative of a text of cultural identity that only the West (or a Western-model discipline) could inscribe” (6), her culture having been shaped by the *Missonaria Protectiva* and her religious legends constructed by a system of epistemic violence employed. Jessica and Paul will later use legends like these to create a new cultural identity for the Fremen, transforming them into an army.

Bene Gesserit ideological violence has not only influenced the subjugated Fremen, but even the colonizing Imperium itself, showing that the Bene Gesserit have effectively managed knowledge within the empire. Though Jessica seems to match certain details of Fremen religious prophecy, it is Paul who is the embodiment of central myths weaved into Fremen religion by the Bene Gesserit. During the takeover of Dune, the Duke Leto Atreides receives “a first-approximation analysis of the Fremen religion” (*Dune* 100) from his spymaster Thufir Hawat, who tells the Duke that as Paul was out walking the streets of Arrakeen, the largest city on the planet, the Fremen shouted an unfamiliar term at Paul, calling him “‘Mahdi!’” (101). Hawat informs the Duke that the Fremen “directed the term at the young master” (101), calling after Paul as he traveled through the city. Hawat notes that “they’ve a legend here, a prophecy, that a leader will come to them, child of a Bene Gesserit, to lead them to true freedom. It follows the familiar messiah pattern” (101). The term “Mahdi” serves to connect the Fremen culture and religion to Islam, as the Madhi is a prophesied messiah, described as “[appearing] at the end of time to restore righteousness briefly” (Glassé 316). The Fremen are the “remnants of the Zensunni Wanderers” (*Dune* 518), a religion combining traits of Zen Buddhism and Sunni Islam practiced within the underclass of the Imperium. Fremen religion, like many within the Dune universe, is built upon religious legends from Earth that have transformed over thousands of years. Hawat’s discussion of the Fremen religion is academic, considering them from the superior position of a spymaster from an Imperial House. His analysis reveals that the Bene Geserit have effectively controlled knowledge within the upper class as well. Hawat is unfamiliar with the term “Mahdi” or its relationship to a religion from Earth, dismissing the legend as simply

following a “familiar pattern” found in many of the Empire’s underclass cultures. Bene Gesserit epistemic violence has allowed them to hide the Fremen as a kind of outsider culture while they prepared the desert people for the coming of a messiah, who the Bene Gesserit could then exploit. This indoctrination resembles Said’s account of “the European encounter with the orient, and specifically Islam” (70), which “strengthened [the] system of representing the Orient and . . . turned Islam into the very epitome of an outsider” (70). The Bene Gesserit system has even influenced Jessica, as when she realizes the Mahdi legend has been planted on Arrakis, she reacts with fear: “*Great Mother! They planted that one here! This must be a hideous place!*” (*Dune* 56). The Mahdi legend has ensured that the Fremen will remain a culture of resistance in the eyes of the Empire, people who view the Imperium as a tyrannical government to be defeated. The Missionaira Protectiva has not been used to simply pacify the Fremen, but to strengthen them for the coming of a Bene Gesserit agent who can use them as an army, while simultaneously cloaking that strength in typical Oriental stereotypes.

This legend becomes invaluable to Paul and Jessica, who exploit it to gain the support of the Fremen after House Atreides is attacked by previous rulers of the planet, House Harkonnen, who have orchestrated a scheme with the help of the Emperor to eliminate the Atreides. Backed by Imperial forces, the Harkonnens launch a surprise assault and destroy House Atreides, killing Paul’s father and most of his troops. Paul and Jessica escape by fleeing into the harsh desert of Dune where it will be difficult for the Harkonnen troops to follow. During their escape, Paul awakens a spark of the superhuman abilities he will later manifest. He views previous events in a new light, noting that “he [can] look into his own past and see the start of it – the training, the

sharpening of talents, the refined pressures of sophisticated disciplines, even exposure to the O.C. Bible at a critical moment” (*Dune* 194-195). Paul realizes that the Bene Gesserit training he has received from his mother has been designed to turn him in a tool of epistemic violence that will allow the Bene Gesserit to secure control of the Spice drug which can only be found on Dune. As he has betrayed by his own culture and forced into the desert homeland of the Fremen, he will now assume the role of their messiah for his own purposes, playing upon the Bene Gesserit legends in order to avenge his betrayal and reclaim his place. Paul has a prescient vision that foreshadows the transformation of epistemic violence into physical violence that will come of the clash between the two cultures. Viewing the future as if in a trance, Paul “[sees] a warrior religion there, a fire spreading across the universe with the Atreides green and black banner waving at the head of fanatic legions drunk on spice liquor” (199). In this moment, Paul begins to feel the overwhelming power of religious violence, and his description of a “warrior religion” (199) that spreads like fire suggests the uncontrolled nature of that violence. Paul’s religion will reach all corners of known human space, changing everything that it touches. He pales at the colonization and death that will be carried out in his name if that future occurs, though he soon comes to realize he cannot prevent it. The change that he will enact in the Fremen will transform their culture into a juggernaut of physical violence that “spreads across the universe” (199) in his name.

Paul’s expulsion from the Imperium marks the beginning of his personal exploitation of the legends the Bene Gesserit have created. While he and his mother seem to fit religious myths from the beginning of the novel, it is not until their own culture betrays them that they realize they must take advantage of those legends. As

Paul and Jessica begin to employ the epistemic violence woven into Fremen culture, that violence becomes physical; instead of only shaping religious legends, the pair are able to alter the structure of Fremen society itself, transforming them from a resistance movement against the Imperium into an army that Paul can use to avenge Imperial betrayal – and even claim the throne for himself.

CHAPTER TWO: "GOD CREATED ARRAKIS TO TRAIN THE FAITHFUL."

RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE AND THE RISE OF AN EMPIRE

"No more terrible disaster could befall your people than for them to fall into the hands of a Hero."

--- Frank Herbert, *Dune*

Paul's betrayal by the Imperium near the end of book one in *Dune* marks the beginning of his movement into Fremen culture, one that is ideally suited to religious manipulation, as the Bene Gesserit have prepared the population for a prophesied messiah through their Missionaria Protectiva. The second two books of *Dune*, "Muad' Dib" and "The Prophet," chart the transformation of that epistemic violence into physical violence, as Paul exploits these myths to create a Fremen army. After Paul and Jessica escape from the Harkonnen assault on House Atreides and flee into the desert, they are rescued by Duncan Idaho, a warrior servant of their house who has become part of a Fremen community that respects his combat skills. Though initially distrustful of Paul and Jessica, the Fremen accept them because of the religious legends that they fit so well, and Paul and Jessica begin to integrate themselves into the "Sietch," a hidden cave community made from a converted Imperial Ecological Testing Station that the Fremen have captured.

