



God Emperor of Dune

Frank Herbert

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More than three thousand years have passed since the first events recorded in DUNE. Only one link survives with those tumultuous times: the grotesque figure of Leto Atreides, son of the prophet Paul Muad'Dib, and now the virtually immortal God Emperor of Dune. He alone understands the future, and he knows with a terrible certainty that the evolution of his race is at an end unless he can breed new qualities into his species. But to achieve his final victory, Leto Atreides must also bring about his own downfall...

God Emperor of Dune Details

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From Reader Review God Emperor of Dune for online ebook

Manny says

Useful background book to read if you've ever thought you might like to rule the Universe. It's a really terrible job.

Katrina says

I hated this book the first time I read it. Hated every person in it, did not understand why anyone acted the way they did. Now it's one of my top-ten comfort reads, and I see so much in Leto I want for myself.

Dune was the perfect hero book, and then Herbert turned the trope of “boy becomes Messiah and saves the noble people” on its head with Dune Messiah and Children of Dune. In those two volumes, everything assumed and trusted became so much sand, and a son had to destroy his Messiah father’s legacy to save the universe from religious genocide and tyranny. We closed on the boy becoming yet another saviour and had only a vague, hopeful idea of what he intended to do next.

Herbert could have left us there, many thought he would when he finished his Dune Trilogy. Instead, he published his most difficult and daring book yet. In Emperor, we discover that the boy’s plan to save humanity from tyranny is... to become the ultimate Tyrant, and Predator of humankind. Yeah, I’m with you. Just say “huh?” and get it over with. I can’t explain without giving plot away. Emperor is a masterpiece of philosophy, and the best book in the series, but I wouldn’t blame you if you stopped somewhere in the middle and stuffed it to the back of your shelf for ten years before you gave it another chance. Who am I to argue? I did.

Lyn says

The weakest of the original series, the fourth Dune book published in 1981 and Herbert's brilliant work begun in 1965 finally bottoms out.

Like many reviewers have said, the quality of the literature diminishes with each installment, but flashes of Herbert's brilliance shines through. I can see the influence on the Star Wars films, is Leto the inspiration for Jabba the Hutt or Anakin Skywalker or both?

I became an instant fan of Dune after the original, but after reading this one I took a long break not just from Dune but from Frank Herbert.

Athena Shardbearer says

Buddy Read with Markus

Actual Rating: 2.5 stars

I was born Leto Atreides II more than three thousand standard years ago, measuring from the moment when I cause these words to be printed. My father was Paul Muad'Dib. My mother was his Fremen consort, Chani. My maternal grandmother was Faroula, a noted herbalist among the Fremen. My paternal grandmother was Jessica, a product of the Bene Gesserit breeding scheme in their search for a male who could share the powers of the Sisterhood's Reverend Mothers. My maternal grandfather was Liet-Kynes, the planetologist who organized the ecological transformation of Arrakis. My paternal grandfather was The Atreides, descendant of the House of Atreus and tracing his ancestry directly back to the Greek original.

Blah, blah, blah. This whole book was about Leto and how amazing he is. And this book started off so strong...

The three people running northward through moon shadows in the Forbidden Forest were strung out along almost half a kilometer. The last runner in the line ran less than a hundred meters ahead of the pursuing D-wolves. The animals could be heard yelping and panting in their eagerness, the way they do when they have the prey in sight.

Siona is on the run for her life. She stole the journals of the God Emperor of Dune in hopes to find important information. I was ready for rebel fighting and this story to be centered around Siona and the resistance. But it was all about Leto, the journals, and his justification of being a tyrant Emperor.

To be quite honest, I was annoyed with his scenes and looked forward to Siona and Duncan..which were rare.

This planet of Arrakis from which I direct my multigalactic Empire is no longer what it was in the days when it was known as Dune. In those days, the entire planet was a desert. Now, there is just this little remnant, my Sareer. No longer does the giant sandworm roam free, producing the spice melange. The spice! Dune was noteworthy only as the source of melange, the only source. What an extraordinary substance. No laboratory has ever been able to duplicate it. And it is the most valuable substance humankind has ever found.

I want my DUNE BACK! I want the sand and the spice. I want the stillsuits and the REAL Fremen...this didn't feel like Dune at all. The wisdom wasn't there, the feel wasn't there and Dune wasn't what it once was. It would have been better if there was more resistance and fighting to bring Dune back to what it once was, but it was always second to Leto. I really hate Leto, much more than Paul...actually I love Paul. I wanted to love Siona, but I didn't get to see her often and Duncan...is the same Duncan.

