

## Paul's Empire: Imperialism and Assemblage Theory in Frank Herbert's *Dune*

By: Amanda Rudd

### Abstract:

In his article, "History and the Historical Effect in Frank Herbert's *Dune*," Lorenzo DiTommaso argues that history within *Dune* is a purely linear and progressive process. DiTommaso claims that Paul's actions are pre-determined by the logical progression of history. Paul constructs his empire from the Galactic Imperium left by Shaddam, making it merely the next step in the causal and evolutionary chain as already determined by the Butlerian Jihad. However, DiTommaso's construction of history is overly-deterministic, and does not attend to the complexity involved in building any empire, particularly Paul's. Instead, reading *Dune* through the lens of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire* and Manuel DeLanda's assemblage theory allows for a more complete understanding of the empire Paul assembles from the pieces of Shaddam's. It is possible to pay proper attention to the historical dimensions of Paul's power while still acknowledging and examining the paradigmatic breaks that occur in his construction of empire. Furthermore, by approaching the Galactic Imperium as an assemblage per DeLanda, in which components may be re-ordered, removed, and plugged into different assemblages, we may understand Shaddam's empire as one assemblage, which is disassembled by Paul and his Fremen forces. Therefore, Paul's empire, composed of the elements of Shaddam's (re-arranged and placed in new relations to each other), along with elements from Fremen culture and militia power, is in fact an entirely new assemblage, which is both properly oriented to its linear historical processes and a total paradigmatic shift from the previous empire.

*Keywords:* imperialism, assemblage, history, paradigmatic shift, empire, science fiction

### Author Notes

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"There is no escape—we pay for the violence of our ancestors" (Herbert, 1965, p. 146); so spoke the prophet Paul Muad'Dib in "The Collected Sayings of Muad'Dib," signifying an inescapable connection to the past. This quote, if read in isolation, would lend support to Lorenzo DiTommaso's (1992) argument in "History and Historical Effect in Frank Herbert's 'Dune'" that *Dune* demonstrates a clear linear relationship between past and present, and that these historical structures of linearity underpin many of the themes and institutions of the novel, including, but not limited to, the Padishah Emperor's Galactic Imperium and Paul's role as a catalyst for change. According to DiTommaso (1992), the structures of *Dune* show that Herbert himself believed that "history is a linear and progressive process, whose effects, while not always predictable, are nonetheless logical and understandable" (p. 311). As prime

evidence, DiTommaso (1992) cites references to the Butlerian Jihad, which in being called “the last jihad” implies a series of previous jihads. “This apparent incidence of multiple jihads,” DiTommaso (1992) posits,

should not be taken as being representative of a theory of cyclical history. Indeed, Herbert’s treatments of the diverse religious traditions and the politico-social history of all aspects of the Imperium clearly reveal the evolutionary nature of his vision of history. (p. 311)

While DiTommaso’s (1992) analysis of history within the context of the *Dune* series is thought-provoking, it is flawed in several places and leads to an overly-simplistic determinism that negates the agency of the characters and does not account for the complexity inherent in empire-building. DiTommaso’s (1992) explication of what he terms the “Vitality struggle”—a binary opposition between vitality (life) and stagnation as represented by the conflict between the Imperium and Paul Muad’Dib—is particularly astute, and offers a unique angle on the main thematic and philosophical conflicts within the first novel of the series. However, this reading neither requires nor advances his interpretation of time and history as linear and progressive.

For instance, neither textual evidence from the novel nor theory provides a reason to believe DiTommaso’s (1992) claim that the series of jihads cannot be read as cyclical. From what little evidence Herbert provides in the Appendices of *Dune*, it is just as plausible to read the jihads as cyclical. Furthermore, DiTommaso’s (1992) argument falls apart when he applies his reading of linear history to Paul’s empire-building project, claiming that Paul’s actions are pre-determined by the logical progression of history, and that the empire Paul inherits is “derived from the same homogeneous effects of the history” (p. 322) that created Shaddam’s empire; it is thus merely the next step in the causal and evolutionary chain as already determined by the Butlerian Jihad. While some attention to historical processes is admittedly important to an understanding of the imperialism portrayed in *Dune*, DiTommaso’s (1992) construction of history and empire is ultimately deterministic and does not account for the special conditions of Paul’s empire-building.

