GREEK MYTHOLOGICAL INFLUENCES IN FRANK HERBERT'S *DUNE* SAGA

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The aim of this paper is to identify the Greek myths in Frank Herbert's *Dune*, *Dune Messiah* and *Children of Dune*, and to analyze how Greek mythology, although considered by many ancient and obsolete, has a great influence on some of the most important science fiction writings of all times. I will demonstrate how this is connected with the previous works of ancient Greek and Roman writers, which recount the lives and deeds of gods and mythical heroes. Further on, I will analyze Frank Herbert's mentioned novels in order to evidence the connections with Greek myths, using Steven Shepard's analysis as a departing point.

The reasons I chose this subject are the importance of mythology for literature and science fiction novels in particular, my eagerness to investigate the critics who deal with the subject and my profound desire to explore the writings of one of the most appreciated Science Fiction authors, Frank Herbert.

If we read Freud, Levi-Strauss or Barthes, we understand myths are still present in our lives, in everything that surrounds us, in most of the things shaped by the hands of man. The relationship between science fiction and mythology is close and deep, but not always obvious. Since science fiction first came into existence it showed marks of mythology. Most of the science fiction narratives parallel ancient myths, starting with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* subtitled *A Modern Prometheus*. Science fiction uses mythology to reflect familiar truths, to make the universe imagined understandable for the reader/viewer.

The paper represents an ingression in the fantastic universe of *Dune*, and an analysis of characters and symbols inspired from Greek mythology, starting with the House Atreides to whom the main characters belong; later on, following Steven Shepard's theory, I compared Duke Leto Atreides with the Greek goddess Leto, Paul Atreides with her son, Apollo, the god of light and Alia Atreides to the goddess of hunt, Artemis. Concerning the worshipped creature of planet Arrakis, Shai-hulud, I argued that it might serve as a representation of Phyton, the serpent-like monster of Delphi. Similarly, the Bene Gesserit priestess can be understood as versions of Phytia, the Oracle of Delphi.

The era of the first SF bestsellers was dominated by the American Frank Herbert (1920-1986), the author of the *Dune* saga, started in 1965. The *Dune* saga got the attention of Sterling E. Lanier, an editor of *Chilton Book Company*, and soon became a great success, winning the Nebula Award for Best Novel in 1965. It also shared the Hugo Award in 1966 with *...And Call Me Conrad* by Roger Zelazny. *Locus* ("The Magazine of the Science Fiction & Fantasy Field") subscribers voted it the all-time best SF novel in 1975, again in 1987, and the best "before 1990" in 1998. According to contemporary Robert A. Heinlein, Herbert's literary work was "powerful, convincing, and most ingenious." Gerald Jonas explains in *The New York*

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Times Book Review: "So completely did Mr. Herbert work out the interactions of man and beast and geography and climate that *Dune* became the standard for a new sub-genre of 'ecological' science fiction."

Loyal to his ecological and philosophical ideas, Herbert continued his *Dune* saga, following it with *Dune Messiah* (1969), *Children of Dune* (1976 – the first SF novel ever to hit #1 on the *New York Times* hardcover bestseller list), and *God Emperor of Dune* (1981). In 1984, the year his wife Beverly died, he published *Heretics of Dune*. Herbert's final single work was *Chapterhouse Dune*, which tied up many of the saga's story threads.

Frank Herbert's masterpiece, *Dune*, introduces us to the world and culture of the far away planet Arrakis (Dune). Although it is set in the distant future, the universe resembles the Western medieval society, with its noble houses and non-sophisticated technology, since machines and computers were banned after the *Butlerian jihad*. The novel tells the story of the liberator of the Fremen, young Paul Atreides, son of Duke Leto from the ancient House Atreides. The critic Timothy O'Reilly describes it as a heroic romance of the best kind. Good and evil are clear-cut. The growth of young Paul to a heroic figure who can snatch victory from overwhelming defeat is a growth in awareness and self-mastery, as well as power. What reader is not heartened when Paul triumphs over all the forces massed against him? (O'Reilly, 2007: 150).

