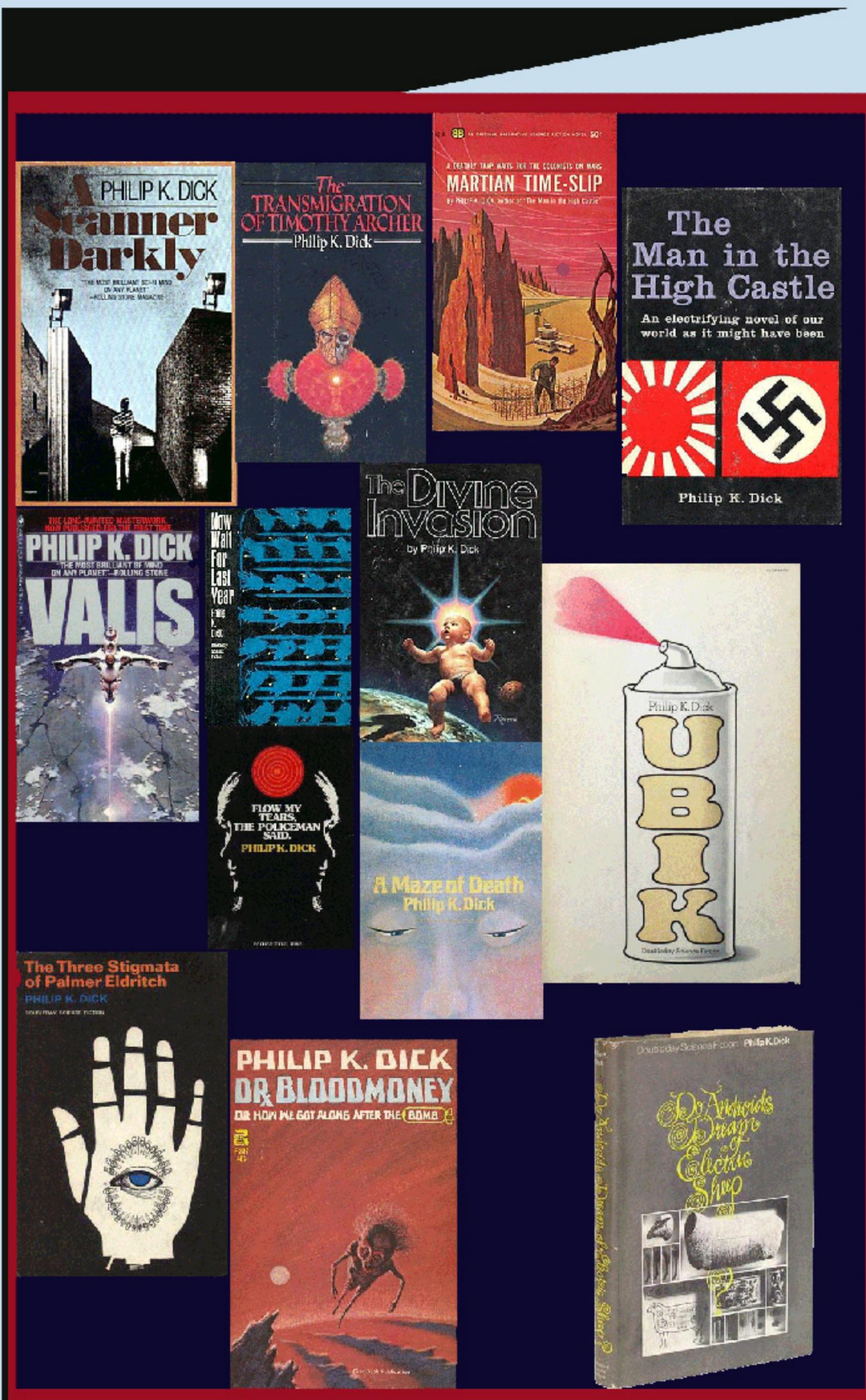


# PHILIP K. DICK: THIRTEEN NOVELS

ANNY BALLARDINI



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# PHILIP K. DICK

# 13 NOVELS

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Tutor: Professor Cesare Gagliardi

PhD Student: Anny Ballardini

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I spent the summer of 2011 on Philip K. Dick. This work is dedicated to My Father who left us on January 12, 2011, since then the world has been deprived of the best of men.

"I am a fictionalizing philosopher, not a novelist; my novel & story-writing ability is employed as a means to formulate my perception. The core of my writing is not art but truth. Thus what I tell is the truth, yet I can do nothing to alleviate it, either by deed or explanation. Yet this seems somehow to help a certain kind of sensitive troubled person, for whom I speak. I think I understand the common ingredient in those whom my writing helps: they cannot or will not blunt their own intimations about the irrational, mysterious nature of reality, &, for them, my corpus is one long ratiocination regarding this inexplicable reality, an integration & presentation, analysis & response & personal history." Philip K. Dick, *Exegesis*, 1981

With Philip K Dick you can go back in time and live three decades over again in a breathless vortex, the '50s, the '60s, the '70s, with a brief outlook onto the beginning of the '80s, he sold his first SF story in 1951 at the age of 22. The very first Science Fiction writer accepted and published by *The Library of America*, draws you into his world when you finally realize that it is there that you wish to be. In the present review, reference will be made to this prestigious and precious publication that comes in a box with three volumes, the first two and a half, true page-turners, the third half with the imposing VALIS trilogy slower and denser in its contents, to reach the very last story: *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer* that slows you down to the point that, at least for me, the time you need to read it, is just about the same required to go through the remaining set of stories. Printed on on-on-skinny paper, acid-free lightweight opaque, and bound in cloth boards, the books have been a pleasure to own, and an indescribable delight to read.

But let's progress step by step by beginning with the very first volume. I will give a short synopsis for the reader to follow my critical notes, story after story, and I will end with Dick's major accomplishment, or the "loony excess of late-period Dick," as defined by Adam Roberts, *de gustibus disputandum non est*, quotation in Latin de rigueur when mentioning Dick's last writings. His fundamental quest? As Sutin writes: "In his philosophical writings, Dick would don, dwell within, and then discard one theory after another – as so many imaginative masks or personae – in his quest to unravel the mysteries of his two great themes: What is human? What is real?" Or through Kleo Mini's words, Dick's second wife, he deals "with the other reality, the meaning of everything."

The slow and thorough progression is a way to discover the author and to meet the more mature adult who deals with the pivoting – and much thornier - existential points that permeate man. A more timing reading in my life could not have taken place, seen the recent disastrous death of my father. An author I wish to praise as being true to his readers, a new literary father who, right because of his inexhaustible dedication, deserves all the needed attention. Frederic Jameson defined him the "Shakespeare of Science Fiction." And Lawrence Sutin, the best of his readers, outlines Dick's portrait in a short paragraph:

These writings establish, I believe, that Dick was not only a visionary creator of speculative fiction but also an illuminating and original thinker on issues ranging from the merging of quantum physics and metaphysics; to the potential scope of virtual reality and its unforeseen personal and political consequences; to the discomforting relation between schizophrenia (and other psychiatric diagnoses) and societal "joint hallucinations"; to, not least, the challenge to primary human values posed in an age of technological distance and spiritual despair.

Ursula Le Guin, with whom Dick corresponded frequently, praised his work, as much as Timothy Leary, although Dick opposed his permissive theories on drugs, Terrence McKenna views him as a genius "worshipping man." As Sutin states, Dick's is a posthumous acclaim as we have seen so often in history, during his lifetime he was read but mainly and sadly only by the ghetto of the SF genre. And Sutin adds that even here he was seen as an extraneous author because he was not faithful to the strict demands of the genre by preferring metaphysical and philosophical speculations to the "hard science predictions," with – as Alexander Star explains – the prophecies of "plausible futures." Star underlines Dick's concern "with psychic dislocation, and its moral and philosophical consequences," thus ignoring the same expectations of his editors, the ones that would have made of him a best-selling author.

The first volume features Four Novels of the 1960s: *The Man in the High Castle*; *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*; *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, and finally *Ubik* (830 pages). The second volume gathers Five Novels of the 1960s & 70s: *Martian Time-Slip*; *Dr. Bloodmoney*; *Now Wait for Last Year*; *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said*; and *Skanner Darkly* (1128 pages). Finally the third volume with its subtitle: VALIS and Later Novels, offers: *A Maze of Death*; *VALIS*; *The Divine Invasion*; and *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer* (849 pages).

I feel almost like Philip K Dick when, in an interview with John Boonstra soon after ending *Timothy Archer*, the writer states: “I was very much into a post-partum depression”. Dick refers to the creation of the character of the young woman who is the counterpart of the Bishop, “an ad-hoc creation, like Pallas Athena from the brow of Zeus. Out of nothing.” I refer instead to Dick’s voice that has kept me company for so many days, hence the present writing.

Jonathan Lethem, the editor who went through the entire work by Philip K Dick to organize the careful selection proposed by *The Library of America*, said Dick’s work was “as formative an influence as marijuana or punk rock—as equally responsible for beautifully fucking up my life, for bending it irreversibly along a course I still travel.” Present also on Facebook with a Page, and on the Internet with his personal site, Lethem is an accomplished writer in his own right.

## First volume: Four Novels of the 1960s

### The Man in the High Castle

As the very first novel given to the reader, *The Man in the High Castle* ranges among the very best and catches you inexorably. By paraphrasing Adam Roberts, a summary risks over-simplicity to the detriment of the full enjoyment of the text.

Winner of the Hugo Award, the most prestigious prize for science fiction, in 1963, it upsets the fundamental principles on which the genre of science fiction is based, since it is set in 1962. As Betty Kasoura states when trying to describe *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*:

“Oh no, no science in it. Nor set in future. Science fiction deals with future, in particular future where science has advanced over now. Book fits neither premise.” (p 97)

And with Sutin, this is a novel “that exemplifies Dick's trademark blending of SF plot structure (as to which the number one rule is constantly to *amaze* the reader) and philosophical mazes (with a no-holds-barred skepticism that allowed for *all* possibilities). Dick was fervent in his view that SF was the genre par excellence for the exploration of new and challenging concepts.” It underlines what Dick, in an interview with Frank Bertrand, defines, the craving the human brain has for intellectual simulation, “the eccentric view and the invented world.”

What is to be seen as high fiction are the fundamental parameters that direct the story. Fourteen years after the Second World War, and in a quite desolate world, we understand that the Axis Powers, Imperial Japan, Italy and Nazi Germany, have won the war. These powers are all-ruling in the former U.S. Slaughtered the Jews, eliminated the black, the Nazis rule the East side of the States, while Japan has organized its administrative structure in the West, the south is played by Nazi collaborators, while a sort of buffer area in its quasi-independency is collocated in the Midwest and the Rocky Mountains. To understand Dick's literary plot, we have to go back to a true fact in the American history, i.e. to an Italian immigrant, the Calabrese Giuseppe Zangara. On February 15, 1933 he killed Chicago mayor Anton Cermak with a .32 caliber pistol, although his intention was to shoot Franklin Delano Roosevelt who was standing close to him. Dick's fictitious representation sees Zangara's attempt as being successful, Roosevelt 'is' assassinated, and the governments of Garner and later of Bricker fail in solving the problems of the Great Depression.

That is why the Americans are not able to support the English and the Russians in WW2, let alone defend themselves in the Pacific against the Japanese. After redrawing new world borders with the invasion of the Nazis of Russia and the extermination of the Slavic – the few surviving in reservations, and the defeat of the Americans in Pearl Harbor, the Japanese invasion extends to Hawaii, Australia, New Zealand and Oceania, and finally dismembers the United States. As observed by Sutin, the Nazis, as seen by Heydrich, are “the products of a collective psychic upheaval” and the critic underlines Dick's indebtedness to C.G. Jung.

The Third Reich and Imperial Japan have become themselves enemies in a refined Cold War aiming at a possible mutual destruction. As per the Nazi side, deposed Hitler, it is Martin Bormann who becomes the Führer. He sends spaceships to Mars to colonize it, and drains the Mediterranean for farmland. With the death of Bormann, three Nazis are struggling to succeed him as Reichkanzler: Joseph Goebbels, Reinhard Heydrich, and Hermann Goering. It is here that Philip K Dick's story begins.

Many writers had left the field. We could not make a living. I had gone to work making jewelry with my wife. I wasn't happy. I didn't enjoy making jewelry. I had no talent whatsoever. She had the talent. She is still a jeweler and a very fine one, making gorgeous stuff which she sells to places like Neiman-Marcus. It's great art. But I couldn't do anything except polish what she made.

I decided that I'd better tell her I was working on a book so I wouldn't have to polish her jewelry all day long. We had a little cabin, and I went over there with a sixty-five-dollar portable typewriter made in Hong Kong -- the "e" key was stuck on it. I started with nothing but the name "Mister Tagomi" written on a scrap of paper, no other notes. I had been reading a lot of Oriental philosophy, reading a lot of Zen Buddhism, reading the *I Ching*. That was the Marin County zeitgeist at that point, Zen Buddhism and the *I Ching*. I just started right out and kept on trucking. It was either that or go back to polishing jewelry.

Philip K Dick in an interview with John Boonstra

We are thus in California, in the Marin County, in the '60s, and the I Ching are ruling when Philip K Dick types on a piece of paper: Mister Tagomi. The visual imagery to which I was continuously drawn, or that constituted an acceptable background for me, could be best described by the artwork of a possible follower of Edward Hopper, more postmodern, though, and deprived of pastel views like the ones depicted in "Lighthouse at Two Lights," or "Lighthouse Porthead," or "Rooms by the Sea," or "Room in Brooklyn," or "Morgensonne," or any other painting in which the light of the sun floods the canvas. The day with its joyful hopes has to be pulled away, as if it was a heavy Margrittean curtain, to let Night enter, it has to be dark in San Francisco. Rather a Berlin after all, a Berlin after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War.

There aren't too many characters, and they are solidly shaped, each one with his/her storyline, and each storyline interacts with the other ones to build one of the most impressive 'contemporary' science fiction books.

**Nobusuke Tagomi** is a businessman who lives in San Francisco, under Japanese rule. He will be something like the backbone for the entire story and will end gloriously. He represents the Japanese power in the States, a power that has become mild, eager to compromise because ready to take in beauty and justice.

The **Frink couple**, separated, will follow different fates and will both be pivotal in the development of the story. **Frank** is a Jew who hides his own identity for fear of being caught by the Nazi. A veteran of the Pacific War, he works for an industry that builds Americana artifacts, Wyndham-Matson Corporation, fired because of his animosity, he opens a business of his own together with his friend Ed McCarthy. The jewels they make, are particular, they have a certain halo able to enchant those who see them.

Childan nodded, studied the piece. But Paul had lost him.

"It does not have *wabi*," Paul said, "nor could it ever. But—" He touched the pin with his nail. "Robert, this object has *wu*."

"I believe you are right," Childan said, trying to recall what *wu* was; it was not a Japanese word—it was Chinese. Wisdom, he decided. Or comprehension. Anyhow, it was highly good.

"The hands of the artificer," Paul said, "had *wu*, and allowed that *wu* to flow into this piece. Possibly he himself knows only that this piece satisfies. It is complete, Robert. By contemplating it, we gain more *wu* ourselves. We experience the tranquility associated not with art but with holy things. I recall a shrine in Hiroshima wherein a shinbone of some medieval saint could be examined. However, this is an artifact and that was a relic. This is alive in the now, whereas that merely *remained*. By this meditation, conducted by myself at great length since you were last here, I have come to identify the value which this has in opposition to historicity. I am deeply moved, as you may see." (p 155)

He is arrested in the moment in which he tries to discredit – righteously - his previous boss, Wyndham-Matson.

**Juliana Frink** is a judo instructor in Colorado. She meets Joe, a truck driver who says he is an Italian who had fought at Cairo with the defeat of the British and the Australian army at the hands of Rommel and his Afrika Korps. She finds herself instead, involved in a short relationship with a Swiss sniper, that's who Joe is, that will take her to the end of the book when she finally meets "The Man in the High Castle," Hawthorne Andersen, the author of *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*. She also becomes the epicenter of a short thriller in the moment in which she understands Joe's intention to kill Andersen, and is able to slit his throat instead of taking her own life, as she was ready to do.

**Robert Childan** is the owner of San Francisco shop *American Artistic Handcrafts* – maybe the most famous in the area. One of his main customers is Nobusuke Tagomi who buys for himself and for visitors; he will choose a "Mickey Mouse wrist-watch on a pad of black velvet" (page 40) for Mr. Baynes, who will be left astounded at the sight of the present. Americana antiques come newly-made from Wyndham-Matson Inc. although Childan thinks they are original pre-war pieces. In order to satisfy his Japanese customers, he has adopted many of their behaviors, while being firmly set in a severe and unbreakable contempt that wants the white male high up the ladder as if he belonged to a superior race. He encloses two diametrically opposed personalities. If on one side he respects the Japanese, see his contact with the "handsome young Japanese couple [...] the Kasouras: Paul and Betty," with their wonderful hospitality, essential taste, "the incredible sense of *wabi*" and its ascetic quality, "the ability to find in simple objects a beauty beyond that of the elaborate or ornate" (page 94), on the other side he cannot understand their interest in pre-war American products, the ones he sells, although he takes on very polite nuances.

It is through **Wyndham-Matson**, the ex-employer of Frank Frink, that we get in contact with the book that builds up the counter-story: *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*. He is with his lover in a hotel when the ideas

on the book first appear, we understand that those who read it are split into the ones who believe it is just fiction, and those who instead, take Hawthorne Anderson's masterpiece as if it was an extremely important writing.

"[...] If Joe Zangara had missed him, he would have pulled America out of the Depression and armed it so that—" She broke off. They arrived at the elevator, and other people were waiting.

Later, as they drove through the nocturnal traffic in Wyndam-Matson's Mercedes Benz, she resumed.

"Abendsen's theory is that Roosevelt would have been a terribly strong President. As strong as Lincoln, he showed it in the year he was President, all those measures he introduced. The book is fiction. I mean, it's in novel form. Roosevelt isn't assassinated in Miami, he goes on and is reelected in 1936, so he's President until 1940, until during the war. Don't you see? He's still President when Germany attacks England and France and Poland. And he sees all that. He makes America strong. Garner was a really awful President. A lot of what happened was his fault. And then in 1940, instead of Bricker, a Democrat would have been elected—"

"[...] His theory is that instead of an Isolationist like Bricker, in 1940 after Roosevelt, Rexford Tugwell would have been President." Her smooth face, reflecting the traffic lights, glowed with animation; her eyes had become large and she gestured as she talked. "And he would have been very active in continuing the Roosevelt anti-Nazi policies. So Germany would have been afraid to come to Japan's help in 1941. They would not have honored their treaty. Do you see?" Turning to him on the seat, grabbing his shoulder with intensity, she said, "And so Germany and Japan would have lost the war!"