There are several signs that history within the context of *Dune* is not the simplistic linear progression that DiTommaso (1992) makes it out to be. While Herbert (1965) acknowledges a connection to the past in such passages as the quote from Muad’Dib mentioned above, there is nothing simple about his representation of history and time. He may state in one place that “there is in all things a pattern that is part of our universe” (Herbert, 1965, p. 380), which implies the kind of logical processes that DiTommaso speaks of. Yet, in another passage, Herbert claims, “The concept of progress acts as a protective mechanism to shield us from the terrors of the future” (1965, p. 371). Defining progress as a shield that protects us from the changes that come with the passage of time defies the very idea of progress, separating history from “the old concepts of continuity, causality, and temporal progression” as the “dream of progress” is buried “beneath the rubble of World War II, the Holocaust...” (Gomel, 2010, p. 2). Despite the fact that the Bene Gesserit and the Houses of the Landsraad pay attention to linearity and genealogy, the novel itself seems in several ways to negate DiTommaso’s argument for a history that is linear, progressive, and evolutionary in nature. By negating this concept of temporal history, the novel also demonstrates that we cannot simplify empire to a deterministic evolutionary progression as characterized by DiTommaso, particularly when we approach empire in a more critical manner.

I would argue that by reading *Dune* through the lens of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's (2000) *Empire*, and Manuel DeLanda's (2006) assemblage theory, we come to a more complete understanding of Paul and the empire he assembles from the shattered pieces of the previous Imperium. As Hardt and Negri (2000) explain in their discussion of capitalism and imperialism, most current frameworks of empire do not stand up to the current moment. It is still possible to pay proper attention to the historical and *ab origine* dimensions of Paul's power while acknowledging the real paradigmatic breaks that occur as he constructs his empire. Moreover, by approaching the Galactic Imperium as an assemblage per DeLanda (2006), we may understand the Imperium of Padishah Emperor Shaddam IV as just one possible assemblage, which is disassembled by Paul and his Fremen forces. Therefore, Paul's empire, composed of the elements of Shaddam's (re-arranged and placed in new relations to each other), along with elements from Fremen culture and militia power, is in fact an entirely new assemblage, both properly oriented to its linear historical processes and also a total paradigmatic shift from the previous empire.

In constructing his argument about the Vitality struggle, DiTommaso (1992) makes several claims about the operations of history in empire building, and how Paul is oriented to history, but his interpretation of history within these contexts is faulty. For instance, he states that the Vitality struggle is a conflict between the Imperium and Arrakis as entities that are different in degree, not in kind (DiTommaso, 1992, p. 313). Paul comes to power by operating within the system of the already established empire, the control of which, DiTommaso claims, "naturally encourages a lowering of race consciousness and a slowing of history" (1992, p. 313).<sup>1</sup> This is neither an accurate reading of Paul specifically, nor of empire in general. DiTommaso (1992) seems to be using a mainly Hobbesian theory of empire—focusing on the transference of sovereignty (i.e., from Shaddam to Paul), and attributing the legitimacy of that sovereignty primarily with a "contractual agreement grounded on the convergence of preexisting state subjects" (Hardt and Negri, 2000, p. 7). Yet Hardt and Negri (2000) point out that this theory of empire "cannot account for the real novelty of the historical processes we are witnessing," nor does it "recognize the accelerated rhythm, the violence, and the necessity with which the new imperial paradigm operates" (p. 8).

Though Hardt and Negri (2000) discuss empire within the context of contemporary globalization and neoliberalism, I believe their notions can be applied in this case because they offer a framework by which we can examine the exceptional quality of Paul's empire-building, including the accelerated rhythm and violence he employs through *Dune*. As Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr. (2003) states, whether Hardt and Negri's (2000) theory is accurate as a critique of global capitalism or not, it is

immensely useful as a tool for understanding contemporary geopolitical mythology [...] As a world-model, it is simultaneously an ideological fiction and a way of experiencing the world. It is also what Peter Stockwell calls an architext: a complex cognitive metaphor onto which can be mapped readers' sense of reality and also the many different parts of the science-fictional megatext. (p. 232)

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<sup>1</sup> Ironically, Hardt and Negri (2000) would posit almost the exact opposite: imperialism creates a perception of difference (among many lines, including race and ideology) as it develops a nationalized identity of "the people" (p. 128-129). Thus the Reverend Mother calls the Fremen "those people" and speaks of them as monstrous.