Mythology has infiltrated many cultures, influencing even modern writings or scripts. Sometimes, the mythological background is easy to recognize, as we can see in *Thor*, *Wrath of the Titans*, *Clash of the Titans*, the *Stargate series* and many more. Albeit perhaps not apparent at first glance, Frank Herbert's *Dune* has strong remnants of Greco-Roman mythology, as I am going to prove in this paper.

The House Atreides

The name of the house of Duke Leto and Paul is clearly taken from Greek mythology; *Atreides* is a patronymic from Atreus and designates his sons and descendants. In Greek mythology, Atreus was the king of Mycenae, son of Pelops and Hippodamia, and the father of Agamemnon and Menelaus.

According to Parks' *Enciclopedia of World Mythology*, Agamemnon was a ruler of Mycenae, a kingdom of ancient Greece. He is one of the central figures in the *Iliad*, Homer's epic poem about the Trojan War. When Atreus was murdered by his nephew Aegisthus, his sons, Agamemnon and Menelaus, fled to Sparta where King Tyndareus granted them refuge and protection. The king gave his daughters

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to the brothers as wives; the eldest daughter, Clytemnestra, was already married, but Agamemnon killed her husband Tantalus and then married her, while Menelaus took her beautiful sister Helen as his bride.

In *Dune*, the protagonist family possesses the surname Atreides and they, like the Atreides before them, are of royal blood and are leaders of men. In *Children of Dune*, Alia fights with all the consciences inside her, who try to overtake her; such a voice is her forefather, Agamemnon: "Other voices wove around her mind: 'I, Agamemnon, your ancestor, demand audience!' 'No ... no.' She pressed her hands against her ears until the flesh answered her with pain" (Herbert, *Children of Dune*, 35). This passage makes clear Herbert's intention to set Paul and Alia as Atreus' descendants.

Later on, during a conversation with princess Irulan, Ghanima, Paul's daughter, reminds her of their ancient blood line:

> We Atreides go back to Agamemnon and we know what's in our blood. Never forget that, childless wife of my father. We Atreides have a bloody history and we're not through with the blood." Distracted, Irulan asked: "Who's Agamemnon?" "How sparse your vaunted Bene Gesserit education proves itself," Ghanima said. "I keep forgetting that you foreshorten history. But my memories go back to . . ." She broke off; best not to arouse those shades from their fragile sleep. (Herbert, *Children of Dune*, 172)

Duke Leto Atreides and Goddess Leto

On his blog, Steven Shepard advances the hypothesis that Duke Leto stands for the goddess Leto of the Ancient Greeks (the moon goddess), due to their names' resemblance. In Greek Mythology, Leto, the daughter of the titans Coeus and Phoebe and the sister of Asteria, is believed to serve the sole mission of bringing into the world two of Zeus's twin children, the gods Apollo and Artemis. Also, in *Dune Messiah*, Herbert tells us the Fremen call themselves "children of the moon" (Herbert, 2008: 62).

Several explanations intended to illuminate the origin of the goddess and the meaning of her name. The *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology* considers the name to be related to "lethe" (oblivion) and "Lotus" (the fruit that brings oblivion to those who eat it). It would thus mean "the hidden one". Smith argues for a Lycian origin, as her earliest cult was centered there. Leto may have the same Lycian origin as "Leda", meaning "woman/wife" in the Lycian language.

Similarly, Duke Leto has a minor role in the saga, leaving his children to

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become the heroes they were meant to be. He is only one more link in the Atreides line and in the Bene Gesserit breeding program.

Paul Atreides as Apollo

Furthermore, Steven Shepard urges that Paul represents the god Apollo; starting again from the name, Shepard argues that the pronunciation alone of the names Paul and Apollo suggests something more than just a coincidental similarity. Considering that Apollo, the most widely worshipped of the Greek gods, protected oracles – the oracle at Delphi where humans could communicate with the gods through an appointed person, was the most famous in the world, and his reputation spread far beyond Greek culture – and had the gift of prophecy, I can understand why the critic compares Paul Atreides with the Greek god of the sun. Paul has precognitive abilities, he is the *Kwisatz Haderach*, with supreme prescience and access to both male and female lines in Other Memory.