"[...] President Tugwell is so smart that he has all the ships out to sea. So the U.S. fleet isn't destroyed."

"I see."

"So, there really isn't any Pearl Harbor. They attack, but all they get is some little boats."

"It's called 'The Grasshopper something'?"

"*The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*. That's a quote from the Bible."

"[...] The U.S. fleet—in this book— keeps them from taking the Philippines and Australia."

(pp 59-60)

**Mr. Baynes**, a refined Swedish, turns out to be Rudolf Wegener, Captain of the Reich Naval Counter-Intelligence. He has to meet Tagomi in order to get in contact with an important representative of Japan., Mr. Yatabe who is as a matter of fact General Tedeki, an elderly man by now but who was previously a member of the Imperial General Staff. He has to warn the Japanese of the Dandelion (Loewenzahn) Operation, a nuclear attack organized by Joseph Goebbels, opposed by the same Heydrich. The so-called **Story-within-the-story** is portrayed by Hawthorne Andersen's book: *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, a variation of "The grasshopper shall be a burden" to be found in Ecclesiastes 12:5.

... And these markets, the countless millions of China, set the factories in Detroit and Chicago to humming; that vast mouth could never be filled, those people could not in a hundred years be given enough trucks or bricks or steel ingots or clothing or typewriters or canned peas or clocks or radios or nosedrops. The American workman, by 1960, had the highest standard of living in the world, and all due to what they genteelly called "the most favored nation" clause in every commercial transaction with the East. The U.S. no longer occupied Japan, and she had never occupied China; and yet the fact could not be disputed. Canton and Tokyo and Shanghai did not buy from the British, they bought American. And with each sale, the workingman in Baltimore or Los Angeles or Atlanta saw a little more prosperity. (p. 141)

As quoted above, it is Rexford Tugwell to succeed Roosevelt. He has time to remove the American troops from Pearl Harbor, thus the entrance of the U.S.A. in the war exhibits a strong naval power. The successful outcome of the war, allows the Americans, together with the British, to open commercial transactions with China. But the race for superpower sees the British against the Americans and it is the former to win the latter and rule.

The **I Ching** is the book of reference. Not only do almost all the main characters involved in the story consult the text, be it for leisure through general questions, be it for private and important decisions that need to be taken, problems to be solved. It stands out as the Book of Truth with its over five thousand years of wisdom. Abendsen admits not only having used it:

"It and I," Hawthorne said at last, "long ago arrived at an agreement regarding royalties. If I ask it why it wrote Grasshopper, I'll wind up turning my share over to it. The question implies I did nothing but the typing, and that's neither fair nor decent."

[Juliana Frink decides to ask the Oracle why]

Juliana said, "Oracle, why did you write *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*? What are we supposed to learn?"

[...]

"It's Chung Fu," Juliana said. "Inner Truth, I know without using the chart, too. And I know what it means."

Raising his head, Hawthorne scrutinized her. He had now an almost savage expression. "It means, does it, that my book is true?"

"Yes," she said.

With anger he said, "Germany and Japan lost the war?"

"Yes."

Hawthorne, then, closed the two volumes and rose to his feet; he said nothing.

"Even you don't face it," Juliana said.

For a time he considered. His gaze had become empty, Juliana saw. Turned inward, she realized. Preoccupied, by himself ... and then his eyes became clear again; he grunted, started.

"I'm not sure of anything," he said.

"Believe," Juliana said.

Juliana leaves the party and heads back to her motel. She says she might look for her husband...

This is the way the book ends. An open end, and Philip K Dick tried several times to write sequels to the novel. It will be in another tumultuous year of his life, 1974, that he will add two full chapters titled: "Biographical Material on Hawthorne Abendsen."

Adam Roberts sees this book as "a meditation on the nature of history, a quasi-philosophical work cast in fictional form, as are several of Dick's masterpieces from his great Decade (1962-1972, or thereabouts)." He continues with the following paragraph: "This is a book about the inter-relations of history, truth and creativity: indeed, one of Dick's most brilliant touches is to advance the idea that there *is* a connection between these three terms, that they need to be understood in relation to one another." Dick is by now fully aware of the responsibilities of a writer.

Wikipedia lists the following texts the author read in order to face the drafting of *The Man in the High Castle*: *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (1960), by William L. Shirer; *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny* (1962), by Alan Bullock; *The Goebbels Diaries* (1948), Louis P. Lochner, translator; *Foxes of the Desert* (1960), by Paul Carrell; and the *I Ching* (1950), Richard Wilhelm, translator. Dick also acknowledged having been influenced by Ward Moore's *Bring the Jubilee*.

An anti-Proustian, no long descriptions of landscapes or gardens are to be found in Dick's writings, but realities, completed or opposed by parallel realities, states of being nuanced in different tunes, contradicted by facts which will be again reshaped in different dimensions. Dick questions reality, describes it as he thinks it could possibly be, and as reality is, it escapes dimensions, be them spatial or temporal, and Dick pursues its variations in his most ingenious, genial, creative and faithful way. What cannot be overseen by Dick is his effort to be sincere in the dialogue he establishes with his reader. There is no relaxation from the part of the author in the red thread that envelopes him, that keeps him working in a constant tension, never to falter, never to disappoint in a shameful or disgraceful way.

Plato's *The Republic* with the *Allegory of the Cave* could not be more present.

## The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch

It goes without saying that *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* inevitably makes you think of *Being John Malkovich* (1999), a statement that will resonate in those who have read the book and watched the brilliant black comedy-fantasy movie. Although the script is signed Charlie Kaufman under the direction of Spike Jonze, the input is Philip K Dick's. The novel was first published both in hardback and paperback in 1965 by Doubleday, with a reprint in 2007. It was nominated for the Nebula Award for Best Novel in the year when it appeared on the market. Interpretations of Dick's text are varied and many, and, as it is often the case, the criticism that sticks to some kind of pre-fixed ideology, usually leftist, can find large space in literary contemporary productions. Peter Fitting titles the subsection of his paper on the author that deals with the present book: *Ideology and Spectacle Society*. Reference in the title is directly linked to Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle*, text that was a Bible for me the day I read it in my early 20s, although already the Roman Emperors knew how to do business by exploiting the uneducated mass with their *panem et circensem*. Once again we are way distant from the novels of the XIXth century, and we are pulled into a vortex where uneasiness and despair are the true leitmotifs. As Marshall McLuhan states in his 1967 excellent and successful text: *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects*, electricity is responsible for several schizophrenic scissions by the human being, since electric is total and inclusive, we are trapped "in our electrically-configured whirl." He moreover enlarges the notion of the media to actual extensions of our senses, bodies and mind. Dick encapsulates man further and deeper into something that does not belong to our original nature.

With *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* we are on an earth that tops 180 degrees, great part of the population lives on ex traterrestrial colonies, while those who are still here move around through a pressurized system of thermosealed interbuilding commute cars. You feel stuffed in already. Not to talk of "the landscape of Mars. Dreary. Why did we come here? Had to, were forced to," (p 262) or "shivering in the cold Martian sunlight" (p 264). Not to talk of the very opening scene. Barney Mayerson wakes up in a bed with Roni Fugate with a terrible headache because of what he drank the previous night. Like those who have a job, he is anguished fearing he is late. Since he has been drafted by the UN to live on Mars, he finds his inseparable psychiatric laptop, Dr. Smile, that tells him and us, who and where he is. We are pulled into the greatest manufacturing industry, the New-York City based Perky Pat (P.P.) Layouts, Inc. of which Barney is the top pre-cog. He uses his power to 'see' if a product will make it on the market, Roni has just showed up to become his assistant. The big boss is Leo Bulero, an evolved being who makes money not only from the sale of his products but especially out of his drug, Can-D. Thanks to Can-D, those who are confined in the colonies can enter a 'state of transition' and be 'transiting' into the Perky Pat dolls on Terra, an actual 'transubstantiation'. Here's the beginning of the experience of two Mars colonists with the drug, they are Sam Regan and Fran Shein:

He was Walt. He owned a Jaguar XJB sports ship with a flatout velocity of fifteen thousand miles an hour. His shirts came from Italy and his shoes were made in England.

It was always Saturday.

[...] As soon as he had finished shaving he vidphoned Pat.[...]

"I'll drop by your place in half an hour and pick you up. Wear your swimsuit, you know, the yellow one. The Spanish one that has a halter."

"Oh," she said disdainfully, "that's completely out of fashion now. I have a new one from Sweden; you haven't seen it, I'll wear that, if it's permitted. The girl at A&F wasn't sure." (pp 269-270)

Going back to Barney, he is emotionally distressed. He left his wife, Emily, to pursue his career, since he has by now reached the top, his personal appointment with an unsolved destiny is clicking. Emily lives "in the miserably high-number conapt building 492 on the outskirts of Marlyn Monroe, New Jersey" with Richard Hnatt. She entrusts him to go to P.P. Layouts, Inc. to sell her pots. As soon as Barney sees them and recognizes his wife's hand, instead of accepting the timing of fate for his personal evolution, he gives a negative assessment, contrary to Roni's vision of the future. The pots will be bought by Palmer Eldritch, the omnipresent enemy of Leo Bulero. Omnipresent since the moment in which he appears, or probably and better said, since the moment in which he disappears. His ship had crashed on Pluto, rescued by the UN, a regulatory body that replaces government, he comes back with three stigmata: an artificial arm, steel teeth and electronic eyes, after six years in transit and four in residence on Prox. He has brought with him an alien hallucinogen he found on Proxima Centauri, a lichen called Chew-Z which is already

available. Since it has been approved by the UN's Narcotics Control Bureau, it will soon wipe out Bulero's profitable business. Its slogan: "*be choosy, Chew Chew-Z*" (p 282). Leo's reaction? "Aw frgawdsake!" At this point – the beginning of Chapter Four (out of Thirteen) - the narration, from linear, well, Dick's linearity, becomes quite difficult to follow, although the scenes are perfectly described as much as the words are syntactically set in contexts that do not require any change nor any explanation. Leo Bulero is on Ganymede, at James Riddle Veterans' Hospital at Base III. He wants to make sure that Eldritch is really Eldritch and that he is actually back. He meets Zoe, Eldritch's daughter: "a rather heavy-set woman in her mid-thirties. Bulero thinks aloud:

"This is Zoe Eldritch. I ought to know; she's on the society pages of the homeopapes enough." (p 275)

Barney, the smartest precog does not know what to do in the moment in which Bulero "dumps the entire problem in his lap." He finally understands that Leo will kill Endritch. In his greed, Barney exchanges the date and the site at which Bulero will meet his enemy, for one fourth of Leo's fortune and the absolute power on all precogs. What happens is quite complicated, in the sense that when Barney and Roni try to understand what is best for the two of them to do, they have difficulties in sorting out what will happen in the future, although they are the ones who can read the future, quite indicative after all. Almost premonitions given to the readers to where they, themselves, are heading. Finally after three days, as foreseen correctly by Barney Mayerson, Bulero gets to meet Eldritch on Luna. Not really the man, but an electronic contraption through which the voice of his enemy reaches him.

The room blew up in his face. White light descended, blanketing him, and he shut his eyes. Jeez, he thought. Anyhow I don't believe that about the Proxers; he's just trying to turn our attention away from what he's up to. I mean, it's strategy. He opened his eyes, and found himself sitting on a grassy bank. Beside him a small girl played with a yo-yo. (p 297)

That's how Bulero's trip with Chew-Z begins, while he is talking to Eldritch's voice in a hospital room, outside the journalists are waiting to enter, an intravenous injection of the translating drug is administered to him unknowingly. He realizes he is in a non-existing place and has the impression that Palmer wants to brainwash him. Finally Felix Braun and his private police are able to locate Leo on a small artificial satellite orbiting Earth, legally titled Sigma 14-B.

The fact is that we readers, are caught in the dream of Bulero, a dream that at the end of Chapter Six seems concluded. Leo is back on Luna and joins the reporters he had left to meet Eldritch, they are still there. In the meantime, Barney wants to try to solve his problems and decides to see Emily, but as soon as he is at her home, the daily routine of her conapt sucks him in and he is unable to focus on what he needed to ask her. The terrain starts becoming slippery, Barney is positive of only one thing, he will migrate to Mars. On the UN transport he meets Miss Anne Hawthorne, a woman full of faith with whom he establishes an interesting friendship.

No wonder she hated it on Mars; historically her people undoubtedly had loved the authentic ground of Terra, the smell and actual texture, and above all the memory it contained, the remnants in transmuted form, of the host of critters who had walked about and then at last dropped dead, in the end perished and turned back—*not to dust*—but to rich humus. Well, she could start a garden here on Mars; maybe she could make one grow where previous hovelists had pointedly failed. How strange that she was so absolutely depressed. Was this normal for new arrivals? Somehow he himself did not feel it. Perhaps on some deep level he imagined he would find his way back to Terra. In which case it was he who was deranged. Not Anne (p 355).

I wouldn't like to seem too out of context, but Anne Hawthorne rang several bells, Nathaniel Hawthorne mentions Anne Hutchinson in Chapter 1 of *The Scarlet Letter*, the religious dissenter who in the 1630s was excommunicated by the Puritans, exiled from Boston and who had to move to Rhode Island. On Mars Barney gets to know those he will have to share the hovel with when the same Palmer Eldritch appears, it is the very first time we see him:

No one could fail to identify him; since his crash on Pluto the homeopapes had printed one pic after another. Of course the pics were ten years out of date, but this was still the man. Gray and bony, well over six feet tall, with swinging arms and a peculiarly rapid gait. And his face. It had a ravaged quality, eaten away; as if, Barney conjectured, the fat-layer had been consumed, as if Eldritch at some time or other had fed off

himself, devoured perhaps with gusto the superfluous portions of his own body. He had enormous steel teeth, these having been installed prior to his trip to Prox by Czech dental surgeons; they were welded to his jaws, were permanent: he would die with them. And—his right arm was artificial. Twenty years ago in a hunting accident on Callisto he had lost the original; this one of course was superior in that it provided a specialized variety of interchangeable hands. At the moment Eldritch made use of the five-finger humanoid manual extremity; except for its metallic shine it might have been organic.

And he was blind. At least from the standpoint of the natural-born body. But replacements had been made—at the prices which Eldritch could and would pay; that had been done just prior to his Prox voyage by Brazilian oculists. They had done a superb job. The replacements, fitted into the bone sockets, had no pupils, nor did any ball move by muscular action. Instead a panoramic vision was supplied by a wide-angle lens, a permanent horizontal slot running from edge to edge. The accident to his original eyes had been no accident; it had occurred in Chicago, a deliberate acid-throwing attack by persons unknown, for equally unknown reasons... at least as far as the public was concerned. Eldritch probably knew. He had, however, said nothing, filed no complaint; instead he had gone straight to his team of Brazilian oculists. His horizontally slotted artificial eyes seemed to please him; almost at once he had appeared at the dedication ceremonies of the new St. George opera house in Utah, and had mixed with his near-peers without embarrassment. Even now, a decade later, the operation was rare and it was the first time Barney had ever seen the Jensen wide-angle, luxvid eyes; this, and the artificial arm with its enormously variable manual repertory, impressed him more than he would have expected... or was there something else about Eldritch? (p 371-372)

The idea of describing with so many details a pseudo-(enhanced or mutilated) Eldritch and the open final question thrown there without any answers could find a development into discussions to which we have been quite accustomed that dig the uncomfortable territories of biogenetics.

The idea Mayerson and Bulero had devised, behind this meeting, was to have Barley take Chew-Z and inject a powerful virus that initiates epilepsy to show the UN that the drug was dangerous, be treated and by doing this, save Bulero's business, out of which Barney would have received a good percentage. Fact is that Barney 'takes' Chew-Z skins and after a brief extremely sweet moment with his wife, he is projected in front of Palmer Eldritch. Chew-Z we finally understand - is - Eldritch. He has entered it, the dream, the illusion is shaped to his own resemblance. A God, a devil, our own soul, our selves, Palmer Eldritch has transmigrated into the human being, into humanity. This realization breaks through thanks to Mayerson's experience, and it runs all the way down to the end of the book. Through one of our main characters, Leo Bulero, we understand the fragility of the human being, his inconsistency, his fundamental incapacity of 'being' One.

My evolved mind tells me all these things, he thought. Those E Therapy sessions weren't in vain... I may not have lived as long as Eldritch in one sense, but in another sense I have; I've lived a hundred thousand years, that of my accelerated evolution, and out of it I've become very wise; I got my money's worth. Nothing could be clearer to me now. And down in the resorts of Antarctica I'll join the others like myself; we'll be a guild of Protectors. Saving the rest.

"Hey Blau," he said, poking with his non-artificial elbow the semi-thing beside him. "I'm your descendant. Elditch showed up from another space but I came from another time. Got it?"

"Um," Felix Blau murmured.

"Look at my double-dome, my big forehead; I'm a bubblehead, right? And this rind; it's not just on top, it's all over. So in my case the therapy really took. So don't give up yet. Believe in me."

"Okay, Leo."

"Stick around for a while. There'll be action. I may be looking out at you through a couple of Jensen luxvid artificial-type eyes but it's still me inside here. Okay?"

"Okay," Felix Blau said. "Anything you say, Leo."

"Leo'? How come you keep calling me 'Leo'?"

Sitting rigidly upright in his chair, supporting himself with both hands, Felix Blau regarded him imploringly.

"Think, Leo. For chrissakes *think*."

"Oh yeah." Sobered, he nodded; he felt chastened. "Sorry. It was just a temporary slip. I know what you're referring to; I know what you're afraid of. But it didn't mean anything." He added, "I'll keep thinking, like you say. I won't forget again." He nodded solemnly, promising.

The ship rushed on, nearer and nearer Earth.

This is the end of the novel. Nobody knows when Chew-Z's effects will finally fade out completely.

Michael Moorcock in his article published on The Guardian in 2003, dismisses Dick's work with the following words:

As he followed these themes, Dick's novels became increasingly incoherent and, for me, scarcely readable. Hacking out book after book, he gave himself no time to discover a more idiosyncratic structure or style, the search for which characterized the so-called SF New Wave and gave us sophisticated American visionaries such as Thomas M Disch, John Sladek and Samuel R Delany.

*The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* ends with a question about identity. Unfortunately, I had to leaf back through the book before I could understand the question because the characters involved were so hard to tell apart.

This could be true, I had to go over the entire book in order to write the present review, as anybody has to in the moment in which they want to give back reliable information, although both Barney Mayerson and Leo Bulero stand out in their own well-shaped dimensions. The critic also adds:

It could be true, as Dick so frequently suggested, that we are all actors playing out the dream of a great director in the sky. In this case, given the illusion of free will, I think I'd rather be in the movie.