I think the only thing that saved this book was the writing...beautiful writing and the narrator is awesome but that's about it.

I hope in the next book it gets back to what it once was...I can only hope.

Evgeny says

Thirty five hundred years has passed since the end of the previous book. Leto II (I will just call him Leto for the sake of brevity) has been the God Emperor of the known Universe practically all this time. He is not shy about using pure despotic methods of governing when he feels like it. Unfortunately with all his infinite wisdom he forgot the most important one: a smart despot knows when to leave; the stupid one remains in power until his subjects remove his head – against his wishes obviously. As a result practically everybody and their brother want Leto gone. Heck, I wanted him gone. I can only think of two exceptions: his fanatical and specially cultivated Fish Speakers and his majordomo Monteo scared into submission by constant mood changes of his not entirely human and sometimes homicidal boss.

Unfortunately Leto is very slow when it comes to taking a hint, so he stays. He continues making endless philosophical speeches about everything in a true prophet fashion: in the most runaround possible way. Ask the guy (being) about the color of the sky and you will receive a speech worth a couple of pages. I assure you, you will not find word "blue" anywhere in the answer. Thus Leto committed the ultimate sin: you can be a despot and sometimes your people can tolerate and even forgive you, but absolutely nobody wants an Emperor who baubles non-stop. This leads to total rebellion.

The book has an excellent beginning which made me really excited. Thirty five hundred years has passed and it means all the annoying people of the first trilogy are long dead. The story starts with a great action scene (the only one in the book, it turned out later) featuring Dune rebels. The philosophical speeches of Leto were quite refreshing in the beginning. I loved what I was reading more than the last two books and thought everybody who gave the novel low rating had no clue.

About 150 pages later the rebels mysteriously disappeared never to be heard again. Leto's word diarrhea started to get on my nerves. Blah blah blah Golden Path blah blah blah I am not a despot blah blah. A normal human being can only read so much of it before it gets really old. I need to add that Leto never bothers to explain what the Golden Path is about except that humanity is doomed without it.

Both Leto and the author himself try to convince the readers – real and imaginary – that the God Emperor is not a despot, using exactly the same arguments every single despot in recorded history justified his behavior, including the classic one:

My answer to Leto would be slightly paraphrased well-known saying: if you walk like a despot and quack like a despot – you are a despot. What else do you call a monarch with unlimited power who kills his subjects when he is in the right mood? No Golden Path can change it.

In the last part of the book – where I get to on sheer willpower – Leto finally shut up to my surprise. The moment he did everybody started to behave like teens on serious hormone overdose. My apologies to teens in real life; this is a cliché and rarely happens. I mean to this extent. Let me just mention that all the people in question were grown-up adults; I am not even sure this term applies to Leto. I suddenly realized I became a faithful of God Emperor as I promptly went down on my knees and prayed, “Oh, God Emperor! Hear your faithful. Please enlighten your undeserving worm with one of your heavenly speeches and make these kids stop”. Needless to say my prayer was not answered. So much for God Emperor.

One of the first disappointments of the book was continuous recycling of poor Duncan Idaho. Leto seems to be fond of resurrecting him and killing the guy the moment he showed an independent thought. How many times do you want to stumble upon the same stone? As many times as can fit into thirty five hundred years that is how many. His personality changed dramatically: in the three books he was a selfish hero completely loyal to his masters (the way dogs are loyal). In this book he is a lovesick teen – well in mature age by years count. Then again if Leto being 3509 years old acts the same, there is no shame for Duncan to behave so.

One of the biggest plot holes is related to this guy as well. To explain it I assume everybody knows Dune – from the book, or movies. The original guy died a heroic death giving Paul and Jessica time to escape. His countless clones keep his memory. Yet during the first meeting of a brand new Duncan Idaho – fresh from a cloning factory – and Leto II the latter asks, “Do you remember me?” Duncan answer with yes. Leto II was born way after the original Duncan died. How the hell his clone was supposed to remember him? Especially considering the fact that the current incarnation spent the majority of his time wondering what happened to previous ones? There is no way the memories are shared between incarnations.