Apollo is not only the god of prophecy, but is also considered the protector of flocks and colonists. The moment his father is killed by a rival House Paul, Paul is exiled from planet Arrakeen, Dune's main city and he must flee into the inhospitable deserts and live among its inhabitants, the nomadic Fremen whom he guides and counsels until their eventual reclamation of their own planet. Therefore he completes his role as protector of flocks and, arguably, is serving those below him, much the same way Apollo was punished for killing Python, being ordered to serve king Admetus as a cowherd for several years. Only after Apollo attends Admetus, is he allowed to return to Olympus, just as Paul is reinstalled as Duke and eventually becomes Emperor of the Universe, after learning the Fremen way and following their rules. Paul was the one who conceived the scheme to remove the impenetrable Shield Wall that surrounded Arrakeen, guiding atomic weapons into the otherwise invulnerable wall, thereby assisting the Fremen in their assault against the invaders. This situation is reflected in Homer's Iliad, where it is Apollo who guides Paris's arrow into the heel of the near-invincible Achilles, a serious blow in favor of the Trojans against the Greeks.

Being also the god of music, Apollo is often depicted holding a lyre, which is a type of harp. Paul Atreides, on the other hand, was an admirer of the *baliset*, which, according to the appendix of Dune, is a "nine-stringed musical instrument, lineal descendant of the zithra [or zither], tuned to the Chusuk scale and played by strumming; Favorite instrument of Imperial troubadours." The lyre is a derivative of the zither and both the lyre and baliset are "stringed instruments played using a

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plectrum". Gurney Halleck taught Paul to play the baliset and, after defeating the Fremen Jamis in single combat, Paul chose Jamis' baliset to be his own, carrying it with him for the rest of the story and often playing various songs to calm or entertain himself and those around him:

> So Jamis played the baliset, Paul thought. The instrument reminded him of Gurney Halleck and all that was lost. Paul knew with his memory of the future in the past that some chance-lines could produce a meeting with Halleck, but the reunions were few and shadowed. They puzzled him. The uncertainty factor touched him with wonder. Does it mean that something I will do . . . that I may do, could destroy Gurney . . . or bring him back to life . . . or . . . [...] Paul felt the diminishment of his self as he advanced into the center of the circle. It was as though he lost a fragment of himself and sought it here. He bent over the mound of belongings, lifted out the baliset. A string twanged softly as it struck against something in the pile. "I was a friend of Jamis," Paul whispered. He felt tears burning his eyes, forced more volume into his voice. "Jamis taught me . . . that . . . when you kill . . . you pay for it. I wish I'd known Jamis better. (Herbert, *Dune*, 204)

Paul sings a love song to Chani, the young Fremen girl that will soon become his beloved consort and the mother of his children, although he knows that his mother disapproves his eventual relation to someone who does not belong to a noble house:

> The troop grew still, listening as Paul's voice lifted in a sweet boy tenor with the baliset tinkling and strumming beneath it [...] Jessica felt the verbal music in her breast--pagan and charged with sounds that made her suddenly and intensely aware of herself, feeling her own body and its needs. (Herbert, *Dune*, 209)

Leto, his son, shares Paul's interest for music and learns to play the baliset. Playing the baliset, his father's favorite musical instrument, the growing presence of Paul inside Leto's memory awakens, dominating his son:

> For the first time since accepting the gift, Leto felt intensely aware that this baliset had originated with a master craftsman on Caladan. He possessed inherited memories which could inflict him with profound nostalgia for that beautiful planet where House Atreides had ruled. Leto had but to relax his inner barriers in the presence of this music and he would hear memories from those times when Gurney had employed the baliset to beguile his friend and charge, Paul Atreides. With the baliset sounding in his own hands, Leto felt himself more and more dominated by his father's psychical presence. Still he played, relating more strongly to the instrument with every second that passed. He sensed the absolute idealized summation within himself which knew how to play this baliset, though nine-year-old muscles had not yet been conditioned to that inner awareness. (Herbert, *Children of Dune*, 18)

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Parks' *Encyclopedia* indicates Apollo also representing the light, both literal (the sun) and metaphorical, as in the light of reason and the intellect. He was a thinker and an artist, just as Paul Atreides, who analyzes all the possible futures he sees and chooses the less harmful one.