Again, my interest in Phil Dick can't but urge me to confirm the present statement, although what the author has shown with *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* goes beyond such a simplistic and given-for-granted sentence.

Thomas M. Wagner on SF Reviews (2009) is highly positive. He sees beyond the 'characters' and talks of 'redemption,' a kind of redemption that the human being cannot find. God is not to be found, this probably Dick's conclusion/message in the present text. But, as Wagner rightly underlines: "If there's a redemption story in this novel, it's Mayerson's, because he's the only one with the courage to reject everything being sold to him — a business in which he was complicit — as redemption, when it's really all just empty dreams." Or in a more sarcastic way, that goes with Dick's humor: "Reading Philip K. Dick is the literary equivalent of taking delirants in church," as Jesse Willis points out. While although Alexander Star does not consider Eldritch's powers to be absolute, he anyhow sees how "they are sufficient to rob other characters of confidence in their reality and in themselves." He also says that in *Palmer Eldritch*, "Dick perfected one of his 'irreal' themes, the nested hallucination."

A book is a physical object in a world of physical objects. It is a set of dead symbols. And then the right reader comes along, and the words—or rather the poetry behind the words, for the words themselves are merely symbols—spring to life and we have the resurrection of the word.

Jorge Luis Borges, *This Craft of Verse* (Borges' Norton Lectures at Harvard, HUP, 2000)

## Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?

The best introduction card for *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is *Blade Runner* (1982), movie by Ridley Scott from the loose transcription by Hampton Fancher and David Peoples, starring Harrison Ford, Rutger Hauer and Sean Young. The 1968 book in its Doubleday print, hardcover and paperback, revolves around two main characters: Rick Deckard and J.R. Isidore. The setting is a radioactive earth barely surviving World War Terminus. People are encouraged by the UN to leave and live on a colony, as a matter of fact they are given an 'andy,' a servant android. Androids are becoming more and more perfect, seen that their manufacturers are using biological material. Only a bone marrow sample can detect an android, although the latest Voigt-Kampff test that measures the degree of empathy, is still quite accurate; the police department of San Francisco uses the Bonelli Test to detect the reaction time to visual stimuli. Androids in their evolutionary process, escape slavery and try to come to earth. With reference to biogenetics and to more contemporary novels that embrace the problem directly, we can easily raise Philip K. Dick to a conscientious writer who had already foreseen catastrophic events in the scientific manipulation of human tissue.

Rick Deckard is a bounty hunter who retires Androids. He needs money desperately because his sheep died of tetanus, he kept it on the roof, like the other animal owners. He bought an electric one to replace the real sheep, partly out of an emotional need and partly to keep the neighbors quiet, it is a status symbol to own an animal seen that very few survived.

In this kind of society, first set in 1992, then in 2021 in later editions, people are devoted to and divided by two opposing religions: Mercerism and Buster Friendly & his Friendly Friends. We will finally realize that they are two sides of the same medal, and that the protagonists of both are Androids. Wilbur Mercer can be reached through an Empathy Box. He endlessly climbs a mountain and stones are thrown at him, his supporters log in to share his pain, a form of collective sufferance in order to strengthen themselves, to be able to survive. The opposite is given by a 23hour broadcast: Buster Friendly & his Friendly Friends. Buster and his guests make fun of Mercer and offer a light comedy *di-vertissement*, as the Jansenist Blaise Pascal (1623- 1662) defined entertainment and all what it entails.

"Let's hear from Mrs. Maggie Klugman," the TV announcer suggested to John Isidore, who wanted only to know the time. "A recent immigrant to Mars, Mrs. Klugman in an interview taped live in New New York had this to say. Mrs. Klugman, how would you contrast your life back on contaminated Earth with your new life here in a world rich with every imaginable possibility?" A pause, and then a tired, dry, middle-aged, female voice said, "I think what I and my family of three noticed most was the dignity." "The dignity, Mrs. Klugman?" the announcer asked. "Yes," Mrs. Klugman of New New York, Mars, said. "It's a hard thing to explain. Having a servant you can depend on in these troubled times... I find it reassuring."

"Back on Earth, Mrs. Klugman, in the old days, did you also worry about finding yourself classified, ahem, as a special?"

"Oh, my husband and myself worried ourselves nearly to death. Of course, once we emigrated that worry vanished, fortunately forever." (p 446)

Thus Deckard, who has some problems with his wife, Iran, because of her compulsory need to want to 'be depressed (she fustigates herself with the mood organ),' and 'on t he hunt,' meets the very first Android, Rachel Rosen of the Nexus 6 type, the most perfect. She herself is convinced to be a human because her proud manufacturer, owner of the Rosen Association, Eldon Rosen, has implanted in her the memory of his niece. She represents the first crack in Deckard's personality, in contact with her, he allows for doubt to creep into his soul. The process that will continue until the end of the book will make of Rick Deckard, one of the most human characters in Philip K Dick's fiction. Together with J.K. Isidore, we, as readers, will be moved.

Various vicissitudes of a high thrilling nature seize our protagonist, among these we could remember Deckard's arrest in a nightmarish sort of Kafkian prison: he vidphones but cannot contact anybody outside, as if his world had disappeared. He manages to escape with Phil Resch, another bounty hunter, the building is in fact a shadow Android Police Department. Deckard succeeds in retiring five Androids, each one with his/her own story. It is with the retirement of the last three androids that we meet John Isidore again. He lives in an apartment in a big empty building of an abandoned area in San Francisco, although he had wanted to leave earth like the other people, but he did not pass his IQ test having the radiation eaten down part of what is required to pass such a test, a "chickenhead," in other words. His connection with people is given by his job: he drives animals to the repair shop. The novel leads us to him through Deckard. After having retired Max Polokov for a 1,000 dollar bounty, he approaches Luba Luft, an opera singer at the San Francisco Opera. She is actually killed by Phil Resch since Deckard is not sure she is an Android, caught as he is by the sublime performance she gives. To meet the remaining 3 Androids, Rick has to reach Isidore's condo, in fact Pris Stratton has chosen Isidore's place as a hide for herself, Irmgard and Roy Baty join her.

The end of the novel exalts both Isidore and Deckard in their mystical experiences. While Isidore is perfectly at ease with it, when Deckard discovers that the 'toad' (Bufonidae) he found in the mud when he 'saw' Mercer, animal particularly dear to the visionary and extinct like so many other species, he is in fact relieved. We leave a Rick Deckard in the full possession of his critical capacities. He can see through both the events and the times as they are.

One of the fundamental questions this book could offer as a discussion is the degree of humanness by humans. Indirectly, this is the kind of responsibility conferred to Rick Deckard. He has to be intuitive enough to understand if the person he has in front is an Android or a human being by basing his knowledge on the intensity of empathic responses. His sensitivity jeopardizes his same life several times because his doubts prevent him from taking immediate action in the moment in which he realizes he has to retire the artificial person with whom he is in contact.

The theme of a shared religion can be analyzed through both: Mercerism and Buster Friendly, the latter rather a consumer-oriented propaganda, propaganda mainly for Androids, but hasn't religion sometimes acted in a fundamentalist way? A religious theme runs even with Rachel Rosen, the very first Nexus 6 Android, the only one who will survive. Bill Yarrow, professor at Joliet Junior College, IL, sheds a particular insight that offers a broader insight worth mentioning, definitely more Dick-like than other speculations. Rachel in Hebrew means 'lamb' (the Biblical sacrificial lamb), when she meets Rick she wears a fish scale coat, another Biblical symbol and we will soon discover how much into the 'fish symbol' Philip K Dick is. Moreover, Deckard is finally able to buy a goat by giving as a down payment all what he has earned, but Rachel is seen by his wife, Iran, pushing the goat off the roof, thus killing the 'scapegoat.' As a matter of fact, although Deckard has grown along the novel and reaches full adulthood with the undeniable critical outlook it implies, his wife has not changed, incapable of siding her husband, don't even mention helping him. Following the accident of the goat, she finally opens up and a meaningful change takes place inside her. She is seen preparing coffee for her exhausted husband in the very last scene. And probably what Deckard/Dick has needed all along the story, is a caring wife, or his female counterpart. (twin sister) but then – ironically and paradoxically – we would not have had the intellectual the way we know him. These probably the Laws of the World. This probably the need of Mercerism. Stressed are the emotional bondages set between the characters. One of the purest poetic top-high moments in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is given by our "chickenhead." Isidore meets Pris, the Android, notices she is slim, and realizes he \_has\_ to nourish her. We are at the beginning of Chapter Thirteen:

He had already stopped off at the blackmarket grocery shop. On the seat beside him a bag of such delicacies as bean curd, ripe peaches, good soft evil-smelling cheese rocked back and forth as he alternately speeded up and slowed down his car; being tense, tonight, he drove somewhat erratically. And his allegedly repaired car coughed and floundered, as it had been doing for months prior to overhaul. Rats, Isidore said to himself.

The smell of peaches and cheese eddied about the car, filling his nose with pleasure. All rarities, for which he had squandered two weeks' salary – borrowed in advance from Mr. Sloat. And, in addition, under the car seat where it could not roll and break, a bottle of Chablis wine knocked back and forth, the greatest rarity of all. He had been keeping it in a safety deposit box at the Bank of America, hanging onto it and not selling it

no matter how much they offered, in case at some long, late, last moment a girl appeared. That had not happened, not until now.

The rubbish-littered, lifeless roof of his apartment building as always depressed him. Passing from his car to the elevator door he damped down his peripheral vision; he concentrated on the valuable bag and bottle which he carried, making certain that he tripped over no trash and took no ignominious pratfall to economic doom. When the elevator creakily arrived he rode it – not to his own floor – but to the lower level on which the new tenant, Pris Stratton, now lived. Presently he stood in front of her door, rapping with the edge of the wine bottle, his heart going to pieces inside his chest. (p 538)

[...] "What is it?" he said. He carried the packages and bottle to the kitchen, set them down and hurried back.

Tonelessly, Pris said, "They're wasted on me." (p 539)

I can't but compare John Isidore to a 1907 character invented by Pirandello, Ciaula, in: "Ciaula scopre la luna (Ciaula Discovers the Moon.)," the poor uneducated Sicilian sulfur miner who, after an accident because of which he breaks his lamp, comes out of the mine with his sac full of sulfur in the middle of the night and for the very first time in his life, sees the moon. Maybe Pirandello did not know of the existence of Matsuo Basho's (1644-1694) poem: "the farmer's child / rests from husking rice / then sees the moon." To go back to the Italian cultural borders, the same emotional intensity could be drawn to the moment in which Massimo Troisi died. Philip K Dick opened *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer* with the death of John Lennon. *Tuning in with the waves*.

Again we are dealing with the real/unreal aspect of what surrounds us. Androids versus humans, sheep versus electric sheep, animals in general versus electric simulations, the blurring of boundaries between winners and defeated, between the intelligent and the IQ deficient, the reproduction for the real: life on Mars that takes away everything but offers something more at the eyes of some, something obsolete; the electric animal loved as if it was real, or the real animal confused for an electric toy, a never-ending crisscrossing or a fading borderline to push you continuously to detect what matters. Within the present context, it is interesting to report the 1991 outlook on the topic by Jean Baudrillard and Arthur B. Evans on Science Fiction Studies.

Reality was able to surpass fiction, the surest sign that the imaginary has possibly been outpaced. But the real could never surpass the model, for the real is only a pretext of the model.

The imaginary was a pretext of the real in a world dominated by the reality principle. Today, it is the real which has become the pretext of the model in a world governed by the principle of simulation. And, paradoxically, it is the real which has become our true utopia – but a utopia that is no longer a possibility, a utopia we can do no more than dream about, like a lost object.

[...] When a system reaches its limits, its own saturation point, a reversal begins to take place. And something happens also to the imagination. (p 310)

And that is what Deckard does, or better, those who live on a devastated earth. They "reactualize," and maybe with Baudrillard, they even "rebanalize" the "fragments of simulation," a universal simulation that is nothing but our real world. And Dick's world is "hyperreal," because here "the double has disappeared." "The simulation is impassable, unsurpassable, *checkmated*, without exteriority. We can no longer move 'through the mirror' to the other side, as we could during the golden age of transcendence" (p 312). Or probably, we will have to wait till the *Valis* trilogy and the *Transmigration of Timothy Archer*, although there, too, Dick is a Master in not leading us backward to the stage of naïve incredulity.

Friedrich Jameson, is as much amazed by the no less peculiar future Dick offers. He is caught by the term: "kipple." Jameson says that "this is Dick's personal vision of entropy in which objects lose their form and 'merge faceless and identical, mere pudding-like kipple piled to the ceiling of each apartment,' a late twentieth-century object-world that "tends to disintegrate under its own momentum, disengaging films of dust over all its fugaces, growing spongy, tearing apart like rotten cloth or becoming as unreliable as a floorboard you put your foot through." As already described lengthily above, the entire novel rotates desperately around the idea of "kipple," term coined by Philip K. Dick which has entered the *urban dictionary* with reference to "the sinister type of rubbish which simply build up without any human intervention. Eventually, one day, the entire world will have moved to a state of kiplization."

Pieces of the past arising out of the rubble. Which evokes Eliot  
and then evokes Suspicion. Ghosts all of them. Doers of no  
good.

The past around us is deeper than.  
Present events defy us, the past  
Has no such scruples. No funeral processions for him. He died  
in agony. The cock under the thumb.

Rest us as corpses

We poets

Vain words.

For a funeral (as I live and breathe and speak)

Of good

And impossible

Dimensions.

Jack Spicer, from *The Collected Books of Jack Spicer* (1965),

## Ubik

This is one of the most distressful stories Philip K. Dick has ever written, assessed by Carl Freedman as being “his finest novel of all.” Published in 1969 by Doubleday in both media type, hardcover and paperback, it originally counted 202 pages. Dick is extremely talented by now in faking fictitious reality to the point that what we see in fiction as reality, turns out to be the opposite, or better, also this statement – in the moment in which you grasp it – could be erroneous.

As usual there is profit, and where there is money to make, competition does not use any decent white gloves; unluckily under this particular perspective, Dick is hyper-realistic. Two are the opposing organizations: Glen Runciter’s “prudence organization.” *Inertials* are employed to prevent the use of telepathic powers from the outside, thus ensuring privacy to the customers in their transactions – they block telepaths from intruding. He runs the company together with his deceased wife, Ella, who is at the Beloved Brethren Moratorium in Zurich in cryonic suspension, or cold-pack. Her half-life state allows her to communicate with her husband by a sort of psychic intercom on matters regarding their shared business. We experience the disturbing intrusion of someone else, we will understand, as the story develops, that it is Jory Miller.

Runciter’s nemesis, eternal enemy, is Ray Hollis, head of the psychics’ Hollis organization that hires precogs and teeps. We are in 1992 in the North American Confederation, the Moon can be easily reached by rockets and psi phenomena are common. The main character and Runciter’s top man is Joe Chip, drained out of money, he is almost trapped inside his own apartment and will be often stopped in his actions, eternally panicking, for not having any coins to operate doors, phones, showers, machines in general. A talent scout, G.G. Ashwood, discovers Pat Conley, daughter of psychics, she has developed the capacity of going back to the past to change it. This particular quality of hers will give the novel an additional clue when trying to untangle the many possible realities.

Glen Runciter is called by tycoon Stanton Mick to protect his lunar settings from spying activities on the Moon. The task is well paid and Glen gathers eleven among the best, a wonderfully multi-colored parade of characters, and decides to accompany them. As soon as they arrive at the premises, an android bomb acting as a human being, explodes leaving Runciter lifeless, the *inertials* run back to earth to set him in a half-life state, like his wife, in order to receive directions from their former boss, and for Joe, a fatherly figure. In the meantime, the group is seized by strange transformations. Like the cigarettes, they are stale, milk rots right there, the current currency becomes obsolete, cream is clotted, out-of-date telephone books. Joe’s friends start dying, one by one, they are mummified in ragbags, withered skin, dehydrated remains before they disappear.

On the floor of the closet a huddled heap, dehydrated, almost mummified, lay curled up. Decaying shreds of what seemingly had once been cloth covered most of it, as if it had, by degrees, over a long period of time, retracted into what remained of its garments. Bending, he turned it over. It weighted only a few pounds; at

the push of his hand its limbs folded out into thin bony extensions that rustled like paper. Its hair seemed enormously long; wiry and tangled, the black cloud of hair obscured its face. He crouched, not moving, not wanting to see who it was.

In a strangled voice von Vogelsang rasped, "That's old. Completely dried out. Like it's been here for centuries. I'll go downstairs and tell the manager."

"It can't be an adult woman," Joe said. These could only be the remnants of a child; they were just too small. "It can't be either Pat or Wendy," he said, and lifted the cloudy hair away from its face. "It's like it was in a kiln," he said. "At a very high temperature, for a long time." The blast, he thought. The severe heat from the bomb.

He stared silently then at the shriveled, heat-darkened little face. And knew who this was. With difficulty he recognized her.

Wendy Wright. (pp 696 – 697)

A process that happens quickly, it usually takes place when a member of the group wanders alone somewhere. In the meantime, although Runciter is in cold-pack he keeps on appearing to some of the members of the group, on the bathroom walls recognizable is his handwriting, his face appears in-between televised ads, his image is printed on money bills: Ubik becomes the keyword, and Runciter insists Joe should use it in the aerosol can. There is time fading, a physical shift, experienced by Joe and the others, and the group is back in 1939, almost a blending, a merging into. Finally Joe Chip reaches Des Moines for Runciter's funeral. Since Joe's friends turn into tumbleweeds and blow away, and Pat Conley is still alive, it seems that Pat is playing a strange trick, confirmed by a sadistic scene between Pat and Joe to strengthen readers' suspicions, in fact, Pat observes with icy detachment Joe's efforts to stay alive. As soon as Joe reaches his hotel room in agony, he meets Runciter with a can of Ubik aerosol who sprays the poor dying man. It is at this point that Joe 'revives,' so to say, and meets Jory, a young criminal who infests the guests of the Moratorium; by creating alternative realities he is able to "eat them", he sucks from them their half-life vitality thus increasing the length of his own.

Joe said, "Why 1939? Why not our contemporary world, 1992?"

"The effort; I can't keep objects from regressing. Doing it all alone, it was too much for me. I created 1992 at first, but then things began to break down. The coins, the cream, the cigarettes – all those phenomena that you noticed. And then Runciter kept breaking through from outside; that made it even harder for me. Actually, it would have been better if he hadn't interfered." Jory grinned slyly. "But I didn't worry about the reversion. I knew you'd figure it was Pat Conley. It would seem like her talent because it's sort of like what her talent does. I thought maybe the rest of you would kill her. I would enjoy that." His grin increased. (p 782)

We finally understand that the only person alive is Runciter, while the entire group died in the detonation on the Moon.