One more fact I found hard to believe: nothing much changed during 3500 years between the books. Even considering that Leto suppressed all changes, that many years is a lot of time. May I remind you the whole recorded history of humanity took less than that and look at where we are now. We do not have any wars anymore. Sorry, scrap that. We go to work by flying cars. Sorry, scrap that too. We conquered terminal diseases like cancer and AIDS. Sorry, I keep coming up with bad examples. I guess we are still not that different from our distant ancestors who just discovered the wonders of controlled fire.

The whole book is way below the level of the first trilogy. This is not just my opinion. The original illustrator thought so too and decided a phallic symbol is needed to salvage the novel. And thus the following cover was born:

This cover promptly ends up among the top three positions of all worst science fiction covers lists by the way. This shows people have no appreciation for true art. Herbert himself used similar symbolism in the novel when Leto commanded a woman dying of thirst to caress the inside folds of his worm body until water mixed with spice comes out to satisfy the woman’s thirst. I am not even commenting on this one.

So the book started on strong 4 star rating level which became 2 stars fairly fast and remained this way until the end when it ended up in 1 star territory. It is not completely hopeless and Leto’s ramblings are interesting until they overstay their welcome, so 2 stars is the final rating.

Markus says

Buddy read with Athena!

"I am a collection of the obsolete, a relic of the damned, of the lost and strayed. I am the waylaid pieces of history which sank out of sight in all of our pasts. Such an accumulation of riffraff has never before been imagined."

More than three thousand years have passed since the events described in the Great Dune Trilogy, and everything has changed. Arrakis is now a planet of running water and green growth, and the days of stillsuits and crysknives are gone. The Sandworms and the Fremen remain only as legends from the Ancient Days of Dune. Only one part remains from the old days: Leto II, the God Emperor.

God Emperor of Dune is, logically, a book centred around Leto. However, that is precisely its greatest problem. The so-called God Emperor who so valiantly sacrificed his human existence for that of an emperor doomed to serve his people by living through the ages and preserving the universe, has turned into a tyrant. And everyone sees him as such, except for himself and his fanatically loyal Fish Speaker cult. It seems as if though the book is an attempt to justify the government of Leto, and that is a task in which it fails miserably.

Because of that, one should think that there would be other people to sympathise with. People living under the oppression of Leto's rule joining together in rebellion against the monstrous tyrant. Well... there really aren't any. The rebels on Arrakis are led by Siona, the last of the Atreides line descending from Ghanima, Leto's sister. But in reality, Leto is allowing the rebellion to happen while secretly grooming Siona to become another of his instruments. Siona knows this, and knows that the God Emperor doesn't want her dead. That, of course, makes one wonder what the point is about the whole thing.

Next to Leto and Siona, the rest of the characters are few and uninteresting. There were a couple of them in particular that were a bit interesting in the beginning, but my interest in them quickly evaporated into thin air. And when you don't have *any* characters that are fun to read about, the book gets terribly boring after a while.

This book is actually not as bad as it sounds. The story was intriguing at times (not often, mind you), the great writing of Frank Herbert is still present, and the fourth book is just as much of a lesson in power and politics as the first three books. But the point is that compared with *Dune*, *Dune Messiah* and *Children of Dune*, three of the greatest books ever written, this one is a disaster.

Eric Allen says

God Emperor of Dune
Book 4 of the Dune Chronicles
By Frank Herbert

A Dune Retrospective by Eric Allen

What do you say about the book that was so completely terrible that it so turned you off of the series that you

refused to read the four books that came after it for over a decade? This book is bad in a way that few things achieve. Oh, yes, there are worse things than this book in human history, and I do not mean to cheapen the horror of those atrocities, but when it comes to complete and utter failures in fictional exploits, this is amongst the worst.

By this time in his career, Frank Herbert's Dune series had sold multiple millions of books. He was a veritable gold mine for his publisher, and so, he had the power and influence to basically get anything he wanted from them. As a result, God Emperor of Dune is pure and complete insanity. Oh, but its not just normal insanity, oho no. Its a special sort of insanity. Its the sort of insanity that happens when you give crazy way too much money, power, influence, and creative license. I like to call this kind of crazy, George Lucas Syndrome.