We can easily apply Hardt and Negri's cognitive metaphor of the new imperial paradigm to Paul's empire—which is built rapidly, using the force of physical, economic, and ideological violence that Shaddam neither anticipates nor understands, and with a sense of necessity for his own and Arrakis's survival. In Paul Muad'Dib's use of physical, economic, and ideological violence, he marks a paradigm shift. In constructing his empire, Paul does indeed utilize all the pieces of Shaddam's Imperium, broken, rearranged, and reconsidered, but he does so in combination with a multitude of new elements and with new networks and connections. The struggle between Shaddam's Imperium and Paul's is, therefore, a clear break from the old reality, a conflict arising from a difference of *kind* as well as degree.

DiTommaso (1992) further argues, "Paul does not escape from the system when he becomes the Prophet" (p. 316), but merely adjusts his position or stance within the system. Paul is therefore a mere catalyst who "sparks the awesome inertial forces of history into motion" (DiTommaso, 1992, p. 321), triggering a series of events that were already set to occur by the linear and evolutionary progression of history. Hardt and Negri (2000) contradict this when they specifically begin their argument with the proposition that we "rule out from the outset [...] the notion that the present order somehow rises up spontaneously out of the interactions of radically heterogeneous global forces, as if this order were a harmonious concert orchestrated by the natural and neutral hand of the world market" (p. 3). In this case, of course, the concert would be orchestrated not by the market but by the determinism of the Butlerian Jihad. If we accept Hardt and Negri's (2000) stance, then the emergence and/or creation of imperial structures requires a more complicated process than a natural combination of preexisting conditions already at play within Shaddam's empire. Instead, viewing the imperial forces of *Dune* through the lens of assemblage theory offers a more complete picture.

In his book *A New Philosophy of Society*, Manuel DeLanda (2006) extends Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) theory of assemblages, first set forth in "1914: One or Several Wolves?" from *A Thousand Plateaus*, which posits a theory that can be applied to a "wide variety of wholes constructed from heterogeneous parts" (p. 3). DeLanda (2006) argues that rather than viewing wholes (whether those wholes are material, social, etc.) as either single irreducible entities or only equal to the properties of its separate parts, it is possible for a whole to be "both analyzable into separate parts and at the same time have irreducible properties that emerge from the interactions between parts" (p. 10). These are assemblages: "wholes characterized by relations of exteriority. These relations imply, first of all, that a component part of an assemblage may be detached from it and plugged into a different assemblage in which its interactions are different" (p. 1).

Over the course of the first chapter of his book, DeLanda (2006) spends considerable time building upon the theory of assemblages and explicates a series of elements within his theory. The relations of exteriority that characterize an assemblage can be "logically necessary relations" between parts, or they can be only "contingently obligatory" (DeLanda, 2006, p. 11). Furthermore, DeLanda defines assemblages along two axes or dimensions. The first axis "defines the variable roles which an assemblage's components may play" (DeLanda, 2006, p. 12), the two sides of which are the material and the expressive. The second axis "defines variable processes in which these components become involved and that either stabilize the identity of an assemblage [...] or destabilize it" (DeLanda, 2006, p. 12). The two sides of this axis are called territorialization and deterritorialization. It is important to note that these two axes

do not exist in binaries, but are spectrums or continuums. Combining these two axes results in an array of components that may perform a variety of functions and could have both territorializing and deterritorializing effects. Throughout the book, DeLanda (2006) demonstrates how this assemblage theory may be applied on different scales, beginning with individual interactions between people or objects, up through the scale of cities and organizations, and ending with nation-states. Adding or removing components will not always alter an assemblage, but because the functions and properties of an assemblage are defined not by the components but the interactions between components, a significant fracturing, re-ordering, or re-structuring of components can, in some cases, result in the creation of an entirely new assemblage. This is, in its essence, what I argue takes place over the course of *Dune*, as Paul Muad'Dib Atreides attacks and disassembles Shaddam IV's Imperium, replacing it with an empire of his own making, which reorders all the components of Shaddam's empire while adding components of Fremen culture and militia power to the mix.