As if he wanted to breathe a little more life, and fighting to keep his perceptions alive, Joe is on a taxi and sees a nice girl, he stops the car and starts a conversation with her. It is Ella Runciter, she is already fading away towards her next reincarnation, but she tells Joe that he will have a good supply of Ubik, thanks to which he will continue *living*. At the end of the story, Glen Runciter finds several Joe Chip's coins:

And then he recognized the profile. I wonder what this means, he asked himself. Strangest thing I've ever seen. Most things in life eventually can be explained. But – Joe Chip – on a fifty-cent piece?

It was the first Joe Chip money he had ever seen.

He had an intuition, chillingly, that if he searched his pockets, and his billfold, he would find more.

This was just the beginning. (pp 797-798)

Chilling indeed. It was Joe Chip who found the money with Runciter's face when he thought he was alive, but *we know* now that he was dead. What does this in fact mean?

Another point the same Dick highlighted to confuse the reader even further, is through Runciter when he finally appears to 'save/spray' Joe:

[...] Here's what happened. We got lured to Luna. We let Pat Conley come with us, a woman we didn't know, a talent we didn't understand – which possibly even Hollis doesn't understand. An ability anyhow connected with time reversion; not, strictly speaking, the ability to travel through time... for instance, she can't go into the future. In a certain sense, she can't go into the past either; what she does, as near as I can

comprehend it, is start a counter-process that uncovers the prior stages inherent in configuration of matter. But you know that; you and Al figured it out." He ground his teeth with wrath. "A Hammond – what a loss. But I couldn't do anything; I couldn't break through then as I've done now."

"Why were you able to now?" Joe asked.

Runciter said, "*Because this is as far back as she is able to carry us* [Italics by the Author in the original text]. Normal forward flow has already resumed; we're again flowing from past into present into future. She evidently stretched her ability to its limit. 1939; that's the limit. What she's done now is shut off her talent. Why not? She's accomplished what Ray Hollis sent her to us to do." (pp 770-771)

Chapter Seventeen, the last chapter, has a very long indented introduction in italics. For the comprehension and analysis of the book, it is worth quoting:

I am Ubik. Before the universe was, I am. I made the suns. I made the worlds. I created the lives and the places they inhabit; I move them here, I put them there. They go as I say, they do as I tell them. I am the word and my name is never spoken, the name which no one knows. I am called Ubik, but that is not my name. I am. I shall always be. (p 797)

Rather the description of God, than of an aerosol spray can. Ubik, ubiquitous, ubiquitous. Behind the idea of a spray can, what seems to me most important to detect is its symbolic image, to be seen probably as the 'vessel,' the idea of 'a container/vase/pot,' and most of all, the conviction that it will be useful, i.e. faith, that Ubik will 'save' us. Dick in "The Shifting Realities of PK Dick," explains with reference to the quoted paragraph above:

It is obvious from this who and what Ubik is; it specifically says that it is the word, which is to say, the Logos.

And Dick continues with his impeccable way of being and what seems to be a great joke, but alas, a true fact instead:

In the German translation, there is one of the most wonderful lapses of correct understanding that I have ever come across; God help us if the man who translated my novel *Ubik* into German were to do a translation from the *koine* Greek into German of the New Testament. He did all right until he got to the sentence "I am the word." That puzzled him. What can the author mean by that? he must have asked himself, obviously never having come across the Logos doctrine. So he did as good a job of translation as possible. In the German edition, the Absolute Entity that made the suns, made the worlds, created the lives and the places they inhabit, says of itself:

I am the brand name.

Had he translated the Gospel according to St. John, I suppose it would have come out as:

When all things began, the brand name already was. The brand name dwelt with God, and what God was, the brand name was.

It would seem that I not only bring you greetings from Disneyland but [also] from Mortimer Snerd. Such is the fate of an author who hoped to include theological themes in his writing. "The brand name, then, was with God at the beginning, and through him all things came to be; no single thing was created without him." So it goes with noble ambitions. Let's hope God has a sense of humor.

Frederick Jameson when speaking of *Ubik*, starts out in a rhetorical way by saying that "science fiction is generally understood as the attempt to imagine unimaginable futures. But its deepest subject may in fact be our own historical present." In fact, and I agree with him, "the future of Dick's novels renders our present historical by turning it into the past of a fantasized future, as in the most electrifying episodes of his books." For him, *Ubik* is "one of the finest" among Dick's novels, and he is touched by the "hapless" situations in which Joe Chip is caught." Definitely more incisive is Alexander Star who underlines how Dick "perfected [...] the experience of entropy, the onset of 'decay, deterioration and destruction.'" He underlines the "enforced obsolescence" that runs throughout the entire "comedy," as he defines it. Lem

Stanislaw goes further into the novel and hypothesizes that all the characters were killed by the blast on the Moon, and that they are all at the moratorium, and that "from this point on," which is round the beginning of the story, it "recounts only their visions and illusions." He then continues by venturing into narrative rules: "In a realistic novel (but this is a *contradictio in adiecto*) this version would correspond to a narrative which, after coming to the demise of the hero, would go on to describe his life after death. The realistic novel cannot describe this life, since the principle of realism rules out such descriptions. If, however, we assume a technology which makes possible the 'half-life' of the dead, nothing prevents the author from remaining faithful to his characters and following them with his narrative-into the depths of their icy dream, which is henceforward the only form of life open to them." Stanislaw shows he is quite creative in trying to render objectively and to a rational reader, facts that do not exist in Dick's story. What Dick wrote: is, he wanted this novel to float in a wonderful suspension in-between reality and dream, life and death, with its unexplainable doubts, the doubts that seize humanity when questioned about death, which is as ancient as human thought. Let's remember Shakespeare's Hamlet: "To die, to sleep, maybe to dream." Or how, when dreaming, can you stop the dream and ask it if it is a dream or if it is reality? Because in dreams here we are caught. Or with Zhuangzi, was it Zhuangzi who had dreamt he was a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming he was Zhuangzi? We are back in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC.

## Second Volume: Five Novels of the 1960s & 70s

### Martian Time-Slip

Although *Martian Time-Slip* was first published by Ballantine Books in 1964, thus before *Ubik*, Jonathan Lethem included it in the second volume subtitled: *Five Novels of the 1960s & 70s*. This novel deals mainly with autism and schizophrenia. I am not too learned in the specific medical field but I tend to agree with Philip K. Dick's view. The 1988 movie, *Rain Man* with Dustin Hoffman, Tom Cruise and Valeria Golino, directed by Barry Levinson, won the Academy prize for best director, screenplay, picture and actor (D. Hoffman), such recognition and acclaim could not have been received were the basis on which the assumptions had been outlined, not founded.

The plot of the novel is, as usual, rich in details and in twists, to the detriment of the masterful narration that offers much to the intuition of the reader, I will try to summarize as clearly as possible. By this I would like to underline Dick's intelligence that succeeds in making of his reader an intelligent person. Thus not easy to follow, but it is a wonder to take in the highly complicate system of possibilities and of undiscovered organizational structures that can/might exist at invisible levels.

On the desert-like horizon of Mars, a quite "sui generis" society has developed. The story starts with Silvia Bohlen's slumber with Phenobarbital, awoken by her son's voice, David. Jack Bohlen, husband and father, is an expert engineer who had decided to leave earth for Mars in the hope he will escape his schizophrenic bouts. He works for Mr. Yee, a strict Japanese employer, and his company.

Or perhaps time flowed differently on Earth than on Mars; he had read an article in a psychology journal suggesting that. His father would arrive a tottering, white-haired old relic. Was there any way to get out of the visit? David would be glad to see his grandfather, and Silvia liked him, too. In Jack Bohlen's ear the faint, distant voice related news of New York City, none of any interest. It was unreal to Jack. A decade ago he had made a terrific effort to detach himself from his community on Earth, and he had succeeded; he did not want to hear about it. (pp 6-7)

Their neighbor, Norbert Steiner is the father of Manfred, an autistic child who is hosted at Camp Ben-Gurion together with the son of Anne Esterhazy and Arnie Kott; although they have divorced, they both value an ongoing friendship that keeps them in close contact. Kott is the big man in the story, the one who can buy almost all there is to buy. He is the head of the Water Worker's Union and on a planet deprived of water, has a swimming-pool. Although Jack Bohlen and Manfred are the main characters, Kott will be ever-present, rotating around them. The very first meeting Dick's mind has set for Bohlen and Kott for us to distinguish the characters, is when they are both on a helicopter. They receive a call by the UN to assist a group of Bleekmen who are dying of thirst, The presence of an autochthonous group of people on Mars with their own traditions and powers as an ethnicity, sets a social background onto which a different outlook is shed. Fact is that Bohlen runs to help the poor people,

Close to them now he saw that the party consisted of one wrinkled old couple, a young male and female, no doubt husband and wife, and their infant. A family, obviously, which had set out across the desert alone on foot, probably seeking water or food; perhaps the oasis at which they had been subsisting had dried up. It was typical of the plight of the Bleekmen, this conclusion to their trek. Here they lay, unable to go on any farther; they had withered away to something resembling heaps of dried vegetable matter and they would have died soon had not the UN satellite spotted them. (p 24)

While Kott, although he does not want to [Bleekman niggers, Arnie thought (p 23)], is forced to comply because of the pilot. The man in the group will give Jack, who instead runs to rescue them, a little amulet for having saved their lives, while Kott will be remembered in a different way in their collective memory.

Their possessions were so meager that he could not believe they had anything to spare. He held his hand out, however, and the young Bleekman put something small and cold into it, a dark, wrinkled, dried bit of substance that looked to Jack like a section of tree root.

"It is a water witch," the Bleekman said. "Mister, it will bring you water, the source of life, any time you need."

"It didn't help you, did it?" Jack said.

With a sly smile the young Bleekman said, "Mister, it helped; it brought you."

"What'll you do without it?" Jack asked.

"We have another. Mister, we fashion water witches." The young Bleekman pointed to the old couple.

"They are authorities."

More carefully examining the water witch, Jack saw that it had a face and vague limbs. It was mummified, once a living creature of some sort; he made out its drawn-up legs, its ears . . . he shivered. The face was oddly human, a wizened, suffering face, as if it had been killed while crying out. (pp 26-27)

The Bleekemen's sacred rock is Dirty Knobby, in the Franklin D. Roosevelt mountain range, and that is where the United Nations will build an enormous apartment block called AM-WEB, from Schiller's *An die Freude* (Ode to Joy): "Alle Menschen werden Brüder (All men become brothers)." Bohlen's father will soon be on Mars to invest in AM-WEB. Since Kott is afraid he will miss out in the big business, and having heard that mental illnesses could be altered states by which time is perceived in a different way, and since Camp B-G is doomed to close down, he offers to host Manfred in the hope he can exploit the powers given to the boy because of his disability. He also gets around Jack Bohlen to hire him to build a video device to set him in contact with Manfred's mind.

Bohlen is plunged in Kott's life. He becomes the lover of Kott's mistress, Doreen Anderton, and even if he likes the autistic child, he does not want to end the device – although he probably could - for fear of collapsing again in his own schizophrenia.

While waiting for Manfred, after his father's suicide, Kott, Anderton and Bohlen are at Kott's. For Dick it is not a question of just pouring out stories, but he wants you to understand the sub-stratum and the psychological intricacies that build up – in this case one – but as a general rule all - momentum, and he does know how to give you an idea. We witness as readers a scene, retold three times over again through Manfred's eyes, but also through Bohlen although in the background, each time more surreal and spaced out, and finally when the same scenes happens, Bohlen forgets all about it. What he knows is that now Kott is his enemy.

Heliogabalus is a Bleekman and works as a servant at Kott's premises. He and Manfred are able to converse without uttering words. Helio tells Kott that the ancient rock is a time portal and if he goes there on a pilgrimage with Manfred, he might be able to enter time and find the answers he needs, i.e. buy out the transaction on AM-WEB. That is what Kott decides to do and asks Bohlen and Doreen to follow him by helicopter, should there be any accidents. The trip will cost Kott's life.

Manfred's father was a fine food dealer, the products were shipped from earth, although Martian laws did not allow it, but those who made the law were connoisseurs and gourmards, that is how Mr. Steiner could easily take care of his family. Kott's greed wanted to take over Steiner's business at his death, without thinking of Norbert's partner: Otto Zitte, who had started selling door-to-door and had conquered Bohlen's wife with champagne and refined delicacies. Kott sends one of his men to blow up his store who leaves a note that stating Kott does not like his business. That is why Zitte is able to find Kott at the rock and kills him, since he has lost all what he had.

In the final scene we are back at Bohlen's home. Jack and Silvia decide to go on with their marriage by forgetting that both have had an affair. They hear a scream at the Steiner's, and see Manfred's mother running out of home. Jack and his father reach Steiner's home to find Manfred as an old man on life-support together with some Bleekmen, he has arrived through time to thank Bohlen who had let him escape with the Bleekmen out of the cave in the sacred rock, and to see his family.

In the end, Jack Bohlen and his father search Mrs. Steiner in the night of Mars.

In the darkness of the Martian night her husband and father-in-law searched for Erna Steiner; their light flashed here and there, and their voices could be heard, business-like and competent and patient. (p 231)

Again, Dick has saved the good and has made them grow into fully responsible adults, ready to face a rather simple, but finally comfortable life.

The novel, as the title recites, is centered on time-slips, shifts from the past to the future, from the future back to the present, the past floating alive and completely submerging the present, see Jack Bohlen's schizophrenic bouts. A fragmented, kaleidoscopic reality, alternating, repeating at times, other times hauntingly aggressive that finds the characters/us unprepared and frightened / touched. Only the Bleekmen, in their poverty, resignation, superstition, know how to accept and deal with time, they revere the Rock, portal to history, past and present. And Manfred, the beautiful autistic child who absorbs all negativity, the scapegoat who does not want to communicate what he will live in the years to come, will choose to go with them, thus finding his own freedom. How mistaken was Arnie Kott when he thought of Manfred:

Must be like fairyland, in there, all beautiful and pure and real innocent. (p 116)

While Jack Bohlen, in his hyper-sensitivity, a sensitivity he himself has problems to master, will remember the Bleekmen. Even if he thinks he will give their amulet to his son, he will always have it in his pocket, and it will reappear at the end of the novel. It is the same Jack to lead us into his uneasiness. In Chapter Five he is talking to a robot at the Martian Public School:

"Schizophrenia," Jack said, "is one of the most pressing problems human civilization has ever faced. Frankly, Kindly Dad, I emigrated to Mars because of my schizophrenic episode when I was twenty-two and worked for Corona Corporation. I was cracking up. I had to move out of a complex urban environment and into a simpler one, a primitive frontier environment with more freedom. The pressure was too great for me; it was emigrate or go mad. That co-op building; can you imagine a thing going down level after level and up like a skyscraper, with enough people living there for them to have their own supermarket? I went mad standing in line at the bookstore. Everybody else, Kindly Dad, every single person in that bookstore and in that supermarket—all of them lived in the same building I did. It was a society, Kindly Dad, that one building. And today it's small by comparison with some that have been built. What do you say to that?"  
"My, my," Kindly Dad said, shaking his head. (pp 74-75)

And Jack continues: "I think this Public School and you teaching machines are going to rear another generation of schizophrenics, the descendants of people like me who are making a fine adaptation to this new planet. You're going to split the psyches of these children because you're teaching them to expect an environment which doesn't exist for them. It doesn't even exist back on Earth, now; it's obsolete. Ask that Whitlock Teacher if intelligence doesn't have to be practical to be true intelligence. I heard it say so, it has to be a tool for adaptation. Right, Kindly Dad?" But the machine at this point gets stuck because of a broken gear-tooth and cannot answer.

What has to be mentioned about schizophrenia, the way it is introduced in this text, is that round the end of Chapter 15, out of 16, thus towards the end of the book, the most rational character, Arnie Kott, says to "his secretary-creature":

"Listen," he said, with authority in his voice. "Don't get too close to me, I can't stand it when people get too close." But even as he spoke he recognized his fears for what they were; it was a basic fear of the schizophrenic that people might get too close to him, might encroach into his space. Nearness fear, it was called; it was due to the schizophrenic's sensing hostility in everyone around him. That's what I'm doing, Arnie thought. And yet, even knowing this, he could not endure having the girl come close to him; he got abruptly to his feet and walked away, back once more to the window.

[...]

It's the schizophrenic confusion, Arnie realized. It's basically a breakdown in time-sense. Now I'm getting it because that kid has it. (pp 213-214)

Should we think with Arnie that it is only his "sense of time that has fouled up," or is maybe Kott finally breaking down to a deeper human level? Or is it maybe definitely Mars' time? If yes, why hasn't he been affected by it before?

"It looks like there is water dripping down the slopes of Mars!" comes from my pc in the moment in which I am typing the present review. It comes from Ira Flatow, on Friday, August 5, 2011. By the time you read it, the program will be easily accessed on npr (national public radio), filed on their online archives.

Jack Shafer quotes a letter introduced by Sutin in Dick's biography in which Philip laments that his behavior has "earned him the reputation 'of an advanced schizophrenic who believed everyone was plotting against him.' Dick self-medicated on drugs for most of his adult life, even trying a vitamin regimen, to beat his self-diagnosis of schizophrenia. He embraced the teaching of Swiss psychoanalyst Ludwig Binswanger, who, Star writes, 'believed that schizophrenia involved a disturbance in the patient's orientation toward time.' He had religious visions, claimed that his mind had been invaded by a 'transcendentally rational mind' and believed he had been possessed by the prophet Elijah."

Since Philip K. Dick's letters are collected in several volumes, I would not give too much importance to the previous statement, because Dick grumbles about so many things, but on the other end is happy with so many other. He was followed by several psychologists, and each one had a different diagnosis for him. That Dick believed them all, and believed none, would be typical of him. That does not mean that he was not interested in schizophrenia, or other similar "dis/eases," see autism, for example, as in the present

novel. With Jonathan Lethem, the editor, "It wasn't any easier to pin [Dick] down in person than it is as a reader."

To end on a less eerie way, I would like to quote Aldiss:

Martian Time-Slip is full of delightful comic effects, not least in the way in which Steiner and the lecherous Otto Zitte ship illegal gourmet-food items from Earth in unmanned Swiss rockets. Dick's fondness for oddball entities and titles is much in evidence, notably in the surrealist public school, where the Emperor Tiberius, Sir Francis Drake, Mark Twain, and various other dignitaries talk to the boys. Below this easy-going humour lies a darker stream of wit. Arnie Kott's terrible and fatal mistake of believing that reality is merely another version of the schizoid past is also part of the comedy of mistakes to which Dick's characters always dance.

The canny and the uncanny, the speculative-philosophical, the visionary, the "libertarian prophet" as defined by Fondanèche, and the one tied-down-to-earth be it on Mars or on any other extra-terrestrial colony, Dick – whichever card he plays, and he often mixes them together - will never stop surprising you with his intricately woven plots, thoughts, actions, facts.