Allow me to explain. In 1977 George Lucas, a rookie filmmaker, under huge budget constraints, and with heavy studio influence, managed to produce one of the greatest movies of all time. Though Star Wars was well received by the world at large, his distributor still placed very harsh budget constraints on the following two films. These movies were a great illustration of the concept "Art from Adversity". Despite all of the people telling him no, all the limitations of special effects technology, all of the problems with budgeting and studio executives trying to change his work, he managed to produce one of the most lucrative franchises in movie history. He was viewed as a filmmaking genius by many... and then he made the prequels. He had unlimited funds, was no longer constrained by the limits of special effects technology, and most importantly, everyone on earth was utterly terrified to tell him no, because he could very easily take his goldmine of a series elsewhere and be just as happy. When you take the adversity, the thing that CLEARLY created the art to begin with, out of the picture, you are left with a man who is completely insane, making movies that are also completely insane.

What does this have to do with Dune, you ask? Plenty. You see, having sold millions of copies of his first three books in the Dune series, Frank Herbert had enough clout with his publishers that he could have taken a dump on a blank piece of paper and they would have published it, because they were utterly terrified that he would take his series elsewhere. And so, when he handed them the manuscript for God Emperor of Dune, NO ONE SAID ANYTHING ABOUT HOW TERRIBLE IT WAS TO HIM!!! They published it because he wrote it, it had Dune in the title, and people would buy it, read it, and claim to love it because of it.

So, this leaves the question, was Herbert balls out insane from the beginning, and simply constrained by his publishers and editors to create art for his first three books? Or did he just do a crapton of drugs between book 3 and book 4? We may never know the answer for sure.

Why is this book so bad? Well, lets find out, shall we?

I can't put enough quotation marks around the word "story" here, so I won't even try. 3500 years have passed since the events of Children of Dune. Leto Atreides II has become a giant sandworm with a human face and arms... Yeah, I'll give you a minute to wrap your mind around that. You good? Ok, moving on then. The ENTIRE plot of this book revolves around Leto talking, and talking, and talking, and talking, and talking, and talking, and talking. He talks about being a sandworm. He talks about what it means to be a sandworm. He talks about why it's important that he has become a sandworm. He talks about how being a sandworm fits into his plans. And through all that talking, HE NEVER MANAGES TO TALK ABOUT WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT TO THE PLOT OR WHY I SHOULD CARE!!! And then he dies, easily killed by his utter arrogance in believing that mere humans could never possibly rise up against him. And I get a lot of people telling me I've got it wrong on this... but try reading his last few bits of dialog after falling in the water with this in mind and tell me I don't have a point. If this was not what Herbert meant to convey with this dialog,

he sure failed at what he actually meant to get across to me.

The Good? Nada. In fact, skip this book if you plan to read this series. Your life will be better for it. You miss absolutely nothing that the next book does not readily explain in a few sentences, and you don't have to wade through all the complete fail that this book embodies.

The Ugly? First of all, while Herbert's views on women were pretty apparent in his previous works, he is openly sexist in this book to a huge and offensive degree. He has some extraordinarily strange views on the roles women play in society, what they want out of life, and how their thoughts and feelings differ from those of men. He devotes a large section of the book to explaining in great detail why women are inferior to men, veiling it behind the guise of praising them as a gender. Nice try Herbert, but you FAIL to hide your complete contempt for women in general. Every woman that I know that has read this book has come away from it TERRIBLY offended. Women beware, this book basically says that you're the scum of the universe and the source of every problem that man knows. If this sort of thing offends you, and believe me, I'm a guy and it offends ME, steer clear of this book.

Not only does Herbert put forward some very offensive ideas about women, he also puts forth some very offensive views about homosexuals, soldiers, and pretty much all humanity in general. Women get the worst of it here by far, but soldiers and homosexuals come close on their heels. He seems to have great contempt for pretty much anyone that is not exactly like he is. This is an actual line from the book. I have not altered it in any way. *"All soldiers are homosexuals at heart."* There are so many layers of offensiveness buried in those six little words that I could write an entire essay on that alone. Needless to say, it is offensive to every party mentioned in multiple ways. It takes true talent and bigotry to imbue such a short sentence with so many layers of insult to so many different people. And let me say right here and now, so that there is no mistaking Herbert's views for my own, though I may come from a strong Christian background, I have no problem with gay people. My philosophy on life is that everyone should have the freedom to live as they see fit, and it is not my place to tell them that they are doing it wrong, regardless of my own personal feelings on the matter. I have worked with gay people all my working life and you know what I've learned about them? They're people. Just like everyone else. Doing their best to live their lives in a world that is not very accepting of them. They deserve to live their lives just like everyone else.