Paul and Jessica no longer have the power of House Atreides backing them, and now must rely on the legends planted in Fremen society to transform them into a military force. Within the Sietch they encounter Liet-Kynes, an Imperial Planetologist with the goal of eventually covering Dune in plants and water to transform it from a

desert planet into a paradise world, a plan the Fremen have have embraced wholeheartedly. Jessica senses the power of his goal and realizes it is “a dream to capture men’s souls . . . This was a dream for which men would die willingly” (*Dune* 319). As she finds that the Fremen view Kynes as an almost spiritual figure who has given them the mission to change their planet, Jessica realizes this is “another of the essential ingredients that she felt her son [needs]: people with a goal” (320). She sees the devotion of the Fremen to an Imperial Scientist and knows the Fremen “[will] be easy to imbue with fervor and fanaticism. They could be wielded like a sword to win back Paul’s place for him” (320). Through Kynes, Jessica senses the potential of the Fremen to become the army that Paul needs to avenge the betrayal of the Imperium. Kynes has already laid the groundwork for this transition by directing Fremen raiding parties toward ecological testing stations and other key locations needed for his plan to take shape, giving their attacks a specific goal. His ability to control the Fremen population with this dream shows Paul and his mother that they can transform the Fremen into an army by conflating Kynes’ almost spiritual goal of transforming Dune with the liberation message of the messiah myths surrounding Paul, turn them into a fighting force that can put him on the throne.

An attack by the Emperor’s Sadurkar that kills Idaho and Kynes before Paul can ally with them complicates the situation, and as he creates his own myths instead of relying on preexisting legends, epistemic violence becomes literal and physical. Paul and Jessica make an arduous journey across the desert to escape their hunters, and rely on their skills of religious manipulation to defuse a potential battle as they encounter another Sietch. After a brief scuffle with the guards, the Fremen find out that Jessica is a

“Bene Gesserit Witch” (*Dune* 284), and she exploits legends planted by the Missionaria Protectiva. She meets Stillgar, leader of the group, and remembers a map with his name next to the words “Sietch Tabr.” Revealing that she knows the name of their secret community, Jessica shocks the group’s leader into believing she has gained this knowledge through some spiritual intuition, thinking “*If only he knew the tricks we use. She must’ve been good, that Bene Gesserit of the Missionaria Protectiva. These Fremen are beautifully prepared to believe in us*” (284). Jessica’s “trick” convinces the Stillgar to allow them into the hidden community, and Jessica recognizes that they can conflate Kynes’ goal of making Dune a paradise world with Paul’s legend to give the scattered Fremen bands a unifying goal: overthrowing the Imperium and placing their messiah on the throne so that he can turn Dune into a paradise. Paul and Jessica must prove the truth of their legends through violence, however, and Jamis, a Fremen warrior Paul bested during the initial confrontation outside the sietch, demands the “amtal rule . . . the right to test [Jessica’s] part in the legend” (298) in combat. This battle will also test Paul, as Jessica “must be championed” (298) in the test – an event that has been foretold in Fremen myths, as “it’s said . . . that she’d need no champion from the Fremen – which can mean only that she brings her own champion” (298). Jamis and Paul must fight to determine whether he and his mother are truly the figures of the Fremen religious myth, and Jessica fears for her son, knowing that Jamis is a hardened Fremen warrior who will not hesitate to kill Paul in single combat, while her son is an Imperium-trained swordsman who has never before fought to the death. She cannot interfere, however, as that would “*conflict with the way they interpret the legend*” (298). As the two square off, she “[wonders] at the way the Missionaria Protectiva’s work had

been twisted on this planet” (298), the physical danger of epistemic violence has never been clearer to her than when she sees her son standing in the midst of it. The influence of the Bene Gesserit’s Missionaria Protectiva has mixed with Fremen traditions that require single combat to decide leadership, and epistemic violence becomes literal violence as Paul confirms his position as Fremen messiah.

The creation of a military force based on religious violence is reflected in nature of the kill-or-be-killed combat itself. Bene Gesserit manipulation has led to this battle, and Paul’s victory will lead to a reshaping of Fremen culture and leadership that turns them into his personal army. As the two battle, Paul offers James mercy after landing the first blow in accordance with Imperial traditions: “Paul crouched at the ready and, as he had been trained to do after first blood, called out: “Do you yield?” (*Dune* 303). The crowd’s reaction marks Paul’s passage from the Imperial culture he was raised with to the new Fremen one he is creating, and his offer of mercy causes “an angry murmur [to rise] from the troop” (303). During the momentary lull in the combat, Stillgar informs Paul that “there can be no yielding in the tahaddi-challenge. Death is the test of it” (303).

It is worthwhile to note that the term “tahaddi” comes from Islam, serving to connect the Fremen to the Orient. In a 1957 translation of Ibn Khaldun’s classic 14th century history of Islam, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, tahhadi is defined: “the prophet’s place in the performance of miracles is (circumscribed by) the ‘advance challenge’ (*tahaddi*)” (188). A translator’s note points out that the phrase could also be translated as “advance information” (188). Essentially, tahaddi allows a prophet to legitimize himself by describing a miracle before it happens: “the prophet

uses the miracles before they occur as the proof of the truth of his claims” (189). This structure that seems to function here when Paul “proves” his place in previously created Fremen prophecies by killing Jamis.³ The physical violence of the duel secures Paul’s place in Fremen legends, and the Fremen fully accept Paul as their savior after his victory, following Paul and Jamis’ battle with an acceptance ritual in which Paul chooses a “name of manhood” to be used by all Fremen communities openly. Paul chooses Muad’ Dib, the name of a small desert mouse he has seen in his flight across the sand, and Stillgar tells Paul this “choice pleases [The Fremen],” (*Dune* 307) informing him that “Muad’ Dib is wise in the ways of the desert... Muad’ Dib we call ‘instructor of boys.’ That is a powerful base on which to build your life” (307). The name marks Paul as a creator of knowledge just after he kills another man to confirm his position in Fremen religion, as rather than simply relying on legends that have been created for him, Paul will now turn his myths into the driving force behind a Fremen army.