## Dr. Bloodmoney, or How We Got Along After the Bomb

This story of disaster and its aftermath with a slow recovery highly impregnated with danger, was first published in 1965 by Ace Books. Throughout the tragedy you are the witness of the fall: death and fatalities. Characters you have just gotten to know and tried to understand, disappear; nothing is left. The first survival steps after a nuclear disaster contemplate, in the better cases, an attempt at rebuilding a community structure, an organized sharing; while in the worst scenarios, the fight to put something on a dish has become an animal-like instinct. Philip K. Dick has been often associated with Charles Dickens because of his many plots and of the particular features of the characters that animate his intricate writing. In this story I would rather compare him to a semi-technological Hieronymus Bosch. Let's see how Stuart McConchie tries to reach Belmont to buy some parts of an unearthed Soviet guided missile:

"Sure," Stuart McConchie said. He got back into his car, flicked the reins that made Edward Prince of Wales, his horse, begin pulling. Edward pulled, and the engineless 1975 Pontiac passed back through the gate and out onto the pier. (p 326)

But a weird surprise will be waiting for him:

When Stuart McConchie returned to the East Bay from his trip to the peninsula south of San Francisco he found that someone – no doubt a group of veterans living under the pier – had killed and eaten his horse, Edward Prince of Wales. All that remained was the skeleton, legs and head, a heap worthless to him or to anyone else. He stood by it, pondering. [...]

Mr. Hardy would supply another horse, no doubt, but he had been fond of Edward Prince of Wales. And it was wrong to kill a horse for food because they were so vitally needed for other purposes; they were the mainstay of transportation, now that most of the wood had been consumed by the woodburning cars and by people in cellars using it in the winter to keep warm, and horses were needed in the job of reconstruction – they were the main source of power, in the absence of electricity. The stupidity of killing Edward maddened him; it was, he thought, like barbarism, the thing they all feared. It was anarchy, and right in the middle of the city; right in downtown Oakland, in broad day. It was what he would expect the Red Chinese to do. (p. 341)

No wonder there is no space for Gnosticism, nobody should be surprised if God is never mentioned with religious awe by the tangle of characters that meet over and over again to comply with Dick's fatherly need to make us realize the dissonance that can be brought on by just one negative spot in the ever-spinning Tao of his complex and inventive plots. Again, and unlike Paganini's famous words, I will never tire repeating that a summary becomes the most over-simplistic way to deal with any work by our author.

Let's start with Jim Fergesson's Modern TV shop and all his great ideas of having to employ as a salesman Stuart McConchie, an African-American – probably the main character in terms of brightness - and Hoppy Harrington, a phocomelus. Dick draws back to the severe malformations caused by Thalidomide, also called Thalidomide syndrome, a drug produced in West Germany and sold over the counter as a mild sedative especially to pregnant women to alleviate morning sickness throughout the early '60s. The statistics speak of 5-7,000 cases of disabled infants in Germany alone, while in the rest of the world the number rises to 10,000. Only about half of them actually survived. Our phocomelus does not have any arms, nor legs. Let's see him through Stuart's eyes when he first shows up at the shop:

But actually, Stuart realized, he did not understand Hoppy, who had a sharp face with bright eyes and a quick, nervous manner of speech which often became jumbled into a stammer. He did not understand him *psychologically*. Why did Hoppy want to repair TV sets? What was so great about that? The way the phocomelus hung around, one would think it was the most exalted calling of all. Actually, repairwork was hard, dirty, and did not pay too well. But Hoppy was passionately determined to become a TV repairman, and now he had succeeded, because Fergesson was determined to do right by all the minority groups in the world. Fergesson was a member of the American Civil Liberties Union and the NAACP and the Help for the Handicapped League – the latter being, as far as Stuart could tell, nothing but a lobby group on an international scale, set up to promote soft berths for all the victims of modern medicine and science, such as the multitude from the Bluthgeld Catastrophe. (p. 244)

Hoppy moves around on a cart and his manual extensors act as upper limbs, according to the "Remington Act" (p 246) the Government is obliged to fit him with better equipment, something that our people knows and is waiting for more sophisticated parts. A thought could go to biogenetics again, especially in view of the developments of the character. In the meantime, in West Marin, Bonny Keller is thinking of Doctor Bruno Bluthgeld (Bloodmoney, in German) with whom she worked back in 1974 at the Radiation Lab, until she got pregnant.

Now, of course, Bluthgeld was sick, as almost everyone at Livermore knew. The man had profound conscience, and he had never ceased to suffer since the error of 1972 – which, as they all knew, all those who had been a part of Livermore in those days, was not specifically his fault; it was not his personal burden, but he had chosen to make it so, and because of that he had become ill, and more ill with each passing year. (p 250)

By 'error', above, the text means Dr. Bluthgeld's supervision of high altitude nuclear testing that led to a catastrophe. Bonny Keller is a sweet lady, well educated, beautiful in appearance, mother of Edie and Bill, although a frustrated wife. Here is Bonny thinking with her naïve voice:

I don't believe Bruno has become a paranoid schizophrenic, she said to herself. This is only a situation deterioration, and with the proper psychiatric help – a few pills here and there – he'll be okay. It's an endocrine disturbance manifesting itself psychically, and they can do wonders with that; it's not a character defect, a psychotic constitution, unfolding itself in the face of stress. (p 253)

It is right at the beginning of the story that we get to know that NASA is sending Mr. and Mrs. Dangerfield to Mars, something like Adam and Eve to explore another world: an idealistic approach to space. The televised show has the Americans in front of their screens hoping in a new era, a new space.

Sometime later today, sometime in the afternoon, their waiting would be rewarded, because Dutchman IV would take off; it would orbit the Earth for an hour or so, and the people would stand at the TV screen watching that, seeing the rocket go around and around, and then finally the decision would be made and someone below in the blockhouse would fire off the final stage and the orbiting rocket would change trajectory and leave the world. (p 255)

Unluckily the spaceship will never leave the orbit of the earth. In the moment in which the technician "in the blockhouse" on earth is ready to let the Dangerfields get off our orbit, an enormous explosion takes place, and he dies. After a while also Mrs. Dangerfield will die and Walt Dangerfield will be left up there circling and keeping company to those who have survived via radio, he is the librarian who keeps human culture alive since his shuttle had been stuffed in with any kind of music and books for the first colonists of Mars to have something to do.

It is Dr. Bluthgeld, our atomic physicist, who recognizes the entity of what is going to happen, i.e. the second catastrophe in 1981:

And then, in the middle of his cursing, he had a weird, vivid notion. The war had begun and they were being bombed and would probably die, but it was Washington that was dropping the bombs on them, not the Chinese or the Russians; something had gone wrong with an automatic defense system out in space, and it was acting out its cycle this way – and no one could halt it, either. It was war and death, yes, but it was error; it lacked intent. He did not feel any hostility from the forces overhead. They were not vengeful or motivated; they were empty, hollow completely cold. It was as if his car had run over him: it was real but meaningless. It was not policy, it was breakdown and failure, change. (p 285)

And we, as readers, do exactly believe it. Something might have gone wrong, it is easy to project a similar accident and adapt it to our times seen all what has been going on, not only on a personal basis, but at an international level, the latest to be remembered is the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster, the largest after Chernobyl, that took place on March 11, 2011. As usual, Dick makes it difficult for you to understand how things actually went, better, in which way he is thinking. The reader will finally understand who triggered the nuclear explosion. We have to step back to Jim Fergesson's shop and to the lively activity that is taking place inside. Fergesson had probably already had several afterthoughts on the phocomelus, he had noticed how he assembled the parts, thanks to strong telekinetic powers.

Jim Fergesson, when the attack began, had just gone downstairs into the repair department of Modern TV. Facing Hoppy Harrington he saw the expression on the phocomelus' face when the red alert was announced over the FM radio and the conalrad system went at once into effect. He saw on the lean, bony face a grin like that of greed, as if in hearing and understanding, Hoppy was filled with joy, the joy of life itself. He had become lit up for an instant, had thrown off everything that inhibited him or held him to the surface of the earth, every force that made him slow. His eyes burst into light and his lips twitched; he seemed to be sticking out his tongue, as if mocking Fergesson. (p 286)

At this point all our characters are seized by the devastating calamity. Stuart, in his highly developed lucid thought recognizes the imminent danger and finds his salvation in a cave under the sidewalk. Those who were outside did not make it. Bonnie escapes from a shattered home, "The air swirled with particles and she inhaled them; she choked on them hating them" (p 290). She leaves her home and meets Andrew Gill, from their distraught meeting a child, *plus one*, will be borne. That is Edie who always talks to 'her [inexistent] brother' Bill until Dr. Stockstill visits her and discovers that the child had grown a foetus in fetu. He has become so conscious by now of himself that he wishes to enter a body of his own. It is the 'spirit' of Bill that can communicate with the dead, and that will finally destroy Hoppy and take his place in his body, right in the moment in which Hoppy 'perceives' his presence, and when the phoce is ready for the final takeover, after having actually killed Bluthgeld.

But let's step back a little to see how the story progresses. Only in Marin County, we are by now in 1988, people are able to share what seems a decent community, while San Francisco is still completely devastated where only the smartest have been efficient enough to find an occupation that grants them a minimum on which they can get by. Humanity has regressed to the point that primitive tribal life has the best on the planet. Dr. Bluthgeld, in his paranoid delusions of omnipotence, guilty because of the 1974 disaster, is convinced he is God-like in catastrophe, and that he can simply 'think' and an apocalypse will be triggered. He lives outside the 'quiet' nucleus of Marin County where Bonny, Dr. Stockstill (the psychologist who will become the doctor of Mr. Dangerfield), Jane Raub, and the same Hoppy are –better than others- leading an almost comfortable life. Probably thanks to Hoppy who has become the do-it-all technician helped by his psychokinetic capacities, to the point that the entire community reveres him. Bluthgeld is hiding behind another name, as Jack Tree he owns a herd of sheep and a dog that can speak. He will also have the intuition that Hoppy is 'hiding' something. That something is real, i.e. Hoppy's plan is to kill Mr. Dangerfield. Since the phoce can mimic the voice of other people, he wants to receive the great applause that earth is sending towards this being who from above reads 'Of Human Bondage,' plays startling classical music and has a wisdom of his own:

"Catch those bad guys... or should I say catch those good guys. Say, who are the *good* guys, these days?" His receiving equipment had picked up, in the last few weeks, a number of complaints about Army brutality. "Now let me tell you something, boys," he said smoothly. "Watch out for those squirrel rifles; that's all." He began hunting through the satellite's tape library for the recording of "The Woodpecker Song." "That's all brother," he said, and put on the tape. (p 317)

The conclusion, as often with Dick, is at least soothing, pastoral-like. Among the destroying pessimistic outlook, the 'good' survive and our Dr. Stockstill tries to help Walt Dangerfield who, after the disappearance of Hoppy, might actually recover.

Although *Dr. Bloodmoney* is a novel of its time, with the Cold War and the paranoia of nuclear threats thick in the air, it can easily be applied to many of our contexts.

What I am most interested in this story is Philip Dick's highly lucid capacity in hiding Hoppy's manipulations, in showing him under different lights that at times you are sincerely close to the phoce's sufferings, and disapprove of the negativity that surrounds him. And yet, it is towards the beginning that we indirectly have the suspicion that he had caused the carnage [see my previous quotation] to happen. But we have to reach the end of the story to perceive the full entity of his increasingly terrifying machinations directed at mere destruction without any human feeling for the other. The problem indirectly posed here is whether someone who is not in his full physical capacities can hate his brother because of his disabilities. The issue, as introduced by Philip K. Dick deranges any possible considerate or compassionate solution, as if envy and jealousy could grow inside a human body and get hold of its entirety, soul and spirit, emotional and rational spheres. The phoce's mind is intoxicated by revenge, it runs wild with dreams of super-power, and it is well hidden behind a defenseless body. The grip such

intensified negativity has on human flesh zooms into one only target, not only the ruin of the other, or the demolition of the entire system, but the destruction of humanity at large.

It seems that critics agree in finding an analogy between Walt Dangerfield and Radio Free Albemuth in *VALIS* (D. Davis, among others). Similarities can be drawn but if we have to compare them, Dangerfield is home-made while Radio Free Albemuth is of a celestial nature. It will be treated extensively under the VALIS section.

Stanislaw Lem could easily be quoted when he underlines that “the disintegrating worlds of [Dick’s] stories [work out] as [if they] were inversions of Genesis, order returning to Chaos - this is not so much the future foreseen as it is future shock, not straightforwardly expressed but embodied in fictional reality, it is an objectivized projection of the fears and fascinations proper to the human individual in our times.” The disappointment of our blind faith in the “infallible beneficence of technical progress,” is played out best by Dr. Bluthgeld, a recurrent theme by Dick, and one of the favorite themes picked up by his critics.

## Now Wait For Last Year

The title says it all, we are dealing with time trips: in the past (Kathy Sweetscent), in the future (her husband Eric), as much as side-trips (Gino Molinari), and there is a powerful drug involved: JJ-180. First published by Doubleday in 1966, both hardcover and paperback, this story, set in 2055, rotates around mental and physical danger, hallucinations, hallucinogenic states, the complexity of human relationships as much as the unreliability of some contacts be them settled for life (see husband and wife, life-long advisors, doctors) and it finally relies, as its main backbone, on the development of the personality of a man, probably in a humanistic sense, with all his contradictions and depressions, that we get to know and experience along the way. Our hero, the representative of the ethical structure, is Dr. Eric Sweetscent who works for Tijuana Fur & Dye tycoon, Virgil Ackerman, at the time of the setting his empire is mobilized by the government for war production. We are dealing with Earth allied with Lillistar's Starmen against the Reegs of Proxima Centauri, as Iain Rowan writes, this is "the only straightforward part of the novel" since it deals with Terra's expansion into space with its easily foreseeable frictions since Earth sides with Lillistar and their Starmen, fierce enemies of the Reegs, and thus sucked into an endless and senseless war.

Sweetscent, a 34-year-old surgeon who implants artiforgs, new artificial organs that have given Virgil the possibility of living beyond the human life span thanks to his privileged position, is invited by the omnipresent Virgil to visit "Wash-35" on Mars, the reconstruction of Ackerman's childhood, i.e. the capital back in 1935. On that occasion he meets Gino Molinari, the elected leader of Earth, called also "the Mole." Sweetscent is 'given' over by Virgil to Gino, and is abruptly caught in the big machine of a state at war.

Gino Molinari, supreme leader of Terra in its war against the reegs, wore Khaki, as usual, with his sole military decoration on his breast, his Golden Cross First Class, awarded by the UN General Assembly fifteen years before. Molinari, Dr. Eric Sweetscent noted, badly needed a shave, the lower portion of his face was stubbled, stained by a grive and sootlike blackness that had risen massively to the surface from deep within. His shoelaces, after the manner of his fly, were undone (p 488).

Kathy, the nice-looking lady, Eric's wife, is also caught unawares into something incredibly bigger than what her modest capacities allow her to escape: she is given JJ-180; a highly toxic and addictive drug that hooks its user since the very first ingestion and provokes irrevocable damage. In fact, as soon as Katy 'comes back,' just a few hours later, she understands that she needs another dose in order to function. At this point Starmen appear, they explain that what she is looking for was produced by the Reegs to poison both Starmen and men in order to win the war, and that she can have more if she complies to spy on her husband, and therefore on UN Secretary General Molinari. For Kathy there is no way out but to accept the Starmen's conditions to receive the precious set of tablets that will have her go for some time.

"Of course it's addictive, Kathy; that's why we put you on it." He smiled at her (p 523).

The speaker is a Starman.

In the meantime her husband, official and personal doctor of the Mole, has to be made part of several state secrets – although many of Gino's political strategies are incomprehensible to him, he does understand something, i.e. that Molinari undergoes psychosomatic illnesses capable of mimicking the diseases of those who work around him. Psychosomatic or not, they anyhow act vehemently on his body, and many times already has he seen his death close-by. The surprises with the UN Secretary General are not all here, Eric is shown Molinari's corpse, pierced by bullets.

And Kathy has finally arrived and while talking to Eric, throws a pill of JJ-180 into his water, without suspecting anything, he sips the water and is projected into the future, one year from the present moment. Eric meets his colleagues, and Earth has allied with the Reegs, while Lillistar has lost. As soon as he returns, he lets Gino Molinari know of his trip who tells him that the drug acts in a different way on those who take it. In his case he has trips into alternate realities from which he can draw android forms back to the present, which explains Molinari's preserved corpse we met before, as much as other forms by Gino, i.e. his final resurrection. The twist that takes place now is sustained and triggered by optimism since Eric gets to know of Gino's plans to side with the Reegs, as much as out of compassion for JJ-180

users – and fearing for himself: he takes a greater dose close to the Hazeltine Corporation in Detroit (he reaches the premises by express ship) to project himself into a more distant future, and yes, his calculations are right.

When he reached the porch the door flew open automatically for him and he looked in on a neat office, with relaxing leather-covered chairs, magazines, a deep-pile carpet whose design changed continuously... he saw, through an open doorway, a business area: accounting machines and a computer of some ordinary kind, and at the same time he heard the buzz of activity beyond that, from the labs themselves.

As he started to sit down, a four-armed reeg walked into the office, its blue, chitinous face inexpressive, its embryonic wings pressed tightly to its sloping, bullet-shiny back. It whistled a greeting to him – he had not heard that about them – and passed on out through the doorway. Another reeg, manipulating its extensive network of double-joined arms vigorously, made its appearance, traveled up to Eric Sweetscent, halted, and produced a small square box.

Scudding across the side of the box, words in English took shape and departed; he woke to the fact that he had to pay attention to them. The reeg was in a communication with him.

WELCOME TO HAZELTINE CORPORATION (pp 605, 606)

A commonly used antidote exists, he memorizes the formula to have it reproduced by Hazeltine Corporation and meets the Betelguese telepath who informs him of what he already knows.

[...] Your wife for example. You have great conflicting emotions about her, fear for the most part, then hatred, and also a good deal of undistorted love. (p 611)

At this point instead of reaching earth directly, he uses the drug further and administers himself a fraction of the pill to get just one year from his present. His alias tells him of the invasion of the Starmen as soon as they guess the UN Secretary General's plans to ally with the Reegs, moreover, his self in the future tells him to get divorced from his wife, seen her mental instability and her grave brain lesions due to the use of JJ-180.