Every character in this book other than Leto exists for one purpose and one purpose alone. To ask questions that facilitate even more talking from him. Let me describe to you every scene in this book. Leto rants for about thirty pages on his morality and plan for humanity. Someone is confused by his complete insanity and asks him a question. He then goes on at great length explaining the answer. The other character is still confused and asks another question, which facilitates yet another long and boring rant from him. These characters have no personality. They have no motivation. They have no plans or desires of their own. They exist within the plot for one purpose and one purpose only, to give Leto an excuse to further explain Frank Herbert's insanity.

Leto is still not a sympathetic character. He has more personality here than he did in the previous book, this is true, but here he is even more loathsome because of it. I'm sorry, I do not sympathize with a grotesque mockery of humanity who goes on, and on, and on, and on about he's the only hope of said humanity, and as such has the right to severly subjugate all life in the universe under his strictures and rule. He was not a likeable character to begin with, and here, he has become a loathsome tyrant that it is impossible to sympathize with. So why should I care about a book that is, primarily, about him talking at GREAT LENGTH about his own personal philosophy? I don't. I really, REALLY don't. He's a terrible character, and as an extension of that, any story revolving around him is also terrible.

Herbert STILL does not seem to feel the need to explain what motivates Leto to do what he has done, and why I should care about it. These are basic elements of the plot of this book and the previous one that are COMPLETELY LEFT TO THE READER'S IMAGINATION. IF you want me to care about your character and the story revolving around him, you have to tell me WHAT he is doing, WHY it is important, and most importantly, WHY I SHOULD CARE!!! These are basic storytelling elements that Herbert completely FAILED to employ.

In conclusion, this book is awful. It's a special kind of awful, the sort of which you will rarely find in fiction. It's basically a thinly disguised excuse for Herbert to give his own philosophies on life. If you want to write a book of philosophy, by all means, go ahead and do so. But don't try to tell me it's the next installment of your epic science fiction series. This book gets ZERO stars, but since the rating does not show up here on Goodreads with zero, I threw one up there. It feels FAR longer than it actually is. It centers around a character that is completely and utterly loathesome, without a SINGLE redeeming characteristic, and I'm supposed to feel for this character? Yeah, sorry Herbert, but no. I don't. I really, REALLY don't. This book is terrible in a way that few books are. And worst of all, it's boring. I can forgive bad writing. I can forgive a bad story. I can forgive wooden characters. It is my opinion that one of the truly unforgivable things that a storyteller can do, is to tell a boring story. Only the most hardcore fans of the Dune series will likely be able to find any enjoyment here, to any casual readers I typically recommend that this book be skipped over, because it really is THAT bad.

Check out my other reviews.

John says

God Emperor of Dune is the red-headed stepchild of the series. Frank Herbert delves into the mind of a near omniscient god-creature. Many people feel disturbed or bored by this book, calling it the most "dull" of the series. From a philosophical point of view, this is probably the most advanced book in the series. Definitions of humanity and morality are contrasted in very personal ways in this book. Those familiar with Lovecraftian Cthulu mythos could well use this as a textbook to start thinking about "alien" motives and the human concept of "evil".

Stephen says

6.0 stars. On my list of All Time Favorite novels. The Dune series is one of the most literate and beautifully written science fiction series ever and this novel certainly continues that tradition of excellence. In fact, this may be my favorite installment of the entire series. I find I may be in the minority with that sentiment based on other reviews I have read, but I found the contemplative and cerebral nature of the story and the many expository monologues and dialogues among the characters discussing politics, religion, ecology, etc. to be hugely enjoyable as I am a big fan of world-building and enjoyed learning more about the incredible universe that Herbert created. Of course, it should be noted that I could sit and read a Dune Encyclopaedia (is the one?) from cover to cover and be very content. HIGHEST POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATION!!!

One note: I have both read the print version and listened to the unabridged audiobook of this novel (as I have

for all of the first 4 Dune novels) and I highly recommended the audiobook to everyone. The full cast for the audio performance is wonderful and I think it truly enhances the enjoyment of the book.

