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Professor John Miller
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Annotated Bibliography: *Dune*

Working Thesis/Premise:

A postmodernist, sociological, and deconstructionist analysis of Frank Herbert's *Dune* novels and how they seek to answer the question of "what does it mean to be human?"

Primary Sources -

Herbert, Frank. *Children of Dune*. Putnam Publishing, 1976.

Herbert, Frank. *Dune Messiah*. Putnam Publishing, 1969.

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

Secondary Sources -

Badmington, Neil. "Theorizing posthumanism." *Cultural Critique* 53 (2003): 10-27.

This article primarily argues that the beginning of a posthuman world, or any fully-fledged posthuman world, does not necessarily mean the end or absence of a human world. The two are entirely capable of existing alongside each other, and the author supports this argument in the context of the theories of men like Descartes and Derrida, among other scholars. Posthumanist theory's arrival doesn't mean that humanist theory should be abandoned, and it is necessary to understand humanism first, as the author states "posthumanism, as I have argued elsewhere, is as much *posthumanist* as it is *posthumanist*" (Badmington 15). The idea that the

posthuman can only be understood if humans are first understood is important to *Dune*, as it exists in a sort of post-posthuman world, where thinking machines, computers, and AI have been outlawed, but humans are trained to think like machines in order to replace their role in society and allow for human civilization to continue to function. Since humans are so important to *Dune's* society, but they take on a posthuman role, knowledge of posthuman theory and by extension humanist theory will be essential to the presentation.

Irizarry, Adella. *The amtal rule: Testing to define in Frank Herbert's Dune*. Florida Atlantic University, 2013.

This article focuses on the various tests that the different factions of the *Dune* universe (or as I like to call it, the Duneiverse) use and why. The factions of note here are the Bene Gesserit, the Fremen, and the Faufreluches, all of whose tests Paul goes through. The Bene Gesserit employ the test of the Gom Jabbar to separate human and animal stock within their breeding program, the Fremen have the amtal rule where they test a thing (or a person) to its breaking point to determine its true capacity, and the Faufreluches have the test of Kanly, a ritualistic form of single combat to protect honor and solve disputes. Paul also undergoes the test of the water of life, the only test he chooses to undergo while the rest are forced upon him, to determine if he is the Kwisatz Haderach. All of these tests exist as a result of the Butlerian Jihad, the event that led to the post-posthuman world of *Dune*, and all of them exist to protect the individual human societies. This paper helps to provide a grounding for the importance of humanity and the human mind in *Dune*, and how despite this reverence, society has adapted and twisted the human mind and humanity to serve different purposes.

Kennedy, Kara. "The Softer Side of Dune: The Impact of the Social Sciences on World-Building." *Exploring Imaginary Worlds*. Routledge, 2020. 159-174.

This article focuses on how Herbert used worldbuilding, using our knowledge of feudalism to create a believable society, and then modifying it within the context of the hinted-at Butlerian Jihad as the reason for why there needed to be groups such as the Bene Gesserit, the Mentats, and the Spacing Guild which focus almost entirely on the advancement of the human mind to replace the roles that machines had previously held. The author argues that this worldbuilding is enabled by Herbert's studies of psychology and sociology. I would use this article to support my own evidence of how the sociological approach to *Dune* is a valid one, as well as drawing examples from it of the importance of the Butlerian Jihad to *Dune*.

Kroupa, Jan. "Social Critique in Sci-Fi Novels Dune by Frank Herbert and The Left Hand of Darkness by Ursula K. Le Guin." (2019).

This article focuses much on how Herbert used *Dune* to not only pose philosophical questions, but also to provide commentary on our own world. The Fremen and the spice are clearly a stand in for Arabic people and the oil of the Middle East. The fact that they want to terraform their desert planet into a place where *everyone* can live without want of water reflects the growing divide in wealth, and crises of climate and hunger we are experiencing today. Understanding Herbert's motivations for and the totality of his social critique is a necessary component of a complete comprehension of the novel. Learning what his groups stand for within our world impacts our understanding of them as human or posthuman, and what it might mean that certain groups have regressed while others have advanced.

Little, William. "An Introduction to Sociology." *Introduction to Sociology-1st Canadian Edition* (2014).

This is an excerpt from the first chapter of a standard sociology textbook. It defines sociology as the study of the society around us and social interactions, as well as both how we shape our society and our society shapes us. It also states that there are two levels to sociology: the micro and the macro. The micro is, obviously, focused on the smaller social networks we build in our lives, while the macro is focused on larger cultural interactions. An understanding of sociology is important because of how vastly different the social practices of people within the Imperium are based on their planet, allegiances, or culture. The Fremen have a very different lifestyle than the Harkonnens do, and using sociology to understand not only why these cultures are different, but also how they evolved and interact with one another, as well as the ideas and practices that are shared across cultural boundaries will be invaluable to fully comprehending the people of *Dune* and further answering the question of “what does it mean to be human?”.

McNelly, Willis E. *The Dune Encyclopedia*. Berkley, 1984.

This one is very straightforward, and honestly, the title is all the summary necessary. It's a big giant reference book for all things *Dune*, and I'll mainly be using it as an easier way to cite different terms, characters, events, etc. rather than seeking them throughout the individual novels. It'll also look good on display during my presentation.

Misha, Kiti. "The Human Non-Human Boundary in 'Dune'—An Ontological Reading through a Comparative Nietzschean and Transhuman Framework." (2020).

This article breaks the characters of *Dune* into three categories, based on Nietzsche's ideas of what a human is: Human, Posthuman, and Nonhuman. Most characters fall into the Human category, while Paul, Alia, the mentats and some Bene Gesserit can be classified as Posthuman, and the Guild navigators, Leto II, and the Sandworms are all Nonhuman. Understanding how the Human, Posthuman, and Nonhuman interact in the societies of *Dune*, and at what point these boundaries are crossed, will enable me to answer the question of how far can humanity advance, or regress, and still remain innately human?

Nealon, Jeffrey T. "The Discipline of Deconstruction." *PMLA*, vol. 107, no. 5, Modern Language Association, 1992, pp. 1266–79, <https://doi.org/10.2307/462879>.

This essay chronicles the rise and fall of deconstruction as a literary theory because it "committed suicide in literature departments after it realized it was unable to break away from the tradition it wished to supersede" (Nealon 1267). It breaks down the different ideas of deconstructionist theorists such as Gasche, Derrida, de Man, and Miller, and the reasons why it was never able to break out as its own truly independent theory. As language is incredibly important within *Dune*, and the difference between languages and the way people talk is a major factor in Paul's legend and how their societies function, understanding deconstruction will be essential in analyzing why and how Herbert's use and study of language impacted the novel.