Following this test, Paul and Jessica secure social positions that allow them to direct Fremen military goals. Paul recalls his vision of the future as he feels the religious presence in the group surrounding him, “[remembering] the vision of fanatic legions following the green and black banner of the Atreides, pillaging and burning across the universe in the name of their prophet Muad’ Dib” (*Dune* 307). Paul’s prescient dreams and visions increase as he transforms the Fremen into a force of physical violence, showing him terrifying images of the future during a moment when

³It is also worth noting that Fremen culture references *The Muqaddimah* itself. The Fremen have a “combined survival handbook-religious manual” (*Dune* 522) titled “Kitab al-Ibar,” which is the Arabic title of *The Muqaddimah*’s first book; as this translation of *The Muqaddimah* was released eight years before the publication of *Dune*, it is possible that Herbert intended to specifically reference the work.

the Fremen display their rising trust in the outsiders, allowing them to see the hidden underground water reserves they plan to use to enact their dream of making Dune a paradise. The scene brings to mind Said's description of the portrayal of the stereotyped "Arab" of modern newsreels and photos. Said notes that in these images, "the Arab is always shown in large numbers. No individuality, no personal characteristics or experiences. Most of the pictures represent mass rage and misery, or irrational (hence hopelessly eccentric) gestures" (287). Storing massive reserves of water to enact the dreams of a dead Imperial scientist certainly seems like a hopeless gesture for the Fremen, for whom water is a matter of life and death, and Paul's visions describe an army "raging" across the universe in a holy war. Said points out that "lurking behind all of these images is the menace of *jihad*. Consequence: a fear that the Muslims (or Arabs) will take over the world" (287). As Paul stands in this group of Fremen, he has exactly this kind of fear as he sees "fanatic hordes [cutting] their gory path across the universe in his name" (*Dune* 317) with his prescient talents, fears which become personal when his visions show him that "the green and black Atreides banner [will] become a symbol of terror" (317). Though he wants to prevent such a future, he "[knows] that no small thing could deflect the juggernaut. It was gathering weight and momentum. If he died this instant, the thing would go on through his mother and unborn sister" (318). Paul feels the overwhelming power of this violence to enact cultural change and believes that he may already be powerless to stop the forces he has set in motion by exploiting the legends planted in the Fremen by the Bene Gesserit. His visions align with Said's account of Orientalism, and Paul believes that as the Fremen become an army, jihad

will sweep across the universe and transform human society, even affecting his family's image.

Paul's view of the Fremen's transition into a military force reflects a colonial view of the Orient as a cultural threat. Though he has been betrayed by the Imperium, Paul sees the Fremen way of life as more dangerous, ignoring his own role in the creation of physical violence that will overthrow his old society. For Paul, the coming of the jihad is linked not only to the rise of Fremen military power, but the transformation of culture that will occur as they take control of the Empire – and certainly not his exploitation of their religious legends. Paul feels “that this Fremen world [is] fishing for him, trying to snare him in its ways. And he knew what lay in the snare – the wild jihad, the religious war he felt he should avoid at any cost” (*Dune* 347). Paul sees the jihad as the inevitable result of a Fremen-controlled universe; to him, their culture is inherently violent, transferring that violence to all that it touches. Paul believes he manipulates the Fremen as an outside force, and his claim that he has not been “snared by their ways” recalls Said's description of William Lane, a scholar who studied Egyptian culture and “was able to submerge himself amongst the natives, to live as they did, to conform to their habits” (Said 160). Lane claimed he “conformed only to the *words* (his italics) of the Koran, and that he was always aware of his difference from an essentially alien culture” (160). Like Lane, Paul feels apart from the Fremen, exploiting the Bene Gesserit designed legends to create an army without “truly” accepting their religion. He believes the Fremen way of life is dangerous, and he fears that their culture will subvert him even while he manipulates it. In contrast to Lane, however, Paul worries that he may not be able to conform only to the motions of the

Fremen religion and the violence of their culture may touch even him. His thoughts resemble the Orientalist concern that “the apocalypse to be feared was not the destruction of Western Civilization but rather the destruction of the barriers that kept East and West from each other” (263). Paul’s concern is not that the jihad will physically destroy the Imperium, but that the Fremen world will “snare him in its ways” (*Dune* 347), transforming his Westernized culture into a Fremen, Easternized universe. His concerns ultimately prove correct when his Fremen army overthrows the Imperium, but the violence that becomes the impetus for a colonial jihad has already eroded those boundaries: Paul, the heir to an Imperial house, has become the leader of a resistance movement against his own empire. While he fears the uncertain future contained in his prescient visions, he does not yet realize that he has snared the Fremen in his own ways by creating the violence that brings those visions about.

“Nothing about Religion is Simple”

Two years after Paul and Jessica’s flight into the desert, their influence has reshaped the Fremen into a collection of military resistance groups capable of causing problems for Imperial Houses. During this time, House Harkonnen reclaims control of the planet, and the Baron Harkonnen finds that the Fremen have become more of a threat since their first occupation, saying “They’ve a new prophet or religious leader of some kind among the Fremen” (*Dune* 368). This Fremen resistance is organized around Paul’s status as a religious figure, a force of physical violence driven by the epistemic violence he used to form his myths. Paul points out the relationship between Fremen religion and the military power he has created by claiming “religion unifies our forces” (383). This religious manipulation allows him to create a personal army of Fremen

warriors known as Fedaykin or “Death Commandos.” These warriors have struck fear into the population of Dune, a fear recalled by Gurney Halleck, a former soldier of the Atreides who falls in with a smuggler group after the destruction of the house, and encounters Paul leading a troop: “Gurney recalled the stories told of Muad’ Dib, the Lisan al-Gaib – how he had taken the skin of a Harkonnen officer to make his drumheads, how he was surrounded by death commandos, Fedaykin who leaped into battle with their death chants on their lips” (417). In two years, Paul has created a fanatic religious army willing to die for its leader, reshaping Fremen society. The Fremen are no longer various bands scattered across the desert, but now function as a military force ready to do violence for their savior. In essence, Paul has transformed the epistemic violence of his myths into physical violence, and can now direct that violence toward his goal of revenge against the empire that betrayed him.

Paul imbues this military force with political legitimacy by relying on his status as a figure of the Imperium rather than his religious legends, foreshadowing the shift from physical violence to colonialism that will occur as the Fremen begin their Jihad. For example, Paul’s assaults on the Harkonnen have lead to great status for Sietch Tabr among Fremen communities of the desert, and Paul and Stillgar have become de facto leaders of the Fremen as a whole, with many other communities following their commands. The Fremen cannot have two rulers, however, and as the two stand in a cavern before thousands of people who expect them to battle to determine leadership according to Fremen tradition, Paul asks “Who is there here to say I’m not the rightful ruler here on Arrakis?” (*Dune* 428). He claims that “I rule here. I rule on every square inch of Arrakis. This is my ducal fief whether the Emperor says yea or nay! He gave it