National Aeronautics and Space Administration chose "Apollo" as the name of the U.S. space program – later dedicated to President John F. Kennedy's national goal of "landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to the Earth" – that resulted in humankind's first successful moon landing. Manager Abe Silverstein chose the name at home one evening, early in 1960, because he felt "Apollo riding his chariot across the Sun was appropriate to the grand scale of the proposed program".

Alia as Artemis

According to Greek legends, immediately after leaving Leto's womb, Artemis assisted her mother in the delivery of her twin brother, Apollo. Steven Shepard claims Alia Atreides took this to the next level and actually became conscious in her mother's womb and upon exiting could speak and articulate her thoughts perfectly. Alia was born and raised in exile, hidden within the barren deserts of planet Dune. She grew up in the wilderness, became acquainted with it and comfortable in its confines. She was as content in the outlands of Dune as Artemis, Goddess of the Wilds, might have been in a similar situation.

Alia Atreides, Paul's sister, is a child born with full awareness and knowledge of her ancestral memories. After only a few moments of crying, the newborn looked around the room as if taking in every detail with her already-focused eyes, and with a curious smile, drank the Water of Conception fed her by her godmother Harah. As her brother was *Muad'Dib*, the *Mahdi* who would lead his Fremen to Heaven over the bodies of the unbelievers, so she became transformed into *Saint Alia-of-the - Knife*, the divine huntress who sought out the faithless, the one who could not be deceived.

At her birth, even her mother, the wise Lady Jessica, is shocked by her baby daughter's knowledge: "What have I borne? Jessica asked herself. A daughter who knew at birth everything that I knew . . . and more: everything revealed to her out of the corridors of the past by the Reverend Mothers within me." (Herbert, *Dune*, 256) yet, Jessica is not afraid of her daughter, to whom she felt a connection that no other mother has ever felt:

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> The child crossed to a cushion beside her mother, sank to it and clasped her mother's hand. The contact of flesh restored that mutual awareness they had shared since before Alia's birth. It wasn't a matter of shared thoughts -- although there were bursts of that if they touched while Jessica was changing the spice poison for a ceremony. It was something larger, an immediate awareness of another living spark, a sharp and poignant thing, a nerve-sympatico that made them emotionally one. (Herbert, *Dune*, 255)

In Greek mythology, Artemis was the daughter of Zeus and Leto and the twin sister of Apollo. She was the goddess of the hunt, of wilderness, childbirth, virginity and protector of maidens, bringing and relieving disease in women; Artemis was famous for her beauty (just like Alia) and she often was portrayed as a huntress carrying a bow and arrows.

Even if Alia and Paul are not twin brothers, they look very much alike; yet, Alia, the same way Artemis did, acts like an adult, even though she is few months old:

> The child -- little more than a toddler -- carried herself with a calmness and awareness beyond her years. Adults were shocked to find her laughing at a subtle play of words between the sexes. Or they'd catch themselves listening to her halflisping voice, still blurred as it was by an unformed soft palate, and discover in her words sly remarks that could only be based on experiences no two-year-old had ever encountered. (Herbert, *Dune*, 255)

The Irulan Report on Alia recounts that the Fremen see her "as the Earth Figure, a demigoddess whose special charge is to protect the tribes through her powers of violence. She is Reverend Mother to their Reverend Mothers. To pilgrims who seek her out with demands that she restore virility or make the barren fruitful, she is a form of antimentat. She feeds on that proof that the "analytic" has limits. She represents ultimate tension. She is the virgin-harlot – witty, vulgar, cruel, as destructive in her whims as a coriolis storm." (Herbert, *Dune Messiah*, 42)

Shai-hulud and Phyton

As a coming-of-age ritual, all Fremen people must learn to ride the massive sandworms that inhabited Dune's deserts by grappling the worm's ring segments with a long hook, exposing the worm's sensitive flesh to the elements, forcing them to stay above the sand. The Fremen riders could then dictate direction by

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harassing certain segments and use the worms to travel vast distances across the desert. This practice was solely utilized by the Fremen until Paul Atreides, an outsider, attempted and succeeded in achieving the sandworm riding skill. Paul's triumph over the sandworm was reminiscent of the Greek god Apollo's vanquishing of Python, the earth-serpent of Delphi who was attacking Leto, his mother.