It is essential first, though, to note the ways in which Paul himself is also an assemblage that cannot be predicted or controlled by the old system. DiTommaso (1992) argues that Paul's abilities and status as the Kwisatz Haderach separate him from the Spacing Guild, the Mentats, and the Bene Gesserit by a difference in degree (p. 316). He views Paul's abilities as simple extensions of the same "awareness-spectrum" that the Spacing Guild uses, increased by a combination of the Mentat training from Thufir Hawat and the Bene Gesserit training from his mother, Jessica. Furthermore, because Paul resorts to using his position as a Duke within the Imperium in his dealing with Shaddam IV, DiTommaso (1992) claims that he merely works within the already-established system and does not in any way constitute a break. There is no denying the importance of Paul's background, the training that is the foundation of his development, or his connections to the institutions of the Spacing Guild, the Mentats, and the Bene Gesserit.

Nevertheless, if we view Paul's abilities as only an intensification of each institution we risk ignoring the novel ways these elements interact with each other. No human being before had ever received both Mentat and Bene Gesserit training. These two elements alone, powerful in their own rights, would interact in unpredictable ways, feeding off and building from the properties of each element to create entirely new abilities.<sup>2</sup> Combining these two already-formidable components with Paul's initial spice consumption, the philosophies and religion of the Fremen, his personality as a Duke's son, and his final consumption of the Water of Life<sup>3</sup> could not fail to create an entirely unique entity that could not have been created or predicted by any of these elements individually. The properties, abilities, and powers of the Kwisatz Haderach as embodied by Paul are different from and greater than any of these individual properties, and are dependent upon the interactions, or relations of exteriority, between these elements. This is, in effect, the very definition of an assemblage. Though

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<sup>2</sup> It may be important to the overall interaction of the various components that make up Paul as an assemblage to note that Jessica disobeyed her Bene Gesserit by having a son instead of a daughter, and that by giving Paul Bene Gesserit training *she* is the one who makes the first paradigmatic break from the old system, in which Bene Gesserit training is for women *only*.

<sup>3</sup> Also a task meant only for women, specifically for women who are Bene Gesserit trained and intend to become Reverend Mothers.

DiTommaso (1992) argues that Paul's prescience is only an extension of the Mentat ability to read paths and probabilities, the scenes when Paul experiences his more powerful prescient visions demonstrate an experience and knowledge that is not only different in intensity but vastly different in quality and kind than a Mentat's computational predictions.

Paul, as the Kwisatz Haderach, is not just playing the odds and dealing with probabilities and statistics. He is stepping outside the stream of time and *experiencing* events—following the paths and possibilities past their conclusions, becoming aware of the consequences of consequences of consequences *ad infinitum*, in ways that neither the Mentats nor the Spacing Guild could ever dream of. His abilities develop slowly, in small flashes such as in the scene just after he and Jessica escape the Harkonnen attack, and Paul sees

two main branchings along the way ahead—in one he confronted an evil old Baron and said: 'Hello, Grandfather.' The thought of that path and what lay along it sickened him. The other path held long patches of grey obscurity except for peaks of violence. He had seen 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. (Herbert, 1954, p. 199)

Already here Paul sees farther and in more visionary ways than the Mentats could, but it is early still, and he does not see clearly. Paul gains greater understanding of the currents he steps in as the novel continues:

Awareness flowed into that timeless stratum where he could view time, [...] the one-eyed vision of the past, the one-eyed vision of the present and the one-eyed vision of the future—all combined in a trinocular vision that permitted him to see time-become-space" (Herbert, 1965, p. 295).

And once he drinks the Water of Life, Paul's sight, his ability to be "many places at once" (Herbert, 1965, p. 444), becomes complete. His mother Jessica knows in that moment that he is, in fact, the Kwisatz Haderach. Yet, though the Bene Gesserit have hoped for the Kwisatz Haderach, have predicted it, and have actively manipulated genetics in order to bring him about, the reality of Paul's existence as an assemblage of many elements leads to a creature that they could not have accurately predicted and will certainly never be able to understand or control.