to my father and it comes to me through my father!” (428). In the moment when Paul claims full control of his army, he relies on the rights that have been given to him by hegemony, relying on the threat of physical violence to enforce the epistemic. Lorenzo DiTomaso notes this combination of religion and law in “History and Historical Effect in Frank Herbert’s *Dune*,” arguing that “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” (317). In this scene, “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” (317). Paul sets the stage for the new Fremen colonial empire that will come in the wake of the physical violence of the Jihad, telling the assemblage of Fremen leaders that “there are men here who will hold positions of importance on Arrakis when I claim those Imperial rights which are mine” (*Dune* 428). Paul’s plan is reminiscent of the way Napoleon attempted to convert Egyptian culture to follow him: “when it seemed obvious to Napoleon that his force was too small to impose itself on the Egyptians, he then tried to make the local imams, cadis muftis, and ulemas interpret the Koran in favor of the Grande Armee” (Said 82). By playing on the Bene Gesserit legends implanted in Fremen society, Paul has certainly accomplished this goal, as the Fremen now see Paul as the messiah who will lead their army to victory. In an interesting parallel, Said notes that Napoleon then offered positions of power to these Egyptian allies, as “the sixty ulemas who taught at the Azhar were invited to his quarters, given full military honors” (82). In a similar way, Paul’s Fremen warriors will go on to become important figures in a new empire as leaders of colonial expeditions to new worlds as the physical

violence Paul has created becomes colonial violence in the next novel. By assuming military command of all of the Fremen tribes and connecting his leadership to the Imperium, Paul simultaneously mobilizes his army, legitimizes their political power, and imbues them with a goal – to defeat the rulers of the planet and put their “Mahdi” on the throne. He ingests a special substance made from Spice known as the “Waters of Life” that causes him to fall into a two week coma; upon awakening, Paul is able to access his ancestral memories much like a Reverend Mother and attains his full prescient abilities. He realizes that the time to strike is now – his visions tell him that the Emperor himself has brought an army to Dune, intent on wiping out the Fremen once and for all.

During Paul’s surprise attack on the Emperor’s forces, the reaction of the Emperor’s party provides a view from a society that is about to be defeated by their own Orientalist assumptions. As they discuss battle plans, Baron Harkonnen claims that Paul is “one of the Umma, surely... A Fremen fanatic, a religious adventurer. They crop up regularly on the fringes of civilization” (*Dune* 459). The Baron sees Paul as just one more figure in a long line of violent religious rebels, only posing a threat to the Imperium because of his spiritual devotion, not his military power. The Baron claims that Muad’ Dib must be “a madman... but all Fremen are a little mad” (459). He describes Fremen resistance to the Harkonnen occupation of the planet in terms of physical violence, claiming that “his people scream his name as they leap into battle. The women throw their babies at us and hurl themselves onto our knives to open a wedge for their men to attack us. They have no ... no ... decency!” (459). To the Baron Harkonnen, the Fremen are a picture of the Orient, again recalling Said’s description of

stereotypical “Arab” portrayals in modern media: “the Arab is associated either with lechery or bloodthirsty dishonesty... essentially sadistic, treacherous, low” (Said 286-287). The Imperium sees the Fremen as a dangerous, treacherous people, reflected in the Baron’s claims that the Fremen are using vicious tactics to defeat his House soldiers. While it is impossible to be sure if his claims about the Fremen are true, as the Baron often uses deceit for political gain, it is clear the colonizing Baron believes the Fremen are people capable of barbaric physical violence, fit only to be wiped out. Paul has cloaked his plan for revenge by playing on the Orientalist fears of the empire that betrayed him, becoming no more than “a Fremen fanatic” (*Dune* 459) while he turned the scattered Fremen into a unified army.

As Paul and his warriors storm the emperor’s ships and reclaim the Great Hall on Arrakeen, he realizes that this physical violence is becoming a colonial force of its own, changing Fremen culture in the process. He converses with Stillgar and “[sees] how Stillgar had been transformed from the Fremen naib to a *creature* of the Lisan al-Gaib, a receptacle for awe and obedience. It was a lessening of the man, and Paul felt the ghost-wind of the jihad in it” (*Dune* 469). As Paul’s military triumph is imminent, he finally begins to feel guilt for what he has done to the Fremen, noting of Stillgar that “*I have seen a friend become a worshiper*” (469). He feels loss when he looks at his devoted Fremen troops, “noting how proper and on-review his guards had become in his presence. He sensed the subtle, prideful competition among them – each hoping for notice from Muad ‘Dib” (469). As the new Imperial structure forms around Paul, he unhappily reflects on the colonial violence that will come of the jihad: “*Muad’ Dib from whom all blessings flow*, he thought, and it was the bitterest thought of his life. [The

Fremen] *sense that I must take the throne*" (469). Paul realizes that his myth has touched all aspects of Fremen life, and the transformation he has enacted is irreversible – he has transformed Fremen culture into a warlike colonial empire, hungry for power.

The Emperor's party arrives, and Paul duels the Harkonnen heir Feyd-Rautha to end the Atreides-Harkonnen war and any possible challenge to his power. In the battle, religious violence is transformed once again, as Paul slays the Harkonnen heir and legitimizes his political power through physical violence. Paul realizes that this is the moment in which the jihad he has seen in his prescient visions is initiated: "*This is the climax... from here, the future will open, the clouds part onto a kind of glory. And if I die here, they'll say I sacrificed myself so that my spirit might lead them. And if I live, they'll say nothing can oppose Muad 'Dib*" (Dune 482). Paul knows that this transformation can not be averted now – even if he dies, the Fremen empire will become a colonial enterprise, spreading his religion across the universe. Paul secures his rights to the throne by demanding that the emperor's daughter marry him, threatening to destroy all Spice on the planet through a chemical reaction if his demands are not met. He dictates the structure of his new empire to those present, marking the transformation of the Fremen from a subjugated people to a colonial power. He claims that "there will be title and attendant power for every surviving Atreides man, not excepting the lowliest trooper" (489), but the Fremen remain separate in the Imperium: "The Fremen are mine ... what they receive shall be dispensed by Muad 'Dib. It'll begin with Stillgar as Governor on Arrakis" (489). As the servants of their messiah, Fremen will assume the positions of importance Paul promised them in the desert, and his government will spread across the universe to create a colonial structure that dwarfs even that of the

Imperium, as the physical violence of the Fremen jihad sweeps away all resistance to their new empire.

Paul's radical alteration of Fremen culture defines the closing moments of *Dune*. He reflects on the personal weakness of his Fremen troops, proud warriors who have cast aside their culture to assume the mantle of a new colonial empire, raging across the universe in a violent jihad. He does not seem happy, but rather resigned to what he sees as an unstoppable cultural change, as well as guilty over his role in starting the jihad that he has foreseen in prescient visions. Over the next years of Fremen religious wars that follow his ascension to power, he grows to hate the colonial violence that has shaped a government in his name, leading to his efforts to destroy his own myth in the sequel, *Dune Messiah*.

CHAPTER THREE: “THE MOON FELL”: RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE AND THE CRISIS OF COLONIALISM

“It was said that this Atreides came to change our world and our universe, that he was the man to make the golden flower blossom in the night.”