Apollo had to defeat many ancient earth creatures, one of them being the dragon Pytho, or Python, which lived beneath Delphi and beside the Castalian Spring and was a child of Gaia (the goddess of Earth). Apollo needed to be cleansed after he slew the monster, since it was necessary that the ancient Delphic Oracle passed to the protection of the new god.

In order to be acknowledged as a true Fremen leader, Paul had to pass the trial of Shai Hulud, the giant sandworm. Paul knows that riding a sandworm is a difficult task, that in order to dominate a creature of the desert, he must first contain himself:

> Paul waited on the sand outside the gigantic maker's line of approach. I must not wait like a smuggler -- impatient and jittering, he reminded himself. I must be part of the desert. The thing was only minutes away now, filling the morning with the friction hissing of its passage. Its great teeth within the cavern-circle of its mouth spread like some enormous flower. The spice odor from it dominated the air. […]The wave lifted his feet. Surface dust swept across him. He steadied himself, his world dominated by the passage of that sand-clouded curving wall, that segmented cliff, the ring lines sharply defined in it. Paul lifted his hooks, sighted along them, leaned in. He felt them bite and pull. He leaped upward, planting his feet against that wall, leaning out against the clinging barbs. This was the true instant of the testing: if he had planted the hooks correctly at the leading edge of a ring segment, opening the segment, the worm would not roll down and crush him. The worm slowed. It glided across the thumper, silencing it. Slowly, it began to roll -- up, up -- bringing those irritant barbs as high as possible, away from the sand that threatened the soft inner lapping of its ring segment. Paul found himself riding upright atop the worm. He felt exultant, like an emperor surveying his world. He suppressed a sudden urge to cavort there, to turn the worm, to show off his mastery of this creature. (Herbert, *Dune*, 261)

The Bene Gesserit Priestess and Pythia

In Greek mythology Pythia, known as the Oracle of Delphi, was the priestess at the Temple of Apollo, located on the coast of Mount Parnassus. Her prophecies were believed to have been inspired by the god Apollo.

The name *Pythia* derived from Pytho, the original name of the Greek city

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Delphi; the verb *pythein* ("to rot") refers to the decomposition of the body of the creature Python after it was defeated by Apollo, according to the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo*. The traditional theory has been that Pythia had visions in a frenzied state induced by vapors rising from a chasm in the rock, speaking unintelligible words which priests interpreted as enigmatic prophecies.

Plutarch affirms the life of Pythia was shortened through the service of Apollo, because the sessions were said to be exhausting. At the end of each period Pythia would be like "a runner after a race or a dancer after an ecstatic dance, which may have had a physical effect on the health of the Pythia" (Plutarch. *On the Failure of Oracles*).

In 2001, John Roach wrote an article for National Geographic News, naming the oracle of Delphi "the telephone psychic of ancient times", explaining how people came from all over Europe "to call on the Pythia at Mount Parnassus to have their questions about the future answered". Her answers could determine when farmers planted their fields or when an empire declared war.

Nevertheless, the explanation of visions induced through vapors did not stand with the scientists. In 1927, French geologists surveyed the oracle's shrine and found no evidence of a chasm or rising gases, dismissing the explanation as a myth. Their study, reported in the August issue of *Geology,* reveals two faults intersecting directly below the Delphic temple. The scientists also found evidence of hallucinogenic gases rising from a nearby spring, preserved within the temple rock. "Plutarch made the right observation," said Jelle De Boer, a geologist at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, and co-author of the study. "Indeed, there were gases that came through the fractures."

The Reverend Mothers are venerable women from the Bene Gesserit, whose ability to use their bodies as vessels in transforming the Water of Life, for purposes of illumination, earned them a place among the Elect. It is believed these priestesses have prescient visions induced by *melange*, the spice only found on Arrakis. Evidence gathered from the previously sealed Archives of the Bene Gesserit Chapter House indicates that a Reverend Mother, by virtue of her standing, was one who had attained to an extraordinary plane of consciousness and prophetic intuition.