This fact is highlighted in the last chapter. The epigraph to the chapter announces: There is no measuring Muad'Dib's motives by ordinary standards. [...] Remember, we speak of the Muad'Dib who ordered battle drums made from his enemies' skins, the Muad'Dib who denied the conventions of his ducal past with a wave of the hand, saying merely: 'I am the Kwisatz Haderach. That is reason enough.' (Herbert, 1965, p. 466)

Paul as Muad'Dib and Kwisatz Haderach cannot be predicted or measured or held to the same standards as either the Fremen or the ducal houses of the Landsraad. When the Bene Gesserit Reverend Mother Gaius Helen Mohiam first realizes that Paul is in fact the Kwisatz Haderach she feels vindicated, going so far as to say that she can forgive Jessica for "the abomination of [her] daughter" (Herbert, 1965, p. 477) because Jessica gave birth to Paul. However, the Reverend Mother quickly realizes that the Kwisatz Haderach is not what she (or anyone) thought it would be. Paul disabuses her of her self-congratulatory attitude by stating not only that he will never do what she wants of him, but also by making her aware of her own limitations and faulty predictions: "you saw part of what the race needs, but how poorly you

saw it. You think to control human breeding and intermix a select few according to your master plan! How little you understand..." (Herbert, 1965, p. 478). At this point, the Reverend Mother's self-satisfaction transforms to rage and horror as she shouts for Jessica to "Silence him!" (Herbert, 1965, p. 477) and demands: "Jessica, what have you done?" (Herbert, 1965, p. 478). Thus, she disavows the entity she had some part in creating, but which has so far exceeded and defied her expectations that her success might as well be considered a failure.

In many ways, Paul exemplifies the kind of multiplicity described in Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) "One or Several Wolves?" which became the foundation for DeLanda's (2006) assemblage theory. Their statement that "the unconscious itself was fundamentally a crowd" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 17) fits neatly with the process of drinking the Water of Life, in which the Bene Gesserit Reverend Mothers, and eventually Paul as Kwisatz Haderach, become connected to each other on some meta-cognitive and spiritual level. "It is like an ultimate *simpatico*," Jessica thinks as she takes the Water of Life, "being two people at once: not telepathy, but mutual awareness" (Herbert, 1965, p. 355). In that moment, Jessica connects to the previous Reverend Mother, Ramallo, and is given all her experiences and memories, including the memories of the Reverend Mother before Ramallo, and the one before that, as far as back as can be conceived. In this way, Jessica becomes a crowd, as does Paul when he later drinks the Water of Life. But unlike Jessica, who merely gains access to previous Reverend Mothers, Paul gains access to more histories, voices, and visions than even he can control.

Paul embodies multiplicity in other ways as well, particularly by virtue of his many names. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987),

the proper name (nom proper) does not designate an individual: it is on the contrary when the individual opens up to the multiplicities pervading him or her, at the outcome of the most severe operations of depersonalization, that he or she acquires his or her true proper name. The proper name is the instantaneous apprehension of a multiplicity. (p. 17)

That name, here, is Muad'Dib, which encompasses and gestures toward the multiplicity of Paul's identity: Paul, Duke, Fremen, Usul, Lisan Al-Gaib, Kwisatz Haderach, and eventually Emperor. The name Muad'Dib signals the assemblage of Paul, the many elements and relations of exteriority that make him who and what he is. As Deleuze and Guattari explain: "Lines of flight or of deterritorialization,<sup>4</sup> [...] becoming-inhuman, deterritorialized intensities: that is what multiplicity is" (1987, p. 11). The multiplicity and the assemblage are one and the same, the assemblage is what makes Paul a multiplicity, and makes him something other or more than human: the Kwisatz Haderach.

The figure of Paul is not, however, the only assemblage to be found in the novel, for the entirety of his empire stands as one as well. In his analysis of organizations and governments as assemblages, DeLanda (2006) chooses to focus on

what all these organizations share in common: an authority structure. We can separate those elements that play an expressive role, that is, those components that express

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<sup>4</sup> Defined by DeLanda (2006) as the process of destabilizing the internal homogeneity or boundaries of an assemblage (p. 12).

legitimacy of the authority, from those playing a material role, those involved in the enforcement of obedience..." (p. 68).

In doing so, he employs Max Weber's categories of three types of authority structures: efficient bureaucracy—"in which a complete separation of position or office from the person occupying it has been achieved"; religious/monarchical governments—"in which positions of authority are justified exclusively in terms of traditional rules and ceremonies inherited from the past and assumed to be sacred"; and charismatic individuals who repudiate the first two and are "treated by followers as a leader by virtue of personal charisma" (DeLanda, 2006, p. 69). These three structures tend to exist in mixtures, making most if not all organizations and governments assemblages. By discussing Paul's empire in these terms, I am greatly simplifying DeLanda's (2006) analysis, which makes a concerted effort to distinguish these kinds of hierarchical organizational assemblages "from the kingdom, empire, or nation-state that [they] control" (p. 87). In reality, on the level of kingdom, empire, or nation-state, we must also deal with the "interactions with other organizations, with coalitions of networks, or with populations of individual persons" (DeLanda, 2006, p. 87), which make that kingdom, empire, or nation-state an assemblage of many other assemblages (Deleuzian multiplicity in its largest form). That said, if we accept from the outset that any empire *is* an assemblage of many other assemblages, then it is possible to delineate several ways in which Paul deconstructs and changes Shaddam's assemblage empire into a new one.