Once back he notices that Kathy has been deteriorating visibly. From her trips to the past she brings back artifacts to the delight of Virgil. Unable to take any decisions, he decides to go to Mexico where he can find a lethal poison. But he finally withdraws from his decision and realizes how much needed he is by Ackerman since the Starmen have started invading the Earth. On board of an automated cab he asks it questions that, contrary to all physical laws, will give him the right answers about his relationship with his distressed wife. The idea of having an automated cabdriver offering vital solutions can be connected to Dick's obsession with the Book, the *I-Ching*, on which Abendsee built the story within the story, *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, the alter-alias of the main plot in *The Man in the High Castle*, as much as the many books that have been consulted in search for answers in the author's final Trilogy.

"I'd stay with her," the cab decided.

"Why?"

"Because," the cab said, "life is composed of reality configurations so constituted. To abandon her would be to say, I can't endure reality as such. I have to have uniquely special easier conditions." (p 667)

As Rowan writes, "Perhaps it would have been a tighter novel had Dick kept a firmer rein on his imagination, perhaps it would have been more coherent had he kept a closer focus on the core plot," but these fluctuating passages were needed for us to fully accept Eric Sweetscent at an emotional level and to redeem him completely in his complexity. As much as we recognize and redeem the same author after having undertaken such an amazing ride through his concerns and obsessions. John Berlyne lists Dick's favorite themes, present in this novel, in the following way: "His suspicions about political machinations are treated with a cynical and witty and very science fictional slant." To which he adds Dick's "toying" with drug-induced hallucinations, and last but not least, an exploration of the severe wounds "dysfunctional marriages" can cause, a mirror of his actual life. He finally underlines that what we have read is "hard-core stuff, alienating and often disconcerting" that "keeps us looking over our shoulders and doubting the truth as much as the characters themselves do."

With *Now Wait For Last Year* we are in 1966, the historical moment that was tinged by the dark tones of the dawning of decadence, The Rolling Stones were painting the surrounding environment black that had to be a 'must' to which to conform, their output in that year counts *Aftermath* with songs like *Lady Jane*, or The Velvet Underground, Andy Warhol with his factory that was driving people nuts, drugs were all

around as much as hard rock and sugary songs. In this context, although Dick had severe problems with drugs, he makes his main character say the following: "As far as I'm concerned deliberately addictive toxic drugs are an abomination, a crime against life. [...] And someone who addicts another is a criminal and ought to be hanged or shot (p 635)." Dick thus set himself against the easy mass culture that would have absorbed him completely and probably granted him a higher and quicker recognition. Here is a longer passage that depicts not only the author's position towards drugs, but also the kind of relationship between Kathy and Eric, a glimpse on the unbearable oscillations that have torn the two characters apart all along the novel:

'The antidote's in town. Or soon will be. All Hazeltine Corp. has to do is whip up a batch and express it here. Another six hours. ' He made an attempt to smile encouragingly; it failed. 'How do you feel? '

'Fine now. Since you brought me the news. ' She was surprisingly matter-of-fact, even for her with her schizoid ways. The sedation no doubt accounted for it. 'You did it, didn't you? Found it for me. '

Then, at last remembering, she added, 'Oh yes, and for yourself, too. But you could have kept it, not told me. Thanks, dear. '

" Dear." It hurt to hear her use such a word to him.

'I can see, ' Kathy said carefully, 'that underneath you really are fond of me still, despite what I've done to you. Otherwise you wouldn't.'

'Sure I would; you think I'm a moral monster? The cure should be a matter of public record, available for anyone who's on the damn stuff. Even Starmen. As far as I'm concerned deliberately addictive toxic drugs are an abomination, a crime against life. " He was silent then, thinking to himself, And someone who addicts another is a criminal and ought to be hanged or shot. 'I'm leaving, ' he said. 'Going back to Cheyenne. I'll see you. Good luck on your therapy. ' He added, trying not to make it sound deliberately unkind, 'You know, it won't restore the physical damage already done; you understand that, Kathy. '

'How old, ' she asked, 'do I look? '

'You look what you are, about thirty-five. '

'No. ' She shook her head. 'I've seen in the mirror. '

Eric said, 'See to it, will you, that everyone who took the drug that night with you, that first time, gets some of the antidote; I'll trust you to do that. Okay? '

'Of course. They're my friends. ' She toyed with a corner of her magazine. 'Eric, I can't expect you to stay with me now, with the way I am physically. All withered and-'

She broke off and became silent.

Was this his chance? He said, 'You want a divorce, Kathy? If you do I'll give it to you. But personally-' He hesitated. How far could hypocrisy go? What was really required of him now? His future self, his compatriot from 2056, had pleaded with him to break loose from her. Didn't all aspects of reason dictate that he do so and if possible right now? In a low voice Kathy said, 'I still love you. I don't want to separate. I'll try to treat you better; honesty I will. I promise. '

'Shall I be honest? '

'Yes, ' she said. 'You should always be honest. '

'Let me go. ' (p 635)

## Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said

Flow, my tears, fall from your springs!  
Exiled for ever, let me mourn;  
Where night's black bird her sad infamy sings,  
There let me live forlorn.

Down vain lights, shine you no more!  
No nights are dark enough for those  
That in despair their lost fortunes deplore.  
Light doth but shame disclose.

Never may my woes be relieved,  
Since pity is fled;  
And tears and sighs and groans my weary days  
Of all joys have deprived.

From the highest spire of contentment  
My fortune is thrown;  
And fear and grief and pain for my deserts  
Are my hopes, since hope is gone.

Hark! you shadows that in darkness dwell,  
Learn to contemn light  
Happy, happy they that in hell  
Feel not the world's despite.

*Flow my Tears* by lutenist and composer John Dowland (1563-1626)  
originally composed as an instrumental: *Lachrimae pavane* (1596)

The first three strophes of John Dowland's lyrics will introduce the three parts that build the corpus of the book, Philip K. Dick will skip the fourth strophe but will open the fourth part or Epilog with the fifth strophe: "*Hark! you shadows that in darkness dwell, ...*"

From 1966, *Now Wait for Last Year*, we fly to 1974 when *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said* is published by Doubleday, both hardback and paperback; this Jonathan Lethem's selection, the editor of The Library of Congress collection. It received the first John W. Campbell Award in 1975, plus a nomination for both the Nebula Award in 1974, and a Hugo Award in 1975.

In a letter to Philip José Farmer dated February 15, 1974, Phil writes: "My new Doubleday novel *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said* just came out, and Ursula Le Guin has already nominated it for a Nebula Award."

At times the novel gets so gloomy and claustrophobic that Kafka, Aldous Huxley and George Orwell can be quoted. Kafka because of the aphasic immobility that permeates *The Metamorphosis*, while static tension by Dick is translated into a major impossibility in communicating the truth. We are drawn back to *Brave New World* because of the tightly structured security system through which beings try to find their ways to get out: after a Second Civil War called the Insurrection, America has become a police state. We can find many analogies also with Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* dystopian setting. A Director manages the totalitarian system divided into nats, National Guards, and pols, Police Force, together with marshals and generals each one competent in his specific field. Students are in labor camps where those who have been helping them (with some food or other necessities), also end up. Within this heavily laid stratospheric order, on October 11, Jason Taverner, a Nexus-6, superior genetically evolved being - there are nine of them, among whom appears Heather Hart, his partner; genetic engineering had started round the '40s - is applauded by 30million spectators thanks to his high rating prime-time show. On October 12 he is nobody. No ID records equal no identity, he is no-one. He wakes up in a rundown hotel, has a lot of money in his pocket, tries to contact the people he used to know but there is no memory of him. Popular as he was before, acclaimed and approached in the streets, in restaurants, anywhere he was to be found, nobody can recognize him now. Heather, when he calls her, does not have a clue, and clicks off fearing it is one of her hideous fans. As we are going to see, Philip K. Dick offers a fantasized solution, but what is interesting is the fact per se. Jason disappears from the mind of people. How many times do people

suddenly disappear from our minds, and how difficult it is sometimes to focalize on someone if it is not out of the blue. I can see in such 'disappearances' the mischievous hand of an enemy, the thought-through ethereal manipulation inside our private spheres that leads to choices oriented a priori by sick and resentful minds.

Jason's attempt at trying to get back to his self will outline the plot of the book. His lack of identity could be seen, as it has been mentioned elsewhere, as a metaphor for death (Jason C.) and loneliness, the total exclusion from his own world. Fact is that this statement does not keep in consideration the actual development of the story, Jason cannot be 'dead' or 'left alone' nor 'live invisibly,' although he has enough money to go by. When he is finally discovered by the police, in spite of his excellently forged documents, he risks being used by the Police General Felix Buckman as a scapegoat. The pivoting character in the big twist of the story is the lesbian Alys Buckman, sister of Felix, with whom she has an incestuous relationship out of which a son is born: Barney. The relationship does not show any similarities to the one we witness in *The Man Without Qualities* by Robert Musil, saturated with decadence and withered sentimental romanticism. Tumultuous and dangerous, the love-hate disposition of the couple is striking. Alys goes heavy on drugs, and her position inside the sealed police structure allows her to access the latest experimental chemicals.

"We have no way of determining as yet what would constitute an overdose with KR-3. It's currently being tested on detainee volunteers at the San Bernardino forced-labor camp, but so far" - Westerburg continued to sketch - "anyhow, as I was explaining. Time-binding is a function of the brain and goes on as long as the brain is receiving input. Now, we know that the brain can't function if it can't bind space as well ... but as to why, we don't know yet. Probably it has to do with the instinct to stabilize reality in such a fashion that sequences can be ordered in terms of before-and-after - that would be time - and, more importantly, space-occupying, as with a three-dimensional object as compared to, say, a drawing of that object."

He showed Buckman his sketch. It meant nothing to Buckman; he stared at it blankly and wondered where, this late at night, he could get some Darvon for his headache. Had Alys had any? She had squirreled so many pills.

Westerburg continued, "Now, one aspect of space is that any given unit of space excludes all other given units; if a thing is there it can't be here. Just as in time if an event comes before, it can't also come after." [...] "The exclusiveness of space, we've learned, is only a function of the brain as it handles perception. It regulates data in terms of mutually restrictive space units. Millions of them. Trillions, theoretically, in fact. But in itself, space is not exclusive. In fact, in itself, space does not exist at all." (p 840)

Yes, Alys had some. And as Westerburg explains to her brother after her death, a drug like KR-3 "opens up the entire range of spatial variations. The brain can no longer tell which objects exist and which are only latent, unspatial possibilities. (p 841)" Thus a "whole new universe appears to the brain to be in the process of creation." It seems that new infinite realities are available to the user by which s/he is caught, thus losing connection with his/her actual reality. Jason Taverner had been "locked" into Alys's "percept-system" since she was on KR-3 and because she liked his music and wanted to meet him, besides the fact that he was most familiar to her out of her previous love relationship with Heather, Jason's actual partner. Only with Alys's death due to an overdose and terrifying sudden decay, she turns right there into a skeleton, the Police receive immediately Jason's file from Data Central, and everybody can remember him.

The Epilog or Part Four will grace us with the continuation of the characters we have followed for so many pages. In Dick's endings I can't but cherish and be grateful to his benevolent and soothing hand. The good are somehow able to find some solace, meaning is gracefully shed to enlighten why they had to suffer. Mary Anne Dominic, a naïve secondary character who extends her humble hand out to Jason in the moment in which he needs it most, will win a major international prize for her ceramic kitchenware. Police General Felix Buckman retires in Borneo with his son, writes a detailed book: *The Law-and-order Mentality* on "the planetwide police apparatus" which will cause his death due to a sniper in 2017. Barney, Alys's and Felix's son, joins the New York police, injured, he retires to a much slower job as an antiquarian. Our Jason Taverner dies almost unnoticed in 2047, after having reached the absolute top of notoriety. Once again the sweet soul of Mary Anne Dominic will remember him in her eighties.

*Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said* has a dedication: "The love in this novel is for Tessa, and the love in me is for her, too. She is my little song." Leslie (Tessa) Busby was Philip's fifth and last wife, from April 1973 to 1977, she bore Christopher Kenneth on July 25, 1973.

An interruption is needed at this point to focus on Philip K. Dick's life. Several events take place that can be easily qualified as: "a life-changing experience," as defined on the site dedicated to the author and maintained by his children, [www.philipkdick.com](http://www.philipkdick.com). On February 20, 1974, he was given sodium pentothal for the extraction of his wisdom tooth, once back home he suffered acute pain and asked for some analgesic. When he answered the door to receive the drug, he noticed the pendant of the woman, a "vesicle pisces" as he defined it. As soon as the woman went away he started having visions that lasted weeks. This experience will be the material for *VALIS*, *The Divine Invasion*, *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*, and will be the fundamental speculation upon which Dick will write his *Exegesis*. From *The Shifting Realities of PK Dick* we can excerpt the experience in his own words:

Shall I go for broke and tell you the rest of this peculiar story? I'll do so, having gone this far already. My novel *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said* was released by Doubleday in February 1974. The week after it was released, I had two impacted wisdom teeth removed, under sodium pentothal. Later that day I found myself in intense pain. My wife phoned the oral surgeon and he phoned a pharmacy. Half an hour later there was a knock at my door: the delivery person from the pharmacy with the pain medication. Although I was bleeding and sick and weak, I felt the need to answer the knock on the door myself. When I opened the door, I found myself facing a young woman -- who wore a shimmering gold necklace in the center of which was a gleaming gold fish. For some reason I was hypnotized by the gleaming gold fish; I forgot my pain, forgot the medication, forgot why the girl was there. I just kept staring at the fish sign.

"What does that mean?" I asked her.

The girl touched the glimmering golden fish with her hand and said, "This is a sign worn by the early Christians." She then gave me the package of medication.

In that instant, as I stared at the gleaming fish sign and heard her words, I suddenly experienced what I later learned is called *anamnesis* -- a Greek word meaning, literally, "loss of forgetfulness." I remembered who I was and where I was. In an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, it all came back to me. And not only could I remember it but I could see it. The girl was a secret Christian and so was I. We lived in fear of detection by the Romans. We had to communicate with cryptic signs. She had just told me all this, and it was true.

For a short time, as hard as this is to believe or explain, I saw fading into view the black, prisonlike contours of hateful Rome. But, of much more importance, I remembered Jesus, who had just recently been with us, and had gone temporarily away, and would very soon return. My emotion was one of joy. We were secretly preparing to welcome Him back. It would not be long. And the Romans did not know. They thought He was dead, forever dead. That was our great secret, our joyous knowledge. Despite all appearances, Christ was going to return, and our delight and anticipation were boundless.

<sup>11</sup>When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

<sup>12</sup>For now we see *through a glass, darkly*, but then face to face. Now I know in part; but then shall I know, even as also I am known.

<sup>13</sup>And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.  
1 Corinthians 13 from the 21<sup>st</sup> Century King James Version

## A Scanner Darkly

The science fiction novel was first published in 1977 by Doubleday, in both hardcover and paperback. Set in Orange County, California, it sees its development in June 1994. Much more than in *Now Wait For Last Year* and in *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said*, drugs are central. To this remark, Philip K Dick writes an Author's Note:

This has been a novel about some people who were punished entirely too much for what they did. They wanted to have a good time, but they were like children playing in the street; they could see one after another of them being killed -- run over, maimed, destroyed -- but they continued to play anyhow. We really all were very happy for a while, sitting around not toiling but just bullshitting and playing, but it was for such a terrible brief time, and then the punishment was beyond belief: even when we could see it, we could not believe it. For example, while I was writing this I learned that the person on whom the character Jerry Fabin is based killed himself. My friend on whom I based the character Ernie Luckman died before I began the novel. For a while I myself was one of these children playing in the street; I was, like the rest of them, trying to play instead of being grown up, and I was punished. I am on the list below, which is a list of those to whom this novel is dedicated, and what became of each. [...] (p 1097)

And to honor the memory of the author and the reliability of the background of his science fiction, I am reproducing the list he inserted :

To Gaylene	deceased
To Ray	deceased
To Francy	permanent psychosis
To Kathy	permanent brain damage
To Jim	deceased
To Val	massive permanent brain damage
To Nancy	permanent psychosis
To Joanne	permanent brain damage
To Maren	deceased
To Nick	deceased
To Terry	deceased
To Dennis	deceased
To Phil	permanent pancreatic damage
To Sue	permanent vascular damage
To Jerri	permanent psychosis and vascular damage
... & so forth	

(p 1098)

Although this note appears at the end of the book, it seems to me the key to read the novel because it is within this spirit that we have to face the characters in their paranoia, manias, even idiocy (see the story of the bicycle), maniacal dis/orders, psychopathic behaviors, irrational way of life, insane attitudes, foul language, and finally schizophrenic relationships, they become so real as to include you as the empathic sharer of their feelings. It can easily be stated that in *A Scanner Darkly* the cherished topics/obsessions that characterize Philip K Dick's writings become more acute, as if it had to mix them together in order to finally drain them out before his final 'mystical and highly philosophical' period. To the point that *A Scanner Darkly* can be seen as one of Dick's milestones with its autobiographical tinges and unmistakable voice, as much as the simultaneity of plots and scenes of which Dick is an expert. As Philip Dick says in an interview with Frank C. Bertrand: "Everything in *A Scanner Darkly* I actually saw."

The novel was welcomed in Europe and it was awarded the British version of the Hugo Award (the BSFA) in 1978, and the French equivalent, the Graouilly d'Or, upon its publication there in 1979. It was also nominated for the Campbell Award in 1978 and placed sixth in the annual Locus poll.

From the Notes to the text by Jonathan Lethem, Dick started writing the novel early in 1973, ended the draft in April the same year, and only two years later, thanks to the input of Judy-Lynn Del Rey [of Ballantine books] who "went over that novel page by page and showed me how to create a character," as Dick later recalls, and after a series of revisions, the writing as it appears in the present form is accepted by Doubleday in 1977.

Thick is here his mistrust for the police, but of a different kind from the misgiving we have already witnessed in *Flow My Tears*, *The Policeman Said*, and *Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep?* A kind of surveying body that becomes observant and observed, spy and spied, victimizer and victim at the same time. The keyword for this omnipresent body is the protagonist, Bob Arctor, alias Agent Fred, who will eventually blow up under the pressure and the demanding requirements of his dual and opposed identity. Bob Arctor is officially the owner of a house he shares with two other addicts, Luckman and Barris. As Fred, his code name, he has to hide under a scramble suit in order to remain anonymous, a requirement for narcotics agents:

The scramble suit was an invention of the Bell Laboratories, conjured up by accident by an employee named S. A. Powers. He had, a few years ago, been experimenting with disinhibiting substances affecting neural tissue, and one night, having administered to himself an IV injection considered safe and mildly euphoric, had experienced a disastrous drop in the GABA fluid of his brain. Subjectively, he had then witnessed lurid phosphene activity projected on the far wall of his bedroom, a frantically progressing montage of what, at the time, he imagined to be modern-day abstract paintings. [...]