According to *The Dune Encyclopedia*, the *melange*, the "spice of spices," is a complex bio-polymer originating only on Arrakis. Its several biological activities include "interaction with various centers of the central nervous system, interaction with the immune system, and deposition within the sclera of the eyes" (513). The geriatric properties, of *melange* are considerable. The spice is mildly addictive when taken in small quantities, severely addictive when imbibed in quantities

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above two grams daily per seventy kilos of body weight. The addict's predicted life-span is increased two to four times that of normal, depending upon the age at which the spice was first ingested as well as the dose. Ingestion of spice also imparts immunity to many common poisons.

Muad'Dib (Paul Atreides) claimed the spice as a key to his prophetic powers, while Guild navigators make similar claims. One of the most striking results of a diet high in *melange* is the "Eyes of Ibad," the characteristic "blue on blue" eye color: the whites and irises of the eyes turn a deep blue, protecting the Fremen from the heat of the sun. The “water of life” is regarded as an illuminating poison. Basically, it is the liquid exhalation of a sandworm produced at the moment of its death from drowning which is changed within the body of a Reverend Mother to become the narcotic used in the *sietch* orgy.

Lady Jessica had to drink the “water of life” to prove she is a Sayyadina, someone who, although not the formal leader, holds a special place of honor. “They teach. They maintain the strength of God here." (Herbert, *Dune*, 190) She knew she must pass the Fremen test, otherwise her son would have been in great danger.

Lady Jessica agreed to go through the Fremen rite and accepted to drink the content of the recipient Chani gave her, while uttering:

> Here is the Water of Life, the water that is greater than water--Kan, the water that frees the soul. If you be a Reverend Mother, it opens the universe to you. Let Shai-hulud judge now." Paul’s mother took the drug without knowing what it really was, and Whirling silence settled around Jessica. Every fiber of her body accepted the fact that something profound had happened to it. She felt that she was a conscious mote, smaller than any subatomic particle, yet capable of motion and of sensing her surroundings. Like an abrupt revelation--the curtains whipped away--she realized she had become aware of a psychokinesthetic extension of herself. She was the mote, yet not the mote. (Herbert, *Dune*, 230)

This experience transformed Jessica forever: “She focused on the psycho kinesthetic extension of herself, looking within, and was confronted immediately with a cellular core, a pit of blackness from which she recoiled. That is the place where we cannot look, she thought. There is the place the Reverend Mothers are so reluctant to mention--the place where only a Kwisatz Haderach may look.” (Herbert, *Dune*, 232) During this ritual of transforming the Water of Life, the Fremen past was revealed to Jessica and she also received the memories of the other Reverend Mothers before her.

It was the same Fremen ritual which gave Paul his first massive dose of melange, thereby opening him to visions of his futures. When trying to define prescience, Paul realized it was

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> [...] an illumination that incorporated the limits of what it revealed--at once a source of accuracy and meaningful error. A kind of Heisenberg indeterminacy intervened: the expenditure of energy that revealed what he saw, changed what he saw. And what he saw was a time nexus within this cave, a boiling of possibilities focused here, wherein the most minute action--the wink of an eye, a careless word, a misplaced grain of sand--moved a gigantic lever across the known universe. He saw violence with the outcome subject to so many variables that his slightest movement created vast shiftings in the pattern. The vision made him want to freeze into immobility, but this, too, was action with its consequences. The countless consequences--lines fanned out from this cave, and along most of these consequence-lines he saw his own dead body with blood flowing from a gaping knife wound. (Herbert, *Dune*, 192)

Alia, considered a goddess by her followers, is a kind of an oracle, having people coming to her temple from all over the world, hoping she can foretell their future: „Usually, the crowd clamored for Alia to answer their pitiful questions. They came as beggars to the oracle, yes". (Herbert, *Dune Messiah*, 86) The ritual of her prophecies starts with her acolytes chant, telling the story of the Far Places visited by the Priestess in her holy trance:

> She rides the sandworm of space! She guides through all storms
> Into the land of gentle winds. Though we sleep by the snake's den,
> She guards our dreaming souls. Shunning the desert heat,
> She hides us in a cool hollow. The gleaming of her white teeth
> Guides us in the night. By the braids of her hair
> We are lifted up to heaven! Sweet fragrance, flower-scented.
>
> Surrounds us in her presence." [...] "She comes from the east," the acolytes chanted. "The sun stands at her back. All things are exposed. In the full glare of light -- her eyes miss no thing, neither light nor dark." (Herbert, *Dune Messiah*, 82-83)

Similarly to the Oracle of Delphi, her words have multiple meanings, so the one who listens has to choose his own interpretation. Here is an extract to show how she delivered her prophecies:

> "Who summons me?" Alia asked. "I do," the woman cried. "I do, Alia. Oh, Alia, help me. They say my son was killed on Muritan. Is he gone? Will I never see my son again . . . never?" "You try to walk backward in the sand," Alia intoned. "Nothing is lost. Everything returns later, but you may not recognize the changed form that returns." "Alia, I don't understand!" the woman wailed. "You live in the air but you do not see it," Alia said, sharpness in her voice. "Are you a lizard? Your voice has the Fremen accent. Does a Fremen try to bring back the dead? What do we need from our dead except their water?" (Herbert, *Dune Messiah*, 85)

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Other references to Greek mythology

When the Count informs Baron Harkonnen about the Emperor's intention to audit his registers, the Baron does not object, declaring that his "CHOAM Company directorship will bear the closest scrutiny", while saying to himself: "Let him bring a false accusation against me and have it exposed. I shall stand there, Promethean, saying: "Behold me, I am wronged." Then let him bring any other accusation against me, even a true one. The Great Houses will not believe a second attack from an accuser once proved wrong. (Herbert, *Dune*, 212) In Greek mythology, the titan Prometheus, a trickster figure who is credited with the creation of man from clay and the theft of fire for human use, is known for his intelligence, representing the quest for scientific knowledge, trying to improve human existence. Although the Baron is extremely intelligent, he is a cruel ruler, completely unconcerned about mankind's interests, focusing only on satisfying his needs and gaining more power.

In *Dune Messiah*, Alia has a Hall of Oracles and her personal guardians are exclusively Fremen amazons: "She ignored attendants, guards, postulants, the Qizarate's omnipresent priest-sycophants, plunged into the spiral passage which twisted upward to her private quarters. There, amidst divans, deep rugs, tent hangings and mementos of the desert, she dismissed the Fremen amazons Stilgar had assigned as her personal guardians. Watchdogs, more likely!" (Herbert, *Dune Messiah*, 43). In Greek mythology, the Amazons were a nation of fierce female warriors, descendants of Ares, the god of war.

The Guild Navigator is depicted as a kind of a *triton* (newt): "Oddly, the Steersman recoiled in agitation, threshing his limbs like some weird newt. Scytale fought a sense of loathing at the sight. The Guild Navigator wore his usual dark leotard bulging at the belt with various containers. Yet ... he gave the impression of nakedness when he moved". (Herbert, Dune Messiah, 72) Triton is a mythological Greek god, considered the messenger of the sea. Being the son of Poseidon, the god of the sea, and Amphitrite, Triton is the herald of his father. He is usually portrayed as a merman, having the upper body of a human and the tail of a fish, according to the Roman poet Ovid, who adds that "his shoulders barnacled with sea-shells".

Through princess Irulan's eyes, the reader also sees Edric, the Guild creature half man half fish as a repellent figure: "the bold stare, those monstrous feet and hands moving softly in the gas, the smoky swirling of orange eddies

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around him. She would wonder about his sex habits, thinking how odd it would be to mate with such a one. Even the field force generator which recreated for Edric the weightlessness of space would set him apart from her now". (Herbert, *Dune Messiah*, 7)

Although the majority of critics claim that *Dune* saga is impregnated with Arab symbols and mythology, I have identified many Ancient Greek myths and I have demonstrated that Greek mythology plays also an essential part in decoding the Herbert's novels and understanding the characters and their actions. Almost all members of the Atreides house have a correspondent in Greek pantheon, showing the continuity with the human past.