The Galactic Imperium, as ruled by Shaddam IV, is in most respects a mixture of bureaucratic and monarchical structures, in which Shaddam is a monarch with limited power, enforced mainly through the deployment of his Sardaukar military forces. Rather, much of the authority comes from the contractual agreements with the noble Houses of the Landsraad, and, in the end, largely from the bureaucratic forces of the Spacing Guild, who have a monopoly on space travel and essentially have the final word on all matters through their ability to control mobility, trade, and even where and when Shaddam may deploy his Sardaukar. This then, though simplified, is the general makeup of Shaddam's assemblage empire.

On the simplest level, because Paul is a new and forceful component of the assemblage, he changes the structure of that assemblage merely by his presence. As stated previously, adding to, removing, or rearranging the components can significantly alter an assemblage. This is true in the case of Paul because he clearly fits the definition of Weber's charismatic leader, and thus creates a ripple effect of change in the makeup of Shaddam's empire. As DeLanda (2006) notes: "the kinds of individuals that have played this role [of charismatic leader] have ranged from 'prophets, to people with a reputation for therapeutic or legal wisdom, to leaders in the hunt, and heroes of war'" (p. 69). Importantly, Paul fulfills all of these roles. He is first and foremost, the Lisan Al-Gaib, the prophet and leader foretold by Fremen myth who can see the future and will bring about change on Arrakis. Second, due to his training as a Duke's son, and his prescient knowledge of Fremen culture, he brings new wisdom to the Fremen clans, following their customs when it is useful, and also changing them when he deems it necessary.

This is most apparent when Paul refuses to follow Fremen culture by challenging Stilgar and killing him in order to take over leadership of the Fremen forces. Instead, he applies his special brand of wisdom to the crowds, explaining that he has already been established as ruler by teaching the Fremen the "weirding way" style of fighting, and because Stilgar already does his bidding and honors him in the Fremen council. He does not need to go through with the



combat challenge in order for the Fremen to recognize his leadership. He will not “smash [his] knife before a battle” or “cut off [his] right arm and leave it bloody on the floor of this cavern” (Herbert, 1965, p. 427-428). Lastly, he also becomes a great war-leader for the Fremen, both by teaching them the weirding way, and also by leading them on highly successful and brutal missions against the Harkonnen, even before he is recognized as the leader. It is his role as the charismatic leader that gives him access to the Fremen forces that allow him to deconstruct Shaddam’s empire, and later gives him the religious mystique that helps to justify his unquestioned rule in the following novel, *Dune Messiah*.

Paul begins to deconstruct Shaddam’s empire when he changes the relations of exteriority with the Spacing Guild. As Paul and the Fremen continue their attacks on the Harkonnen, their master plan is to so completely disrupt the mining and production of the all-important spice mélange that it will capture the undivided attention of the Spacing Guild and the Emperor. The Spacing Guild needs the spice because it fuels their ability to fold space and travel between planets. The Emperor needs the spice because it fuels the entire economy, and because without it the Spacing Guild will cut off his ability to travel as well. For decades, the Spacing Guild has been the power behind the throne, and even the Emperor must often bow to their demands. As Paul states to Shaddam, the Guild only permitted him to mount the throne on the assurance that the spice would continue to flow. This balance of power changes in the final chapter, with Paul. When Shaddam threatens Paul with an armada of ships from the Great Houses of the Landsraad ready to attack at any moment, Paul does not respond to the Emperor, but to the two Spacing guildsmen in the room, ordering them to “Get out there immediately and dispatch messages that will get that fleet on its way home” (Herbert, 1965, p. 475). The guildsmen respond by explaining that they do not take orders from him. In order to gain their attention, Paul threatens to destroy all spice production on Arrakis: “The power to destroy a thing is the absolute control over it,”<sup>5</sup> explains Paul (Herbert, 1965, p. 477), and therefore the Spacing Guild is now also under his control. He describes the guild as a village beside a river:

They need the water, but can only dip out what they require. [...] The spice flow, that’s their river, and I have built a dam. But my dam is such that you cannot destroy it without destroying the river. (Herbert, 1965, p. 477)

By exerting his power over the Spacing Guild, Paul dismantles nearly all the bureaucratic power it has over the empire, vastly restructuring the relations of exteriority between it and the throne.