--- Frank Herbert, *Dune Messiah*

Dune Messiah takes place twelve years after the first novel; Paul’s empire has taken shape and displaced the Imperium, and his Fremen have become a colonial culture, transformed from their position as a subjugated people into the leaders of a new galactic hegemony. While Paul despises the religious violence carried out in his name, he is unable to stop the efforts of priests and warriors who rage across space, spreading his empire in the wake of the Jihad. His religion has become power structure that enables his priests, known as the Qizarate, to subjugate and oppress colonized worlds. These priests ostensibly serve as missionaries of Paul’s religion to new planets, but immediately seize political power over those worlds in the name of their religion. Paul is unable to manage his empire, and his attempts to end the hegemonic structures surrounding the Atreides name fail. Through a process of epistemic violence enforced by physical violence, religious colonialism spins out of control, and Paul’s failure suggests that even by those who initiate religious violence cannot control it.

The novel opens with excerpts from two texts that portray the religious colonialism that has taken place during the twelve years of Paul’s reign. A historical

document chronicling this time period called “Analysis of History: Muad’dib by Bronso of Ix” summarizes the Jihad: “Muad’dib’s Qizarate missionaries carried their religious war across space in a Jihad whose major impetus endured only twelve standard years, but in that time, religious colonialism brought all but a fraction of the human universe under one rule” (*Dune Messiah* 8-9). Bronso’s specific use of the term “religious colonialism” highlights that this has not simply been a holy war carried out by Fremen fanatics against nonbelievers, but a political project intended to forcibly unify all of human society under Paul’s government. A second text, “Excerpts from the Death Cell Interview with Bronso of Ix,” shows the response of Paul’s hegemonic religion to such claims. As one of Paul’s priests questions Bronso before putting him to death, it becomes obvious that Paul’s empire is founded not only on the physical violence of his devoted Fremen warriors, but also on colonialism enacted by his priesthood. Paul’s priests are responsible for spreading the cultural aspect of the Fremen jihad, functioning as missionaries, scholars, and writers, insinuating Paul’s religion into every aspect of colonized societies. Works like Bronso’s challenge priestly authority by claiming that Paul is not a spiritual figure, but simply another user of the Spice. Since Bronso has been taken to a “death cell,” it is clear that Paul’s priests punish such challenges with violence to ensure that this knowledge does not threaten the power base of his religion.

Paul himself has grown to detest his religion, and his feelings of helplessness suggest that colonial projects based on epistemic and physical violence cannot be controlled. In a guilt ridden state, he asks his Fremen lover, Chani, “do you know what I’d spend to end the Jihad – to separate myself from the damnable godhead the Qizarate forces onto me?” (*Dune Messiah* 44). His myth has intensified to the point that his

priests rely on his legends for their status within society, and contrary to the beliefs of those who see him as a godlike emperor, Paul can no longer manage or control this colonizing religion. He claims that “even if I died now, my name would still lead them” (44), feeling that he has lost control of his religious image, noting that “when godhead’s given, that’s one thing the so-called god no longer controls” (44). Religious colonialism has spread out of control throughout the universe because of the Jihad, and the epistemic and physical violence used to fuel that colonization has formed a culture so entrenched that it will continue even in the absence of Paul as a living divine figure.

Paul’s priests have learned to control religion much as he did in the past, using it to enhance their own personal status within his empire. This colonial project resembles the Western management of knowledge about the East that Said describes, noting that “Oriental students (and Oriental professors) still want to come and sit at the feet of American Orientalists, and later to repeat to their local audiences the clichés I have been characterizing as Orientalist dogmas” (Said 323-24). The Qizarate priesthood functions in a similar way as the main force behind the expansion of Paul’s religion, traveling the universe to convert people to their new culture after his Fedaykin armies have destroyed any military resistance to their colonial efforts. These priests, who often come from the ranks of the Fedaykin or important Fremen sietch communities, use the Atreides name to spread Paul’s empire much as he once used Bene Gesserit myths to assume control of the Fremen, replacing local religions and cultures with the structures of Paul’s government. Paul notices this effect during a meeting of high-ranking political figures that includes one of his chief propagandists, Korba, who was one of the Fremen commanders during the surprise attack on the Emperor that put Paul on the throne. As

the group discusses Paul's prescient talents and how they can be applied to matters of state, Paul notes that "Korba...[sits] in a pose of religious reverie – *listening with the soul*. How could the Qizarate use this exchange? More religious mystery? Something to evoke awe? No doubt" (*Dune Messiah* 74). Korba pays close attention to the discussion of Paul's abilities, making a mental record of details that he will be able to later use as propaganda on colonized planets. Priests like Korba essentially "sit at the feet" of the colonizer and learn how to use epistemic and physical violence to control cultures who have been defeated by the jihad, and then employ Paul's myths to manage those cultures in much the same way their messiah once did.

Paul's Qizarate priesthood forms the backbone of his colonial project, spreading religious violence through systems that seem almost a blend of the physical and epistemic religious violence of the first novel. The physical violence of the Jihad allows them to take control of various planets, on which the Priesthood then can use its status "to 'manage' the Orientalist system" (Said 324) by creating rituals that maintain the Empire's power structure. These rituals include pilgrimages to Arrakis that "[have] become a disgusting source of power and wealth for [Paul's] Imperium" (*Dune Messiah* 80). They refer to this pilgrimage as a hajj, the Arabic word for the required spiritual pilgrimage to Mecca that is a central tenet of Islam, indicating that the priests have converted existing Fremen Zensunni philosophy to the colonial Atreides religion. Robert Bianchi notes in *Guests of God: Pilgrimage and Politics in the Islamic World*, "for pilgrims, the hajj is the peak of spiritual life" (3), pointing out that it is traditionally "a time of profound reflection, during which pilgrims critically examine their souls as well as the social and political conditions in their homelands" (3). He notes that this

tradition has changed, however, arguing that “today... [the hajj] is more politicized” (4), as “state pilgrimage agencies have taken over the lion’s share of the booming market in religious tourism” (4). Bianchi claims that this modern “hajj administration is tainted with favoritism and corruption. All the major pilgrimage programs are explicitly tailored to benefit voting blocks and businesses at home while cultivating prestige and influence abroad” (5-6). In a similar way, the Qizarate has transformed Fremen culture into a political tool that perpetuates the Atreides colonial project. Rituals such as the hajj are not intended to create a sense of spiritual reflection, but rather to create a galaxy-wide colonial religion based on the Fremen Mahdi, a dark view of this kind of state-controlled religious ritual.