Moreover, despite the fact that Frank Herbert writes about the future, his purpose is to explain the past, our purpose in the universe, human evolution and the danger it entails. By using mythology, Herbert succeeded in affirming the universality of the ancient figures and their staying power against time itself. By decoding the myths, the reader is much more involved in the process of creating the story. Not to mention that, becoming aware of the original myths, the reader can trully appreciate their modern form and acquire from them a deeper, more thorough understanding and consciousness of how they penetrate our everyday lives.

Science fiction is believed to be the mythology of the future, not only predicting the future, but influencing it. It does not only share similarities with old myths, it also creates a new world and the dreams the future will be made of, and sometimes it warns us about possible tomorrows. Olaf Stapledon, the British philosopher who influenced the works of Arthur Clarke, Brian Aldiss and Stanislaw Lem, concluded about the aim of science fiction:

> …our aim is not merely to create aesthetically admirable fiction. We must achieve neither mere history, nor mere fiction, but myth. A true myth is one which, within the universe of a certain culture…expresses richly, and often perhaps tragically, the highest aspirations possible within a culture. (*Last and First Man*)

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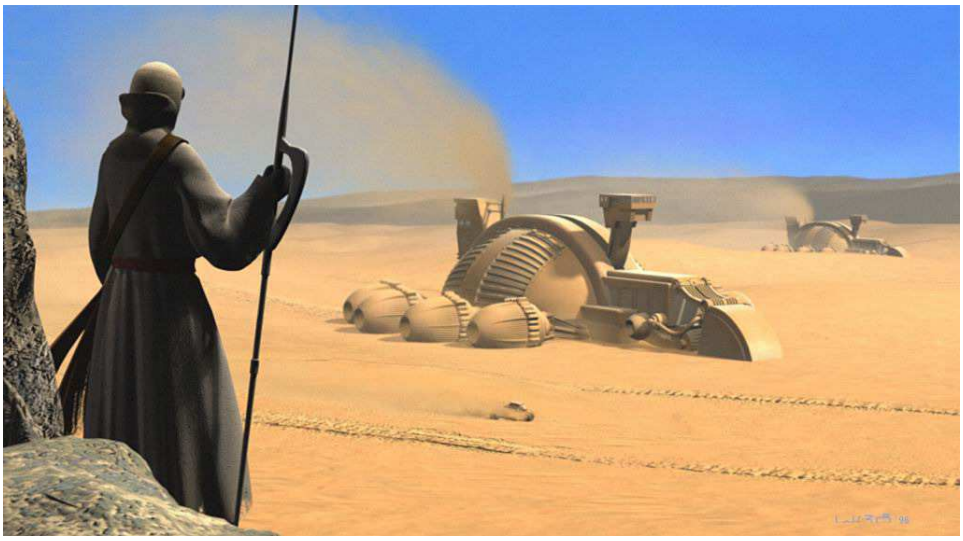
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Shai-hulud

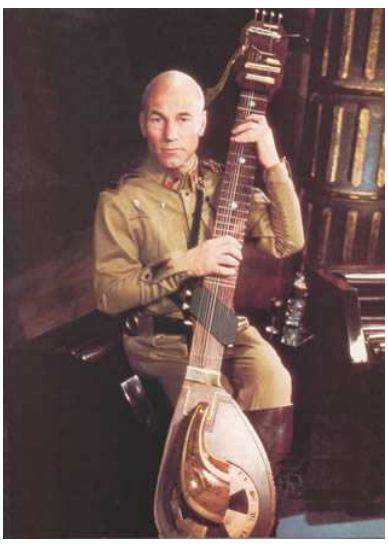


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Dune Fremen



Guild Navigator



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Gurney Hallek playing the *baliset*



Paul Atreides



Alia Atreides The Bene Gesserit

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Alia and Jessica Atreides

MODALITĂŢI DE OBIECTIVARE A STĂRII LIRICE ÎN POEZIA LUI ZBIGNIEW HERBERT ŞI STANISŁAW BARAŃCZAK

Marina ILIE

Preliminarii. În ce mod se articulează identitatea subiectului în textul poetic? Problema enunţătorului, a individualităţii prezente implicit sau explicit în poezie nu este nici pe departe una nouă, impunându-se drept temă de reflecţie de sine stătătoare în prima jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea, odată cu aparţia

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