Adrian Ciuleanu says

Okay, this was my second read of God Emperor of Dune. Honestly, it was quite an useful read because now I understand more precisely what was Leto's goal and the exact purpose of his Golden Path. To make a long story short the Golden Path is nothing more than the survival of the human race. At the end of the old empire (period described in the previous books) the human race has become doomed beyond hope with a corrupt and decadent feudal ruling system, stagnant and with a major addiction to substance (the spice) that influenced almost all aspects of life (transportation, science, technological advancement, religion, food, etc) across the universe. The Bene Gesserit has foreseen humanity's disaster and they hoped to avoid it with the Kwisatz Haderach, the prescient messiah who will save us all. As we know, they lost control of it and Paul Muad'dib became Emperor on his own. Paul with his ability to see the future also saw the end of humanity and acted on it and he tried to save it with his Jihad. But wiping all resistance to his rule was not enough and something more drastic was needed. Because of Paul's love for his wife and because he still had his thirst for his humanity Paul couldn't make the ultimate sacrifice. Instead his son, Leto did it. Leto transformed himself into a half man-half sandworm creature that permitted him to guide humanity on the Golden Path journey. The Golden Path acted on several different aspects. First, he needed to free the humanity from the spice addiction, thus during a long period of time he wiped out the sandworms, which were the only source of spice and could live only in one place: Dune. Upon his foreseen death, Leto would breed a new kind of sandworms, with conscience and more intelligent and also with the ability to live on other planets besides Dune. Second, Leto also began oppressing humanity like no ruler, (thus the Tyrant nickname) before him. This had also several reasons behind it: he slowly started reducing the spice addiction of humanity, by the end Leto's rule people were almost free of it and the spice influenced only a few essential aspects of life (ex: space travel). Also oppressing the people for long enough, he created a longing to be free of him, a desire for freedom (which is basically, the Scattering, in the following books). In particular, by oppressing the Ixians and Tleilaxu and not destroying them entirely, forced these two factions to be more inventive, creative and eventually it will lead them to discover space travel without the need of spice and the invention of artificial spice. Third, Leto had to be sure that in the future no other will ever possess the power he had possessed and that no person, no matter how prescient, would ever be able to track down all humanity and control like he did. So, he took from the Bene Gesserit their prized breeding plan and with Siona he managed to make a new kind of Atreides, free of the prescience vision. Fourth, with his all-female army, the Fish Speakers, Leto ensured that after he was gone, these women (with their training, discipline and life philosophy) will guarantee humanity's survival and guide them along the right path.

God Emperor of Dune might not be so action-packed like the previous or the following books in the Dune Saga but it is most certainly the center one and the most important one of all.

Michael Finocchiaro says

[SPOILER ALERT: if you never read Children of Dune STOP NOW!]

Leto II is now the God Emperor after merging with the sandtrout and becoming a monstrous worm-man powered by melange. He rules the known universe with an iron fist - not unlike his Aunt Alya did actually - but this is of course because he is SAVING the human race from itself. He has an army of women, the Fish Speakers, that carry out his bidding spreading terror and, still, peace across his vast domain. He has reigned

for 3000+ years and sees the end nearing.

There is a lot of philosophy here and it is interesting. perhaps it gets a little slow. I know several people that get fed up with the Tleilaxu ghola of Duncan Idaho's appearance (and, yes, he is back in Heretics of Dune as well). But overall, it was a good read.

One thing I still don't understand - and perhaps someone more versant in the Dune universe will enlighten me - is what was the threat to humanity that the Golden Path was initiated to alleviate? Was it just infighting that he thought would exterminate the human race? If so, just enforcing a brutal 3500 year peace was just postponing the inevitable? Perhaps this will be revealed in Heretics or Chapterhouse.

Another puzzling thing was the tolerance of Ix. Apparently, in the distant past before Dune, the Butlerian Jihad was raged against "thinking" machines which resulted in a world with human computers (Mentats and Guild Navigators) and a formal universal proscription of computers. However, Leto II apparently allows Ix to wind up production again as he purchases machines for transcribing his thoughts among other things. I found it a bit frustrating not to understand more how the Ixians themselves.

I really love this series although I probably will not read the apocryphal 7 and 8 written after Frank died.