In the morning, he remembered that a drastic drop in the GABA fluid of the brain normally produced such phosphene activity; nobody was trying telepathically, with or without microwave boosting, to contact him. But it did give him the idea for the scramble suit. Basically, his design consisted of a multifaced quartz lens hooked to a miniaturized computer whose memory banks held up to a million and a half physiognomic fraction -- representations of various people: men and women, children, with every variant encoded and then projected outward in all directions equally onto a superthin shroudlike membrane large enough to fit around an average human.

As the computer looped through its banks, it projected every conceivable eye color, hair color, shape and type of nose, formation of teeth, configuration of facial bone structure -- the entire shroudlike membrane took on whatever physical characteristics were projected at any nanosecond, and then switched to the next. Just to make his scramble suit more effective, S. A. Powers programmed the computer to randomize the sequence of characteristics within each set. And to bring the cost down (the federal people always liked that), he found the source for the material of the membrane in a by-product of a large industrial firm already doing business with Washington. (p. 876)

He cannot even be recognized by technological voiceprint, he is just a vague blur. In order to penetrate the subculture of drug-users, he becomes addicted to Substance D, a psychoactive drug. He falls in love with Donna, whom he thinks is a small retail seller and hopes to reach her dealer to fulfill his own duty. But, unknown to Bob/Fred, Donna is also an agent who has a specific task to carry out, she has to infiltrate New-Path's residence building in Santa Ana, California, a rehabilitation clinic, to understand where the funds come from. And Bob/Fred has been chosen as the pawn by the directives that regulate Donna's job. Not only, there is a moment in the novel when Bob/Fred is speaking with his boss, Hank, both in their scramble suits, and the reader is inevitably led to think that maybe Hank himself is a member of the trio at Arctor's home; who?

Robert Arctor had had a previous life with a wife and two small daughters, a clean house, but something happened that made him realize how much he 'hated' living with those people and in that way, "the power mower, the garage, the radiant heating system, the front yard, the fence, the whole fucking place and everyone in it." He did not like the safety of it, he felt it like "a little plastic boat that would sail on forever, without incident, until it finally sank, which would be a secret relief to all."

But in this dark world where he now dwelt, ugly things and surprising things and once in a long while a tiny wondrous thing spilled out at him constantly; he could count on nothing. Like the deliberate, evil damage to his Altec cephalochromosome, around which he had built the pleasure part of his schedule, the segment of the day in which they all relaxed and got mellow. For someone to damage that made no sense, viewed

rationally. But not much among these long dark evening shadows here was truly rational, at least in the strict sense. The enigmatic act could have been done by anyone for almost any reason. (p 914)

Arctor is finally confined to the clinic because of his serious neurocognitive defect. The same police psychologists at the testing lab try to explain him what went wrong.

"Competition," the other psychologist said, "between the left and right hemispheres of your brain. It's not so much a single signal, defective or contaminated; it's more like two signals that interfere with each other by carrying conflicting information."

"Normally," the other psychologist explained, "a person uses the left hemisphere. The self-system or ego, or consciousness, is located there. It is dominant, because it's in the left hemisphere always that the speech center is located; more precisely, bilateralization involves a verbal ability or valency in the left, with spatial abilities in the right. The left can be compared to a digital computer; the right to an analogic. So bilateral function is not mere duplication; both percept systems monitor and process incoming data differently. But for you, neither hemisphere is dominant and they do not act in a compensatory fashion, each to the other. One tells you one thing, the other another." (p 1040)

They tell him why and what kind of danger such an impairment entails:

"Substance D. It often causes that, functionally. This is what we expected; this is what the tests confirm. Damage having taken place in the normally dominant left hemisphere, the right hemisphere is attempting to compensate for the impairment. But the twin functions do not fuse, because this is an abnormal condition the body isn't prepared for. It should never happen. *Cross-cuing*, we call it. Related to split-brain phenomena. We could perform a right hemispherectomy, but --"

[..]

The other man said, "It may be organic damage. It may be permanent. Time'll tell, and only after you are off Substance D for a long while. And off entirely." (p 1041)

It is logically Donna who 'helps him out' and gets him to the clinic. When Bob/Fred enters his confusional state with memory disorders:

"Then it isn't Donna," he said. "If she's been here that long. Because I just got here a week ago." And, he thought, Donna drove me here in her MG. I remember that, because we had to stop while she got the radiator filled back up. And she looked fine then. Sad-eyed, dark, quiet and composed in her little leather jacket, her boots, with her purse that has the rabbit's foot dangling. Like she always is. (p 1087)

The text, from its highly anguishing level where nobody knows exactly who is who, and if our heroes will ever make it on time to show their innocence or to save their lives, steps down to a heart-breaking dimension. Bob/Fred was full of life, intelligence, decision-making capacity, and to face such a debilitated being and to live with his new dimension as Bruce for several chapters, does trigger emotional pain. A pain that anyhow underlies the entire novel. The recall to the figure of Bob/Fred's great-uncle who was German born - the German language peeks through at times with quotations to root the protagonist somewhere - shows once again the extreme fragility of the main character in his striving for survival. An impotent fight that from being overstuffed with dissonant implosions, has become a skeletal hand from which everything slides.

*Gott! Welch Dunkel hier! O grauenvolle Stille!  
Od' ist es um mich her. Nichts lebet auszer mir ...  
God, how dark it is here, and totally silent.  
Nothing but me lives in this vacuum ...* (p 1049)

Or

*Ich unglucksel get Atlas! Eine Welt,  
Die ganze Welt der Schmerzen muss ich tragen,  
Ich trage Unertragliches, und brechen  
Will mir das Herz im Leibe.* (pp 1084-1085)

From Jonathan Lethem's Notes on p 1128, the translation of the passage from Heinrich Heine's *The Homecoming* (1823-24) which was set to music by Franz Schubert in the *Schwanengesang*: "Unhappy Atlas that I am! A world, / The entire world of sorrows I must bear. / I bear the unbearable, and / In my body, my heart wants to break."

Bruce is planting Substance-D to recover at the clinic that treats its addicts, Donna's bosses were right, even though it has no importance for our victim. With these words we will accompany Bob/Fred/Bruce to the end of the book:

"Back to work, Bruce," Donald, the Executive Director, said.

"I saw," Bruce said. He thought, I knew. That was it: I saw Substance D growing. I saw death rising from the earth, from the ground itself, in one blue field, in stubbled color.

The farm-facility manager and Donald Abrahams glanced at each other and then down at the kneeling figure, the kneeling man and the *Mors ontologica* planted everywhere, within the concealing corn.

"Back to work, Bruce," the kneeling man said then, and rose to his feet.

Donald and the farm-facility manager strolled off toward their parked Lincoln. Talking together; he watched -- without turning, without being able to turn -- them depart.

Stooping down, Bruce picked one of the stubbled blue plants, then placed it in his right shoe, slipping it down out of sight. A present for my friends, he thought, and looked forward inside his mind, where no one could see, to Thanksgiving. (p 1096)

Philip K Dick introduces five quotations from Goethe's *Faust*, Part 1, Jonathan Lethem chooses Louis McNiece's translation in the Notes on p 1127.

*Ihr Instrumente freilich spottet mein,  
Mit Rad und Kammen, Walz' und Bugel;  
Ich stand am Tor, ihr solltet Schlüssel sein;  
Zwar euer Bart ist kraus, doch hebt ihr nicht  
die Riegel.*(p 1011)

"Your instruments, I know you are *mocking me / With cog and crank and cylinder.* / I stood at the door, you were to be the key; / A key with intricate wards – but the bolt declines to stir."

*Was grinsest du mir, hohler Schadel, her?  
Als dass dein Hirn, wie meines, einst verwirret  
Den leichten Tag gesucht und in der Dammrung schwer,  
Mit Lust nach Wahrheit, jammerlich geirret.*(p 1014)

"Why do you grin at me, you hollow skull? / To point out that your brain was once, like mine, confused / And looked for the easy day but in the difficult dusk, / Lusting for truth was led astray and abused?"

*Dem Wurme gleich' ich, der den Staub durchwuhlt,  
Den, wie er sich im Staube nahrend lebt,  
Des Wandrers Tritt vernichtet and begrabt.* (p 1016)

"I am like the worm that burrows through the dust / Which, as it keeps itself alive in the dust, / Is annulled and buried by some casual heel."

*Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach! in meiner Brust,  
Die eine will sich von der andern trennen;  
Die eine halt, in derber Liebeslust,  
Sich an die Welt mit klammernden Organen;  
Die andre hebt gewaltsam sich vom Dust  
Zu den Gefilden hoher Ahnen.* (p 1018)

"Two souls, alas, cohabit in my breast, / A contract one of them desires to sever. / The one like a rough lover clings / To the world with the tentacles of its senses; / The other lifts itself to Elysian Fields / Out of the mist on powerful wings."

*Weh! steck' ich in dem Kerker noch?  
Verfluchtes dumpfes Mauerloch,  
Wo selbst das liebe Himmelslicht*

*Trüb durch gemalte Scheiben bricht!  
Beschränkt mit diesem Bücherhauf,  
Den Würme nagen, Staub bedeckt,  
Den bis ans hohe. (p 1020)*

Oh! Am I still stuck in this jail? / This God-damned dreary hole in the wall / Where even the lovely light of heaven / Breaks wanly through the painted panes! / Cooped up among these heaps of books / Gnawed by worms, coated with dust, / Round which to the top [of the Gothic vault / A smoke-stained paper forms a crust.]”

The quotations faithfully render the spirit by which Philip K. Dick has lived what he stated he had seen. *A Scanner Darkly* ends the second volume of the collection.

## Third Volume: VALIS and Later Novels A Maze of Death

Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita  
mi ritrovai per una selva oscura,  
ché la diritta via era smarrita.  
Dante, *Inferno*, Canto 1

Published in 1970 by Doubleday in both hardcover and paperback, although *A Maze of Death* appears before *A Scanner Darkly*, it is included in the third volume right because it draws the beginning of Dick's metaphysical bet, as Jonathan Lethem states in his interview with Rich Kelley for The Library of America e-Newsletter. He later explains that Dick here explores "motifs of 'paranoid theology'" and adds "(to coin a phrase);" while further down he contradicts himself by declaring the novel, "mordantly hilarious," or "weirdly congenial." A bet it is, anyhow, which has always been present in Dick's work, maybe not as manifest as it is here with an open contact, or a clear attempt at contacting a divinity. Dick's rather increased sensitivity to the subject probably draws back to his childhood when he realized he had a twin sister, the same pathos constantly and regularly revived through the abrupt and violent vicissitudes our author had to live.

Dedicated to his two daughters, Laura and Isa, in the Foreword, Philip says that the theology in this novel "stems from an attempt made by William Sarill" and the author "to develop an abstract, logical system of religious thought, based on the arbitrary postulate that God exists." For the very first time we get acquainted with Bishop James A. Pike who will influence the author by providing and suggesting theological material on which Dick will base much of the later 'religious' novels. Moreover, Phil states that "Maggie Walsh's experiences after death are based on an L.S.D. experience" of his own "in exact detail." No need to keep on repeating that every book by Dick is the fateful transcription of the times as they were. Although highly enjoyable thanks to his geniality, (sarcastic, naïve, hilarious, light, dark) humor, attentive twists, different levels of sensitivity in order to seize all facets of 'reality' or to succeed in expressing the different perceptions of the same situation with its for/after-thoughts, actual and imaginary consequences. Philip makes it clear to the reader that "reality is seen – not directly – but indirectly, i.e., through the mind of one of the characters."

"On page 158," Maggie said, "Specktowsky says, 'The soul of brevity--the short time we are alive--is wit. And as regards the art of prayer, wit runs inversely proportional to length.'" (p 49)

Egon Specktowsky is the imaginary author who wrote *How I Rose from the Dead in My Spare Time and So Can You*, the main book to which our colonists refer.

But we're leaving, Morley thought. As in Goethe's *Faust*, "In the beginning was the deed." The deed and not the word, as Goethe, anticipating the twentieth century existentialists, had pointed out. (p 14)

The joyful moment of letting things behind towards a new and unknown journey. This the spirit that accompanies the 14 people who find themselves on Delmak-O, they arrived by different nosers, at different times, but they do not know why they are there, nor do they know one another, exception made for the couple: Mary and Seth Morley, two marine biologists who come from a kibbutz in Tekel Upharsin. Better, they are waiting for the instructions they have to receive from General Treaton and Interplan West, but when they are all finally there and eager to listen, the message turns out to be garbled, and there is no way they can restore it. Left to themselves, they start exploring the surroundings. The landscape reminds us of other depictions of Mars, to which the author has initiated us. Like in a nightmare there is a river that appears and disappears at will, the same goes for a very strange Building that seems animated in its own right, it approaches and moves further distant, it even sends different messages to our characters. There is a sign, everybody notices it, but the words read by those who come close enough, are not the same, one sees WINERY, another WITTERY, the third STOPPERY, and finally WITCHERY. Nothing but the usual personal projections, so strong as to become actual words. Moreover there are the tench, sort of small jellyfish oracles that answer questions written on a piece of paper.

"Nobody sees reality as it actually is," Frazer said. "As Kant proved. Space and time are modes of perception, for example. Did you know that?" He poked at Seth Morley. "Did you know that, mister marine biologist?"

"Yes," he answered, although in point of fact he had never even heard of Kant, much less read him.

"Specktowsky says that ultimately we can see reality as it is," Maggie Walsh said. "When the Intercessor releases us from our world and condition. When the Curse is lifted from us, through him." (p. 91)

The saddest part arrives quick enough: our characters begin to die, they are murdered, one after another in a quite fast sequence. After various adventures, the survivors discover they have something in common, a tattoo with "Perseus 9" written on it. They think the tench can explain this further mystery, but as soon as the question is asked, it explodes.

It is at this point that the other reality breaks in. The 14 colonists are actually 14 members of a spaceship that got trapped in an orbit around a dead star and there is no way of being saved. This will be their destiny until they die. Their only escape is a computer generated machine that makes them 'dream' a virtual reality. The murders were nothing but personal explosions of aggression that found their natural outlet during their state of virtual reality. It is Seth Morley who makes us understand what T.E.N.C.H. 889B is:

What did we make up? he asked himself blearily. The entire theology, he realized. They had fed into the ship's computer all the data they had in their possession concerning advanced religions. Into T.E.N.C.H. 889B had gone elaborated information dealing with Judaism, Christianity, Mohammedanism, Zoroastrianism, Tibetan Buddhism . . . a complex mass, out of which T.E.N.C.H. 889B was to distill a composite religion, a synthesis of every factor involved. We made it up, Seth Morley thought, bewildered; memory of Specktowsky's Book still filled his mind. The Intercessor, the Mentufactorer, the Walker-on-Earth--even the ferocity of the Form Destroyer. Distillate of man's total experience with God--a tremendous logical system, a comforting web deduced by the computer from the postulates given it--in particular the postulate that God existed.

And Specktowsky. . . he shut his eyes, remembering.

Egon Specktowsky had been the original captain of the ship. He had died during the accident which had disabled them. A nice touch by T.E.N.C.H. 889B, to make their dear former captain the author of the galaxy-wide worship which had acted as the base of this, their latest world. The awe and near-worship which they all felt for Egon Specktowsky had been neatly carried over to their episode on Delmak-O because for them, in a sense, he was a god--functioned, in their lives, as a god would. This touch had given the created world a more plausible air; it fitted in perfectly with their preconceptions. The polyencephalic mind, he thought. Originally an escape toy to amuse us during our twenty year voyage. But the voyage had not lasted twenty years; it would continue until they died, one by one, in some indefinably remote epoch, which none of them could imagine. And for good reason: everything, especially the infinitude of the voyage, had become an endless nightmare to them. (pp 162-163)

The outline of the plot skips the many references to the religious hints contained in the novel, sections that once in a while stand to the foreground. Although Maggie Walsh is the theologian, it is Seth Morley who has the actual encounters/apparitions with the deity. We meet the Intercessor and the Mentufactorer, at the beginning, while he is trying to choose a decent noser to get to the new colony, he is approached by The Walker-on-Earth.

"Thank you," he said, when the blessing ended.

"You will see him again," the Walker said. "When you sit with us in Paradise."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

"Exactly as he was?"

"Yes."

"Will he remember me?"

"He remembers you now. He waits. He will never stop waiting."

"Thanks," Morley said. "I feel a lot better."

The Walker-on-Earth departed. (p 22)

By 'him,' the Walker-on-Earth means an old tomcat that Seth loved and had died.

Also Maggie Walsh, who is trying to make Ignatz Thugg desist from shooting, and takes out the Book and starts reading passages in the wild feverish manner anybody would do with a gun pointed at them, has some interesting close encounters. Halas, she is shot, but she records a quite strange passage:

A chasm opened before her feet. She began to fall; below her the frozen landscape of the hellworld grew closer. Again she cried out, "Libera me, Domine, de morte aeterna!" But still she fell; she had almost reached the hell-world, and nothing meant to lift her up.

Something with immense wings soared up, like a great, metallic dragonfly with spines jutting from its head. It passed her, and a warm wind billowed after it. "Salve me, fons pietatis," she called to it; she recognized it and felt no surprise at seeing it. The Intercessor, fluttering up from the hellworld, back to the fire of the smaller, inner rings.

Lights, in various colors, bloomed on all sides of her; she saw a red, smoky light burning close and, confused, turned toward it. But something made her pause. The wrong color, she thought to herself. I should be looking for a clear, white light, the proper womb in which to be reborn. She drifted upward, carried by the warm wind of the Intercessor. . . the smoky red light fell behind and in its place, to her right, she saw a powerful, unflickering, yellow light. As best she could she propelled herself toward that.

The pain in her chest seemed to have lessened; in fact her entire body felt vague. Thank you, she thought, for easing the discomfort; I appreciate that. I have seen it, she said to herself; I have seen the Intercessor and through it I have a chance of surviving. Lead me, she thought. Take me to the proper color of light. To the right new birth.

The clear, white light appeared. She yearned toward it, and something helped propel her. Are you angry at me? she thought, meaning the enormous presence that throbbed. She could still hear the throbbing, but it was no longer meant for her; it would throb on throughout eternity because it was beyond time, outside of time, never having been in time. And--there was no space present, either; everything appeared two-dimensional and squeezed together, like robust but crude figures drawn by a child or by some primitive man. Bright colorful figures, but absolutely flat. . . and touching.

"Mors stupebit et natura," she said aloud. "Cum resurgente creatura, iudicanti responsura." Again the throbbing lessened. It has forgiven me, she said to herself. It is letting the Intercessor carry me to the right light.

Toward the clear, white light she floated, still uttering from time to time pious Latin phrases. The pain in her chest had gone now entirely and she felt no weight; her body had ceased to consume both time and space.

Wheee, she thought. This is marvelous.

Throb, throb, went the Central Presence, but no longer for her; it throbbed for others, now.