Paul’s guilt over the colonial structure he can no longer manage manifests in his prescient visions, which grow clouded by the existence of a conspiracy against his rule. The Bene Tlielax (a group of biological experimenters viewed with distrust throughout the empire), Spacing Guild (a group who controls interstellar travel), Bene Gesserit, House Corrino, and even some dissatisfied Fremen have launched a plot designed to either assassinate Paul or force him to renounce his religion and abdicate his throne. Under the protection of a Spacing Guild Navigator who uses the Spice to achieve a limited prescience necessary for faster-than-light travel, this conspiracy hides from Paul’s prescient talents, which he can only see as a “blank spot” in his visions. The conspiracy gives him a “ghola” as a political gift, a Bene Tlielax creation cloned from the dead cells of his former friend and swordmaster, Duncan Idaho. The clone is trained as a Zensunni philosopher to play upon Paul’s doubts and convince him to abdicate the throne. In an effort to find a way to end the colonial project he has created, Paul takes a

massive dose of Spice, seeing a vision of “a falling moon and the hateful way he’d known from the beginning. To buy an end for the Jihad, to silence the volcano of butchery, he must discredit himself” (*Dune Messiah* 158). Paul realizes that the only way to stop the colonial violence he has enacted is to “make the moon fall” by delegitimizing his own myth, transforming himself from a “god” back into a man. Paul asks the gholas to analyze the vision, who responds that Paul has “digested so much time you have delusions of immortality... Even *your* Empire, my lord, must live its time and die” (164). This response seems to evoke anger in Paul, who tells the gholas not to “parade smoke-blackened altars before me... I’ve heard enough sad histories of gods and messiahs. Why should I need special powers to forecast ruins of my own like all those others?” (164). Paul answers in irritation and his response reveals anger at the violent, colonial empire his religion has created. His emphasis on his “special powers” highlights the uncontrollable intensity of that religion – even with his ability to see into the future, he cannot find a way to end the epistemic and physical violence he has created.

Paul’s failed attempt to find a solution during a conversation with Edric, one of the conspirators against his throne, makes him realize he must take direct action to bring an end to his empire. As Paul holds an audience ostensibly concerning the position of the Spacing Guild in Paul’s empire, the conspiracy tries to play on Paul’s guilt and sense of justice by openly discussing the flaws of his government in front of the assembled political figures. As Edric and Paul speak, the guild navigator claims that Paul “[conspires] to make a god of [himself]” (*Dune Messiah* 126). Paul notes his choice of words, pointing out that Edric’s use of the term “conspire” shows that he

“[expects] the worst of me” (127), implying that Paul’s religion is a negative influence on the universe. This is a dangerous claim in the face of Paul’s Qizarate priesthood, who would certainly eliminate the navigator for speaking against their colonial religion. Trying to draw out a confrontation, Paul claims that Edric is “saying my bishops and I are no better than power-hungry brigands” (128), forcing Edric to be on the defensive. Edric responds, saying “Power hungry . . . Power tends to isolate those who hold too much of it. Eventually, they lose touch with reality . . . and fall” (128-129). Edric drives his accusation home when he points out that “what religion and self-interest cannot hide, government can” (129), arguing that Paul has maintained this massive deception by combining his religion with his government, turning it into a political entity. Paul retorts that “religious *mana* was thrust upon me. I did not seek it” (130), but speaks only to hide his reaction from the conspiracy. Though these opinions go beyond what his religion would usually tolerate, Paul covertly orders his Fremmen guards not to eliminate Edric, hoping the navigator’s attack on colonialism in a public setting is enough to raise doubts in some of his priests. After the meeting, he plays upon the conversation while speaking with Stillgar and Korba, recounting the statistics of his colonial project: “at a conservative estimate, I’ve killed sixty-one billion people, sterilized ninety planets, completely demoralized five hundred others. I’ve wiped out followers of forty religions” (135-136). He believes that “we’ll be a hundred generations recovering from Muad’dib’s Jihad. I find it hard to imagine that anyone will ever surpass this” (136). Paul chuckles at “a sudden vision of the Emperor Hitler saying something similar” (136), comparing his Jihad to brutal events of humanity’s past, events he can remember because of his access to Other Memory. Neither his former lieutenant Korba nor his

close friend Stillgar recognize the reference, showing no grief at the statistics of Paul's jihad, and cause him to realize that a simple public discussion of his empire's atrocities will not be enough to bring it down. Paul will have to take direct action discredit his colonial empire, though he is not yet sure of what action to take.

Paul's empire influences more than just the priesthood, however, and he knows that he must delegitimize his own myth for all of human society if he is to bring an end to Atreides colonialism. He recognizes these colonial structures are a part of everyday human life:

"I've had a bellyful of the god and priest business. You think I don't see my own mythos... I've insinuated my rites into the most elementary human acts. The people eat in the name of Muad'dib! They make love in my name, are born in my name – cross the street in my name. A roof beam cannot be raised in the lowliest hovel of far Gangishree without invoking the blessing of Muad'dib!" (Dune Messiah 183)

Paul's description brings to mind a "remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as Other" (Spivak 266). Through the physical violence of the jihad and the epistemic violence of the Qizarate, Paul's religion has become a heterogeneous instance of colonial violence, transforming the victims of the Jihad into subjects of one Atreides empire. The differentiated pressures of the Bene Gesserit Missionaria Protectiva that seeded Paul's religion, the myths that Paul and Jessica manipulated on Dune to create a Fremen army, the violent religious war that followed his rise to the throne, and the Qizarate priesthood that institutionalized Paul's religion have all functioned to create a colonial project that

operates on multiple fronts. Scytale, the Tlielaxu representative of the conspiracy, characterizes it as a disease: “you can’t stop a mental epidemic. It leaps from person to person across parsecs. It’s overwhelmingly contagious. Who can stop such a thing? Muad’dib hasn’t the antidote” (*Dune Messiah* 187). Scytale points out that colonialism transforms traditional political structures, arguing that “religious government is something else. Muad’dib has crowded his Qizarate in everywhere, displaced the old functions of government. But he has no permanent civil service, no interlocking embassies. He has bishoprics, islands of authority” (188). In Paul’s empire “the networks of power/desire/interest are so heterogeneous that their reduction to a coherent narrative is counterproductive” (Spivak 249). Spivak’s discussion of colonial power and Scytale’s criticism of Paul’s empire hit upon the same problem; colonialism functions on multiple fronts, so confronting a single narrative is pointless. The religious violence of Paul’s empire comes from “islands of authority” rather than any one unified force, spread by his Fedaykin warriors, his Qizarate priests, and pilgrims from colonized worlds, all acting individually to spread his government upon new planets. To bring down such a heterogeneous network of physical and epistemic violence, Paul realizes he will have to destroy the “coherent narrative” of his religious empire, rather than simply eliminating the individuals who have spread it.