Du4 says

It's not until the end of this book that you begin to understand Herbert's grand plan for his series. DUNE is really about shaking man out of an evolutionary cul-de-sac, showing a frustrated civil(?) society that despite its technological and social superiority is stagnating. The inventions of the Bene Gesserit, the Guild, the Mentats, all of these are bulwarks against the decline of man that are failing. And the only one to understand this is Leto II, God Emperor of the Known Universe. In his transformed state, he rules a bizarrely changed Dune, and through more political intrigue and the continued centuries-long resurrection of Duncan Idaho clones, we learn that Leto has seen this decline of man coming and his twisted machinations are an attempt to prepare the human race to evolve beyond this end. Fucking BRILLIANT stuff here, even if it's not fully borne out until the next novel. But wow. They don't make 'em like they used to.

Tom says

Reviews for this book have called it "heady" and "deep." I cannot concur more. Few books have mastered this combination of deep material with a hurtling plot, and this is one of them.

Of the Dune Chronicles so far (this is book 4), God Emperor of Dune is my clear favorite. This profoundly philosophical installment in "the bestselling sci-fi series of all time" explores the now-verdant world of Arrakis thirty-five hundred years after the events in Children of Dune.

Leto, the nine-year old son of Paul "Muad'Dib" Atreides, has assumed control of the galaxy-spanning empire described in the first three books, and has transformed himself into a grotesque synthesis of worm and human in an effort to avert a terrible catastrophe which would render all of humanity extinct. To be sure, Leto's transformation is both disturbing and uncomfortable (and yes, the full physical ramifications of this transformation are explored thoroughly), yet it feels quite naturally based in the mythology that Frank

Herbert has laid out thus far in the series. It is the logical conclusion of a mythology steeped in the surreal and otherworldly.

God Emperor of Dune explores nature of despotism, the conditions under which it's called for, and the attendant concerns that such a dictator would have (amongst them the nature of religion, government, trade, rebellions, mythology, armies, sexuality, war, family, duty, and sacrifice) and depicts Leto's difficult - near impossible - choices and the poignant destiny which results from them.

The portrait of Leto - God, Emperor, saint, tyrant, martyr, human, sandworm - is a portrait of one of the most complex, sympathetic, and lonely characters I have ever encountered. I loved, Loved, LOVED this book. Highly recommended.

Jan-Maat says

With this book I ran out of energy to read the Dune series any further. Reading this book drained life out of me, until I died and abandoned reading science fiction (for the second time). Nowadays of course one can just read the gist of it on Wikipeadia, but in the dim and distant past, curiosity about a story could only be satisfied by the personal turning of the pages of an entire book.

The opening I thought was great and it was interesting to see the outcomes of the Fremen's plan, outlines the previous thousand or so pages of the three preceding volumes, to irrigate the surface of Dune - and for a book series with such a focus on ecology it was completely indifferent to the number of trees that would need to be sacrificed to the paper-mills and the release of waste water into rivers and lakes...I think I would have enjoyed this more if Herbert had followed the technique that Asimov used in the Foundation series of using short stories and novellas to create a narrative that spanned great reaches of time rather than having great blocky narratives bound into print bricks based around single points in time. One can see the problem, the writer has a vision of a mighty story with deep roots, whose branches sweep across immeasurable distances with a trunk that grows through time to support the universe, but can't realise this without dropping wedgy slices in to the lap of the reader. After a few hundred pages I found myself without interest in a super brained spaceworm using eugenics and captive breeding to plot against itself, or in perpetually reincarnated characters who didn't amuse me the first time they were alive. Possibly best consumed via the medium of Wikipeadia rather than in person.

Lucy Black says

God Emperor of Dune is one of those books you can measure inner growth and change by.

As a child, I hated it. I got bogged down in what I felt was a lack of story and plot. I hated the characters which I felt were very, very one dimensional and boring. I hated the protagonist, Leto II, who I thought was stuffy and pretentious.

Then, as an adult, I rediscovered it and it is now my favorite book of the Dune series (the original Dune is right behind it) and indeed one of my favorite books in the world.

I think it takes an experience of time and pain to be able to understand Leto. The sacrifice he makes to save

the human race is doubly painful because his prescient gifts make every nuance available so that he can see exactly what he is missing and will never experience. He is the ultimate outsider staring in, in love with the human race, and completely reviled by them in return. One wonders if they deserve the great sacrifice he has made for them and if they will ever understand or deserve the great words he leaves behind in his journals.

Every time I read God Emperor of Dune I find new layers of meaning, new ideas to ponder, and new beauty to appreciate. Frank Herbert was a genius ahead of his time. Give the series a try and if you can not read God Emperor yet, set it aside and try again another time. You may end up being pleasantly surprised and greatly touched.