Paul breaks apart and rebuilds Shaddam’s Imperium in other ways as well. When he removes the Sardaukar from power, and announces that he will turn their prison/training planet Salusa Secundus into a “garden world, full of gentle things” (Herbert, 1965, p. 488), he eradicates the Galactic Imperium’s only other real method of enforcement outside the bureaucratic structures of the Spacing Guild. Instead, Paul replaces the Sardaukar with his Fremen forces, leading the Reverend Mother to burst out in fear and horror: “You cannot loose these people upon the universe!” (Herbert, 1965, p. 488) when she senses the coming jihad. Paul responds: “You will think back to the gentle ways of the Sardaukar!” (Herbert, 1965, p. 488). This further highlights the difference Paul envisions in the way his forces will interact

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<sup>5</sup> Or, as the Baron Harkonnen says in the 1984 film version: “he who controls the spice controls the universe.”

with the empire and the universe at large. By making the Fremen one of the most significant components of his empire, Paul also restructures the ceremonial and expressive elements of the assemblage. The Fremen religion becomes a new method for enforcement and obedience as their sacred histories and rites influence the expected behavior, language, and hierarchies of all the people in the empire.

Furthermore, these ritual aspects are not material components, but are highly important as expressive elements that sacralize, historicize, and justify both Paul's power as emperor and the actions of himself and his followers (this is especially true in *Dune Messiah*, in the case of his sister who is called St. Alia of the Knife<sup>6</sup>). In addition, in Shaddam's empire, religion had little influence or importance (perhaps none). While the Bene Gesserit are in some ways a religious group similar to an order of nuns, who seed messages of their beliefs within the myths and religions of all the worlds they contact (through a project called the Missionaria Protectiva,<sup>7</sup> which left seeds within the Fremen religion making it possible for Jessica to claim support and safety), these religious elements have little to no effect on the governmental organization or bureaucracy of Shaddam's empire. Paul's empire, on the other hand, contains strong threads of the Fremen religion within its foundations. It is this religion that first posits Paul as a prophet and grants him the role of charismatic leader, which he uses in combination with his role as a Duke of the Landsraad to claim Arrakis and eventually the empire.

Paul does not, of course, deny his inheritance as Duke Atreides after the death of his father, Leto. Because he uses his name as an Atreides to his advantage, DiTommaso argues that Paul merely operates within the already-established system and does not constitute a paradigm shift. However, this claim ignores the fact that Paul is an assemblage, a multiplicity of names and roles that interact and relate to each other in complex ways. Paul knows it would be foolish and damaging both to his cause and to his own identity if he were to disavow his name and responsibility as Duke of House Atreides. He therefore uses every aspect to his advantage as he negotiates with Gurney Halleck, one of his father's best commanders, with the Sardaukar, and with Emperor Shaddam IV himself. In demanding the Emperor's surrender, Paul sends a message: "I, a Duke of a Great House, an Imperial Kinsman, give my word of bond under the Convention. If the Emperor and his people lay down their arms and come to me here I will guard their lives with my own" (Herbert, 1965, p. 469). When the Emperor and his entourage come before him, Paul behaves as a Duke of a Great House should behave. He follows the rules and rituals afforded to him as a Duke. Paul even accepts a combat challenge from Feyd-Ruatha and fights the battle within the rules of the Convention that controls the actions of the Houses of the Landsraad, despite the fact that as a Fremen warrior and leader, there is no need for him to fight Feyd himself. He could just as easily allow Gurney or even his lover Chani to kill Feyd for him, but he obeys the dictates of the system he resides within as a Duke because it is politically effective for him to do so.

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<sup>6</sup> Alia is often seen giving speeches or sermons about her brother's philosophies and godhood, and is described as "a Reverend Mother without motherhood, virgin priestess, object of fearful veneration for the superstitious masses" (Herbert, 1969, p. 68).