The Atrides colonial narrative has already transformed human society, however, suggesting that Paul’s efforts may come too late to save distinct cultures like the Fremen. The Qizarate priesthood has replaced many of the “old” Fremen of the desert, who have become religious bureaucrats, military leaders in the jihad, or simply forgotten. These priests now function as the representatives of Fremen culture in Paul’s

empire, even though some of them are not even actually from Arrakis: “A new civil servant had sprung up all throughout his universe. This new man of the Qizarate was more often a convert. He seldom displaced a Fremen in the key posts, but he was filling all the interstices” (*Dune Messiah* 211). These people resemble the “postcolonial migrant” (Spivak 256), a figure that “[becomes] the norm, thus occluding the native” (256) through the effects of colonialism. As the Qizarate fills in new, middle class bureaucratic positions, they become representatives of the Fremen culture they have replaced. This “silencing” of Fremen culture recalls Spivak’s example of Bhubaneswari Bhaduri, who was tasked with an assassination by a political independence group she supported. She was unable to bring herself to carry out the assassination, and instead decided to commit suicide (Spivak 306-307). She tried to ensure that her suicide would be taken as a political statement, rather than a suicide over an illicit pregnancy, by waiting until she was menstruating to commit the act. Her family, however, claimed her death “was a case of illicit love” (308) to downplay her involvement in a political independence movement. Spivak argues that she was “[silenced] by her own more emancipated granddaughters” (309), her story retold by a postcolonial culture to benefit the colonizer. In a similar way, the original Fremen of Dune have been silenced by the Qizarate priesthood, who transform the story of Fremen liberation from the Imperium into a message of submission to the Atreides colonial project. They function as representatives of Fremen culture in Paul’s empire, but the “true” Fremen of the desert are mostly gone, having become soldiers, governmental figures, priests, or even conspirators against the throne. As emperor, Paul could simply eliminate those who

continue to spread his empire, but such religious purges would intensify the colonial violence he hopes to end, as these people are throughout human society.

Paul plans to discredit himself to stop the monumental, systematic colonial violence of his religious empire, but his failure suggests that the influence of colonialism cannot be easily undone. He follows the visions of the falling moon he has seen, believing they will allow him dismantle his own godhood, and meets a Tliealaxu dwarf named Bijaz, who claims to be an informant that can reveal the location of Fremen conspirators against the throne. Aware that he is walking into a trap, Paul personally leads his troopers to the homes that contain these conspirators. His enemies launch a small nuclear weapon in the hopes that Paul will die in the localized blast, but are unsuccessful; the explosion only blinds Paul, burning his eyes out. He maintains the ability to see by “[summoning] up his oracular vision of these moments... [striding] along the track Time had carved for him, fitting himself into the vision so tightly that it could not escape” (*Dune Messiah* 240), effectively negating his blindness by continuously peering into the future. Paul believes his blindness will allow him to discredit himself within the context of Fremen tradition, which states that the blind are to be abandoned in the desert so that they are not a burden on their tribe. By abdicating the throne based upon the same Fremen myths that created his colonial empire, Paul believes he can delegitimize his colonial project, leaving the physical and epistemic violence of the Jihad without a driving force.

The unstoppable influence of colonialism is revealed when Paul is unable to bring an end to his own empire even within the context of Fremen tradition. His myth is increased as he gives battle orders to his surviving troopers and continues to hold

political meetings with his priesthood, all of whom are terrified by his ability to “see” without eyes through the use of his prescient talents. Though most of the conspiracy is hunted down by Paul’s armies in the aftermath of the attack, Paul’s prescience makes him aware of a threat against his unborn child. Paul’s lover, Chani, is pregnant, but the conspiracy has introduced chemicals into her diet that will complicate her pregnancy and cause her to die during childbirth. Paul’s visions have told him that danger and treachery surround both Chani’s death and the birth of his child, and though he knows he cannot save his lover from the drugs she has been given, he hopes to ensure the survival of his child before he abdicates his throne. This treachery comes to a head with news of Chani’s death, which also brings a surprise for Paul: Chani has born twins, a boy and a girl, rather than the single child that Paul saw in his visions. This news clouds Paul’s prescient visions as reality diverges from the future he has foreseen, leaving him truly blind as his party travels to the Sietch where his children were born. As they enter the room his children were born in, the mysterious threat of his prescient visions is revealed: Scytale, a Tleilaxu “Face Dancer” able to morph his physical appearance to take the form of any person, has used his skills to replace one of Chani’s birth attendants. Scytale holds a knife to Paul’s children, offering him a deal: Paul must abdicate his throne and give all of his monetary holdings to the Tleilaxu, or Scytale will murder his children. As an additional temptation, Scytale also offers Paul a clone of his dead lover, Chani, claiming that he can restore her in gholia form as he did with Duncan Idaho. As Paul debates the offer, he receives a strange, new kind of prescient vision that heralds the passing of his powers to his children. He sees the room through the eyes of

his newborn son, Scytale's weapon hovering right above the child, and lines up a throw through his own son's eyes, hurling his crysknife across the room and killing Scytale.

Paul's experience of seeing through his own son's eyes suggests that colonialism cannot be ended, even by people who are able to leverage religious violence to their own advantage. Like his sister Alia, Paul's children have been born with superhuman abilities, fully aware even in their newborn state. Paul's prescient visions have also manifested in his son, and Paul knows that the Atreides myth will pass on to his children, signifying that the effects of Paul's colonial empire cannot truly be ended; colonial religious violence will live on in his descendants, and they will be deified just as he has been. Paul relates this to Duncan after Bijaz, who had been traveling with the group, rushes into the room in a final, desperate attempt to offer Paul the Bene Tleilax's bargain of restoring Chani as a gholia once again. Knowing he cannot resist the temptation a second time, Paul orders the Duncan Idaho to kill the Tleilaxu dwarf, telling the gholia that "there are problems in this universe for which there are no answers... nothing can be done" (*Dune Messiah* 320). Though his words ostensibly refer to the Tleilaxu bargain, they echo in Duncan's mind after Paul secretly escapes into the desert at night, walking into the dunes in accordance with Fremen tradition now that he is truly blind. The gholia realizes that Paul referred to more than just Bijaz's offer of resurrecting Chani – the true problem Paul refers to is that his myth cannot be completely destroyed. Though Paul's prescience has failed him, and he has walked into the desert in accordance with the traditions of his empire, the colonial project that empire created will transfer to his children, who will be worshiped as gods just as he was.

Though Paul renounces the position of emperor and leaves Alia to rule until his son, Leto II, is old enough, Paul's success at ending religious violence is mixed at best. The Atreides religion will live on in his sister and children, and though he has ended the physical violence of the Jihad and prevented his empire from falling into chaotic warfare and religious strife, the Atreides empire will continue, the effects of his manipulation never truly leaving the universe. His failure to fully destroy his own empire represents the overwhelming power of colonial religious violence as a cultural force. Colonial systems and the methods of discourse that they enable enact violence against other cultures and become powerful systems in their own right, but when mixed with the power of religion to inspire belief, those methods of discourse can become enduring and unstoppable.