<sup>7</sup> Defined in the Appendices of *Dune* as "the arm of the Bene Gesserit order charged with sowing infectious superstitions on primitive worlds, thus opening those regions to exploitation by the Bene Gesserit" (Herbert, 1965, p. 524).

Paul follows the conventions of the Landsraad only to a point, and only so far as it suits his needs and whims. Because he is a multiplicity contained within the name Muad'Dib he feels no compulsion to limit himself to the rules that dictate the actions of a duke. He thus feels no compunction against threatening the Emperor with violence and imprisonment. When the Emperor exclaims: "I put down my arms and came here on your word of bond! [...] You dare threaten—" (Herbert, 1965, p. 487), Paul's response is a clear sign of his ability to fragment his actions between his multiple roles: "Your person is safe in my presence [...] An Atreides promised it. Muad'Dib, however, sentences you to your prison planet" (Herbert, 1965, p. 487). It is as if he contains two different people with two different sets of motives and morals. As Atreides, he demands the hand of the eldest Princess, Irulan, in marriage, in order to secure the throne and justify his rule in the eyes of the Landsraad. As Muad'Dib he threatens the Spacing Guild and sends the Fremen out into the universe with their strength and their religion to justify his rule in the eyes of everyone else. While Paul Atreides would worry for his sister, Alia, who is only four or five, Muad'Dib is only proud of her ability to kill as he tells his mother that Alia is "out doing what any good Fremen child should be doing in such times [...] She's killing enemy wounded and marking their bodies for the water-recovery teams" (Herbert, 1965, p. 470). It is Muad'Dib who swears to his lover Chani that she will have his love and his children and his loyalty, but it is Duke Atreides who bargains to marry the Princess Irulan anyway. Despite the presence of the Duke within him, and his ability to work within the old structures as needed, Paul makes it clear in the conclusion of *Dune* that the old law is dead and he is the new law. As he says of Arrakis:

The Fremen have the word of Muad'Dib [...] There will be flowing water here open to the sky and green oases rich with good things. But we have the spice to think of, too. Thus, there will always be desert on Arrakis... and fierce winds, and trials to toughen a man. We Fremen have a saying: 'God created Arrakis to train the faithful.' One cannot go against the word of God. (Herbert, 1965, p. 488)

He adds later that the Fremen are his and "what they receive shall be dispensed from Muad'Dib" (Herbert, 1965, p. 489). There is no question that he dispenses law, and the empire, not just Arrakis, will be one of *his* making. And yet, because his empire is an assemblage, with a multitude of components that interact in various and often-unpredictable ways, even Paul fails to account for and control everything. This becomes abundantly clear in *Dune Messiah*, as his jihad escapes his control, and he is eventually betrayed.

Manuel DeLanda's (2006) assemblage theory gives us the tools and lens through which the intricate nature of imperial power is demonstrated in *Dune*. However, this only begins to scratch the surface of the possibilities of how both assemblage theory and Hardt and Negri's (2000) *Empire* can be applied to the series as a whole. A more in-depth analysis of the multitude of assemblages that appear in Herbert's world-building could offer promising insights into his portrayals of religion and the politics of the masses. Moreover, the capitalistic nature of the spice trade and the Spacing Guild are ripe for an analysis based upon the issues of capitalism and globalization discussed in *Empire*. It would also be intriguing to see how Paul's role as a charismatic leader and Kwisatz Haderach complicates the proposition by Hardt and Negri (2000) that we should rule out the possibility of "a single power and a single center of rationality transcendent to global forces, guiding the various phases of historical development according to its conscious and all-seeing plan" (p. 3). That is not to say, of course, that Paul is in

control of every single event or sees every single outcome. The events of *Dune Messiah* and *Children of Dune*, the third novel of the series which focuses on Paul's children, certainly remove that possibility. And yet, as The Tleilaxu Godbuk states in *Dune Messiah*:

No matter how exotic human civilization becomes, no matter the developments of life and society nor the complexity of the machine/human interface, there always come interludes of lonely power when the course of humankind, depends upon the relatively simple actions of single individuals. (Herbert, 1969, p. 209)

No single, all-seeing individual may orchestrate the concert of imperial forces; but occasionally, a charismatic and powerful individual such as Paul Muad'Dib Atreides has the ability to break through systems, shift paradigms, and change the paths of those forces.

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