CONCLUSION: “GOLDEN PATHS” AND “SCATTERINGS”

“At the portal, one Fish Speaker guard whispered to another: ‘Is God troubled?’ And her companion replied: ‘The sins of this universe would trouble anyone.’ Leto heard them and wept silently.”

--- Frank Herbert, *God Emperor of Dune*

Herbert’s saga of jihad cuts to the heart of colonial movements founded on religious violence. The initial groundwork of Paul’s empire is laid by the Bene Gesserit Sisterhood and the Corrino Imperium, as a combination of epistemic violence and oppression create the desire for a messiah. As Paul and Jessica are betrayed by their own culture, they exploit this groundwork, transforming the Fremen into an army. This physical violence becomes more powerful than they can imagine, leading to a jihad that spreads across the universe, colonizing countless planets. After twelve years as Emperor, Paul can no longer manage the colonial project he has created, and various political officials wield power by exploiting his image. Though he attempts to discredit himself and bring an end to this empire, his success is mixed; he is able to end the jihad and abdicate the throne without plunging the empire into chaos, but his religious mantle is passed on to his family and the structure of the empire remains, as his sister Alia becomes regent until his twin children are old enough to ascend to political power.

Though this thesis is not able to examine the whole *Dune* series, it is interesting to note that the final result of the Atreides empire is not so dismal. In *Children of Dune*, Paul’s son, Leto II, undergoes a hybrid transformation that merges his body with that of a sandworm of Dune, becoming a superhuman figure capable of singlehandedly

destroying the forces of Alia's corrupt regency, which has perpetuated and even intensified the oppressive structure of Paul's empire. Like his father, he assumes control of the empire, but opts for a much tighter control of his religious myth, ruling as an iron-fisted tyrant. For over three millennia, the empire is completely controlled by their "God Emperor" as Leto II slowly becomes a combination of human and sandworm that functions as the sole source of human culture.

During the events of *God Emperor of Dune*, Leto II engineers his own downfall much more successfully than his father. Using his ability to recall events through Other Memory and his highly advanced prescient talents, he finds a course through the future he calls "The Golden Path" designed to avoid Paul's mistakes, directing all of human culture toward a tipping point of religious violence. Donald Palumbo argues in "The Monomyth as Fractal Pattern in Frank Herbert's *Dune* Novels" that Leto's golden path is an "explicit plan to correct Paul's vision of the future – to redeem Paul's failure to transcend his transcendence – a goal which takes him nearly 3500 years to accomplish" (437). This need to "correct his father's mistakes" drives Leto to tightly control human society, forbid space travel, and manage human breeding patterns to create a gene that enables invisibility to his own prescient powers. In the process, Leto II engineers the downfall of monolithic religious violence as a whole; he is assassinated by Siona Atreides, a woman he genetically designs to be the perfect rebel, and Duncan Idaho, who he has restored as a ghola repeatedly for thousands of years, through a series of events that ensures his violent demise in front of a gathering of his most devoted worshipers. The Atreides myth is crushed once and for all, plunging humanity into chaos for years to come.

Over fifteen hundred years later, *Heretics of Dune* and *Chapterhouse: Dune* depict the aftermath of Leto's empire. During these years, humanity has traveled far beyond the boundaries of Leto's empire to escape the violent periods that followed during an era called the Scattering. These migrations have spread Siona's prescience-invisible gene throughout all human society and created a heterogeneous population too far flung to be controlled by a single force. Though the Atreides religion still remains, it exists primarily as a cult on Arrakis and within the Old Imperium, the planets where the first four novels took place. The novel shows that Leto II succeeded where his father failed by ensuring that no single tyrant or cultural movement will ever be able to control humanity again. Though various power groups struggle for power in this "post-Atreides" universe, no single group is able to assert total control: human immunity to prescience negates one of the most powerful tools of tyranny in the universe, and Leto's era has bred a deep seated distrust of monolithic power into human society. Even the powerful "Honored Matres," a Bene Gesserit splinter group from the Scattering who attempt to seize power over the Old Imperium, are on the run from mysterious foes from the countless new worlds humanity has visited.

When analyzed through Postcolonial theory, the *Dune* series illuminates the critical questions of that theory that pertain to religious violence. Paul's creation of an empire provides a model of a religious-based colonial project. Postcolonial critics such as Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak examine the influence of colonialism on knowledge and culture, and an exploration of religious violence through a postcolonial framework allows for the same kind of analysis of the effects of the "religious colonialism" (*Dune Messiah* 8) in Paul Atreides' empire. Paul's story questions and criticizes the colonial

project, leading to the moment when even Paul himself decides that violence must be brought to an end. His failure highlights the incredible power of cultural movements such as his transformation of Fremen society, suggesting that those movements cannot be brought to an end easily. Though Paul is able to exploit the epistemic violence woven into Fremen culture by the Bene Gesserit Sisterhood and uses it to muster the military power necessary to overthrow the Imperium, he is unable to manage that power once it becomes an entrenched colonial force. His empire becomes a heterogeneous society that uses religious violence to attain political power and Paul's image to maintain the colonial structure of the new Imperial culture. Paul's inability to bring an end to his empire recalls Said and Spivak's suggestions that the effects of colonialism may never truly leave cultures that are subjected to it.

The first two novels allow for an examination of postcolonial questions within the framework of a single fictional empire. While Leto II's empire raises its own questions, those questions are different from the ones posed by postcolonial theory. Texts such as *Orientalism* and *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* do not necessarily set out to provide solutions to the problems created by colonialism; rather, they critically examine the effects of empire. The first two novels of Herbert's series work in a similar way; Paul never "solves the problem" of empire, but his life experiences show colonial effects: he exploits, manages, and eventually tries to destroy religious colonialism. Those problems are eventually solved, but require the ascension of a tyrannical, powerful, yet benevolent godlike ruler who nevertheless needs almost four thousand years of brutal political control to achieve success. His manipulation leads to generations of warfare and strife for humanity, suggesting that the "answer" to the

problems of colonialism may be as bad as the problem itself. Herbert's first two novels are a critical examination of the effects of religious violence, and a warning about the dangers of using that violence to create an empire. The *Dune* novels therefore remind critics of one of the classic functions of science fiction: to reframe real world problems, allowing them to be examined from their usual associations. In a contemporary society that often associates religious violence with third world cultures rather than colonial projects, *Dune* reminds critics that religious violence can come from many sources. While *Dune* and *Dune Messiah* were published nearly 50 years ago, the novels engage questions of religious violence and colonialism in ways that few texts have in the science fiction genre.

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