The Day of the Final Audit had come for her--had come and now had passed. She had been judged and the judgment was favorable. She experienced utter, absolute joy. And continued, like a moth among novae, to flutter upward toward the proper light. (pp 126-127)

We witness Seth Morley's final decision, again the borders that separate reality from dream or nightmare fade out, Seth will, as a matter of fact, disappear, and the other 13 members will leave on a new virtual trip without him:

"Walker," Seth Morley said.

"No," the figure said. "I am not the Walker-on-Earth. I am the Intercessor."

"But we invented you! We and T.E.N.C.H. 889B." The Intercessor said, "I am here to take you away. Where would you like to go, Seth Morley? What would you like to be?"

"An illusion, you mean?" he said. "Like our polyencephalic worlds?"

"No," the Intercessor said, "You will be free; you will die and be reborn. I will guide you to what you want, and to what is fitting and proper for you. Tell me what it is."

"You don't want me to kill the others," Seth Morley said, with abrupt comprehension. "By opening the vents." The Intercessor inclined his head in a nod. "It is for each of them to decide. You may decide only for yourself."

"I'd like to be a desert plant," Seth Morley said. "That could see the sun all day. I want to be growing. Perhaps a cactus on some warm world. Where no one will bother me."

"Agreed."

"And sleep," Seth Morley said. "I want to be asleep but still aware of the sun and of myself."

"That is the way with plants," the Intercessor said. "They sleep. And yet they know themselves to exist. Very well." He held out his hand to Seth Morley. "Come along."

Reaching, Seth Morley touched the Intercessor's extended hand. Strong fingers closed around his own hand. He felt happy. He had never before been so glad.

"You will live and sleep for a thousand years," the Intercessor said, and guided him away from where he stood, into the stars. (pp 167-168)

Friedrich Jameson sees in the immobility of all the characters in cryogenic half-life the static imprint of a literature, that of the "death of the subject," of "an end to individualism so absolute as to call into question

the last glimmers of the ego.” Under this light, Seth’s decision to become a cactus could be seen as the only individual glimmer at the end of this novel, while the decision of the other members of the group, strays them to the condition of non-subjects who do not want to endorse their own subjectivity. I think that, if we have to accept the “death of the subject” theory, it was not Dick’s wish to package it, he rather wanted to lead his readers to understand the intensity of despair that can seize the protagonists of a life set under the absolute spell of fate. No rebellion is possible, constriction has drawn space limits around them, and their only escape is given by frequent shared dreams that dislocate them into other half-realities. A metaphor, it seems to me, for the spreading use of drugs that hit Dick and his friends, as well as a broad slice of the members of his generation; If not drugs, then pills, see Kirsten Lundborg in *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*, for example, or alcohol. Not to talk of economic, identity - psychological and social problems.

It rather seems to me that Jameson does not want to take into consideration the philosophical and religious complexity of Dick’s highly investigative and educated personality. Dick’s writing has much more to do with a broader civic discourse and escapes categorizations, since it shows itself to be more productive in its open questions rather than in the answers supplied, if any. A discourse that opens up to the exhibition of corrupted relationships, people gone adrift, lack of motivations be them instinctive or thoughtful. From a critical point of view, Jameson’s observation can find the input of a paragraph, which is what I have granted him, but it also seems to me that his reaction is quite similar to the reflection of the surviving characters’ egos projected on the sign of the Building. Strong in this observation, I am tempted to go further to the point of stating that Jameson is “the death of the subject,” since this is exactly “what he sees.”

## VALIS

Les éclairs n'ont-ils pas la même forme à l'étranger? Quelqu'un qui se trouva chez mes parents discutait de la couleur du ciel. Y a-t-il des éclairs? C'était un nuage rose qui s'avavançait. Oh! que tout changea! Mon Dieu! Est-il possible que ta réalité soit si vivante? La maison paternelle est là; les marronniers son collés à la fenêtre, la préfecture est collée aux marronniers, le mont Frugy est collé à la préfecture: les cimes seules, rien que les cimes. Une voix annonça: « Dieu! » et il se fit une clarté dans la nuit. Un corps énorme cacha la moitié du paysage. Etait-ce Lui? était-ce Job? Il était pauvre; il montrait une chair percée, ses cuisses étaient cachées par un linge; que de larmes, ô Seigneur! Il descendait... Comment? Alors descendirent aussi des couples plus grands que nature. Ils venaient de l'air dans des caisses, dans des œufs de Pâques: ils riaient et le balcon de la maison paternelle fut encombré de fils noirs comme la poudre. On avait peur. Les couples s'installèrent dans la maison paternelle et nous les surveillions par la fenêtre. Car ils étaient méchants. Il y avait des fils noirs jusque sur la nappe de la table à manger et mes frères démontraient des cartouches Lebel. Depuis, je suis surveillé par la police.

Max Jacob, *Cornet à dés*, 1914. Thanks to Dr. Alexander Dickow and Dr. Mark Weiss for having forwarded the present poem.

In hyper-synthetic form, here is Philip K. Dick's perception and creed in God (p 197):

:

**GOD IS NO WHERE  
GOD IS NOW HERE**

Major strength is required in order to deal with *VALIS*, not a simple endeavor, a novel seen by Carl Freedman as an interesting failure, together with *The Divine Invasion*. If up to now I was able to keep the books clean from pencil or pen signs, without any second thought for the economic value of the edition I started scribbling notes and underlining. *VALIS*, and the two following books, need underlining, they need pauses to think, notes for you to go back so that you can fill in your knowledge with further research. As James Schellenberg states: "The novel **VALIS** presents almost insurmountable difficulties to the reviewer." *VALIS* is the opening book of the Trilogy that sets Dick to a higher existential plane, both as a man and as a writer. Hermeneutics is the very key word, submerged by highly thick quotations, the reading of this text - with its infinite inputs - could easily end up being a fulfilling lifelong task by itself. *VALIS* first appeared in 1981 published by Bantam Books, in both hardcover and paperback editions. It will be followed by *The Divine Invasion* and finally the last writing by Philip: *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*, besides the *Exegesis* on which Dick had kept on writing until his untimely departure.

This book is dedicated to Russell Galen, his long-time literary agent (from 1977), and Dick continues: "Who showed me the right way." Then he proceeds to explain what *VALIS* means with a quotation taken from the *Great Soviet Dictionary, Sixth Edition, 1992*.

*VALIS* (acronym of Vast Active Living Intelligence System, from an American film): A perturbation in the reality field in which a spontaneous self-monitoring negentropic vortex is formed, tending progressively to subsume and incorporate its environment into arrangements of information. Characterized by quasi-consciousness, purpose, intelligence, growth and an armillary coherence.

Thomas Disch, in an amusing short story, *Talking with Jesus*, quotes Jacopone da Todi with his poem "It Is the Highest Wisdom to Be Considered Crazy for the Love of Christ," as well as William Blake, before introducing a passage in which Dick deals with theophanies:

You cannot say that an encounter with God is to mental illness what death is to cancer: the logical outcome of a deteriorating illness process. The technical term - theological technical term, not psychiatric - is theophany. A theophany consists of a self-disclosure by the divine. It does not consist of something the percipient does; it consists of something the divine - the God or gods, the high power - does.

Although Disch thinks that the novel goes "off the rails sometimes," he is able to summarize in a simple paragraph the most gripping tension that embodies it: "[...] the hero is called 'Philip K. Dick,' though he also appears in the form of an alter ego called 'Horselover Fat' (which is his own name, rendered from

Greek and German). The fascination of the book, what's most artful and confounding about it, is the way the line between Dick and Fat shifts and wavers, Dick representing the professional novelist who understands that all these mystic revelations are his own novelistic imaginings, while Fat is the part of him that receives, for a while, and believes, a little longer, messages from" God. He even defines it confessional novel and compares it to Plath's *The Bell Jar* or Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, where VALIS scores higher. Disch ends his fictitious encounter with God with a quotation from James Merrill's *Scripts for the Pageant*, where the author disserts on the Holy Figure, and finally writes in his two closing lines: "Of these objections, one does well to keep / One's mouth shut." We thus understand Thomas Disch's position. Which is in part also Philip Dick's. He lets Horselover Fat squibble and sweat in his theophanies, and rethinking, and supposing, and quoting, while he, as the narrating "I," keeps at a safe and critically objective distance.

Among the many poets that have written of theophanies, besides Max Jacob whose poem opens the present section, and thanks to Dr. James Finnegan for having collaborated, to be mentioned are: Angelus Silesius, George Herbert, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Gabriela Mistral, St. John of the Cross, Sor Juana de la Cruz, Thomas Merton, and the same James Finnegan among the many and after the theophanic poet par excellence, Dante.

Dick digs into Gnosticism, he needs to 'understand,' whatever it might cost him.

The vividness of the impression which a supposed theophany makes on the percipient is no proof of authenticity. Nor, really, is group perception (as Spinoza supposed, the entire universe may be one theophany; but then, again, the universe may not exist at all, as the Buddhist idealists decided. Any given alleged theophany may be a fake because anything may be a fake, from stamps to fossil skulls to black holes in space. (p. 203)

Many and varied are the characters in this story. As already pointed out through T. Disch, Phil keeps his identity as a science fiction writer.

I am, by profession, a science fiction writer. I deal in fantasies. My life is a fantasy. (p 178)

Having devised the stratagem of his alter ego. Horselover Fat is the one who can venture freely into the invisible realm and use Dick's mystical experiences as the ground on which to build further disquisitions. Thoughts that are duly recorded in his *Exegesis*, and taken from it to insert them in the text. The numerous entries are numbered and in bold character.

I am Horselover Fat, and I am writing this in the third person to gain much-needed objectivity. (p 177)

And finally addressing the reader directly:

If, in reading this, you cannot see that Fat is writing about himself; then you understand nothing. (p 202)

How Philip Dick can be disorienting is something he himself can only know.

**The changing information which we experience as World is an unfolding narrative. *It tells about the death of a woman* (italics mine). This woman, who died long ago, was one of the primordial twins. She was one half of the divine syzygy. The purpose of the narrative is the recollection of her and of her death. The Mind does not wish to forget her. Thus the ratiocination of the Brain consists of a permanent record of her existence, and, if read, will be understood this way. All the information processed by the Brain-experienced by us as the arranging and rearranging of physical objects-is an attempt at this preservation other; stones and rocks and sticks and amoebae are traces of her. The record of her existence and passing is ordered onto the meanest level of reality by the suffering Mind which is now alone.** (pp 201-202)

In bold character in the original. The story starts with Gloria Knudson's suicide, it seems that Fat, in his unlimited goodness, cannot overcome such a terrifying event. Instead of looking for a stable relationship, he gets involved with Sherri Solvig, a pseudo-Christian woman who is dying from lymphatic cancer, which depresses him even more.

The mentally disturbed do not employ the Principle of Scientific Parsimony: the most simple theory to explain a given set of facts. They shoot for the baroque. (p 187)

Dick did help Doris Sauter for the same reason, Doris is still alive to date. Fat himself is a survivor of an attempted suicide since his wife Beth has left him by taking with her his son Christopher. Unluckily only the name changes in Dick's life, his wife Tessa did run away with their beloved child, the one Philip saved thanks to his visions, since the doctors were not able to discover the boy's "potentially fatal inguinal hernia."

**# 45. In seeing Christ in a vision I correctly said to him, "We need medical attention." In the vision there was an insane creator who destroyed what he created, without purpose; which is to say, irrationally. This is the deranged streak in the Mind; Christ is our only hope, since we cannot now call on Asklepios, Asklepios came before Christ and raised a man from the dead; for this act, Zeus had a Kyklopes slay him with a thunderbolt. Christ also was killed for what he had done: raising a man from the dead. Elijah brought a boy back to life and disappeared soon thereafter in a whirlwind. "The Empire never ended." (p 295)**

The way Dick tried to kill himself is exactly the same way he has Fat do it. Fat's best friends are Phil, Kevin the skeptic, and David the Catholic, in real life Dick's friends are Tim Powers and K.W. Jeter, also science fiction writers. Philip Dick leads us to meet *The Black Iron Prison*:

**# 48. Two realms there are, upper and lower. The upper, derived from hyperuniverse I or Yang, Form I of Parmenides, is sentient and volitional. The lower realm, or Yin, Form II of Parmenides, is mechanical, driven by blind, efficient cause, deterministic and without intelligence, since it emanates from a dead source. In ancient times it was termed "astral determinism." We are trapped, by and large, in the lower realm, but are, through the sacraments, by means of the plasmate, extricated. Until astral determinism is broken, we are not even aware of it, so occluded are we. "The Empire never ended." (p 212)**

And he continues later to make us understand better what he means by The Empire:

Prior to that, during the interval in which he had experienced the two-world superimposition, had seen not only California, U.S.A., of the year 1974 but also ancient Rome, he had discerned within the superimposition a Gestalt shared by both space-time continua, their common element: a Black Iron Prison. This is what the dream referred to as "the Empire." He knew it because, upon seeing the Black Iron Prison, he had recognized it. Everyone dwelt in it without realizing it. The Black Iron Prison was their world. (p 213)

The quotation is self-explaining. I could add that it reminds of Nietzsche's catafalque, i.e. the structure only a superman, Uebermensch, is able to forego; of Felix's and Guattari's rhizomes; of Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* although much more claustrophobic than the latter. Not to mention Giovanni Battista Piranesi (10/4/1720-11/9/1778) and his disemboweled etchings of *Imaginary Prisons*, Thomas De Quincey notices the lack of balustrades on the stairs that connect one side to the other, thus rightly seeing "the abyss." Baudelaire arrived later to seize the depth of that abyss. Piranesi's contemporary; Jeremy Bentham (2/15/1748-6/6/1832), designed the Panopticon out of his Utilitarian philosophy.

Two paragraphs down, Dick / Fat defines it: "the supra- or trans-temporal constant."

A big twist is given to the story when Kevin wants David and Fat/Phil to watch a movie titled VALIS, and Fat is convinced he has finally got in contact with Zebra, the divine energy with which he is in direct contact.

Above everything else, outranking every other aspect, object, quality of his encounter, Fat had witnessed a benign power which had invaded this world. No other term fitted it: the benign power, whatever it was, had invaded this world, like a champion ready to do battle. That terrified him but it also excited his joy, because he understood what it meant. Help had come.

[...]

Normally it remained camouflaged. Normally when it appeared no one could distinguish it from ground – set to ground, as Fat correctly expressed it. He had a name for it. Zebra. Because it blended. The name for this is mimesis. Another name is mimicry. (pp 232-233)

The movie is very complicated, full of details and symbols and they think they need to talk to the directors, Eric (probably David Bowie) and Linda Lampton. On that occasion they get to meet Linda's two-year-old daughter, Sophia, who should be the reincarnation of VALIS, and the messiah. The soundtrack of the movie is by Brent Mini (Brian Eno) who lives with the couple and their child. Sophia, aka Wisdom, the Child Jesus, Zebra, is able to rejoin Phil with Fat, which does not last long: "St Sophia" is an unusual hypostasis of Christ (p 235).

Entry # 33 in Fat's journal (i.e. his exegesis):

**This loneliness, this anguish of the bereaved Mind, is felt by every constituent of the universe. All its constituents are alive. Thus the ancient Greek thinkers were hylozoists.**

A "hylozoist" believes that the universe is alive; it's about the same idea as pan-psychism, that everything is animated. Pan-psychism or hylozoism falls into two belief-classes:

- 1) Each object is independently alive.
- 2) Everything is one unitary entity; the universe is one thing, alive, with one mind. (p 233)

We need to go back to Dick's biography at this point. Philip had a twin sister who died when they were just a few months old, besides that, his parents divorced when he was six. The memory of his lost sister will accompany him throughout his life. A clear reference seemed to me the two characters Edie and Bill in *Dr. Bloodmoney, or How We Got Along After the Bomb*, previously discussed, or Manny and Zinna in *The Divine Invasion*, to follow. In the online video, *Philip K. Dick: The Penultimate Truth*, directed by Emilio Larre and produced by Martin Florio, a drawing by Dick of his "imaginary sister" is exhibited, whom he stated had black hair, and he depicted her in the same posture of one of his well-known pictures where he poses with a cat in his arms. It seems that he often tried to visualize her as a human being. In his speech at Metz Sci-Fi Convention in France, 1977, he clearly speaks of the divine 'female' voice, and of a female figure with black hair that comes to meet him. The extract pasted above can acquire a well-defined consistency.

It is a basic purpose of mythic ritual and sacrament to overcome time. (p 205)

Another speculation on time comes further into the novel:

Fat said, "Time does not exist. This is the great secret known to Apollonius of Tyana, Paul of Tarsus, Simon Magus, Paracelsus, Boehme and Bruno. The universe is contracting into a unitary entity which is completing itself. Decay and disorder are seen by us in reverse, as increasing. (pp 223-224)

As Schellenberg says: "In the end, any attempt to separate Dick's life from VALIS would be futile." I also agree with the critic when he states that it would be as much out of order to assert that everything which is written in VALIS has as a matter of fact happened to the author. Again with Dick, the analyzer of the human brain, as much as a man who has lived his 54 years on this earth thoroughly, extended parts of his novel are nothing but variations of his own perception of the things as they are. VALIS is an in-depth analysis of 2-3-1974 (the moment of his 'enlightenment,' i.e. February-March, 1974). His has been a super-human attempt to put some order in the chaos of the universe by using himself out of necessity. Kloe, his first wife, says in an interview that they were so poor they bought food for dogs.

Either he had seen God too soon or he had seen him too late. In any case, it had done him no good at all in terms of survival. Encountering the living God had not helped to equip him for the tasks of ordinary endurance, which ordinary men, not so favored, handle. (p 211)

Dick's divine trilogy comes after some recognition he had with Hollywood and the exceptional acclaim from France, and Europe in general. He had never seen that much money. Maybe for this reason he concentrates on what most interests him, in the only genre he can master by now, science fiction. A genre that allows him to be the way he most cherishes and to say the final word there where he probably had the only opportunity to do it. Or, better said with Schnellenberg, Dick writes "about Dick writing about mutable reality, [...] if nothing else (it constitutes a way of exorcising) personal demons, (since the novel)

provides those lingering enigmas with their fullest airing.” Attentively, and by projecting himself into Dick, the author, the critic says: “Paradox... I can live with it if it’s in a package like VALIS.” Which is what many writers do to be able to carry on.

Which is partially true. Dick shares with us his dire financial problems:

All he [Fat] knew was that he had been thrown in the lock-up for a minimum of two weeks. Also, he had found out one other thing, from the other patients. The County of Orange would bill him for his stay in the lock-up. As a matter of fact his total bill, including that portion covering his time in the cardiac intensive care ward, came to over two thousand dollars. Fat had gone to the county hospital in the first place because he didn’t have the money to be taken to a private hospital. So now he had learned something else about being crazy: not only does it get you locked up, but it costs you a lot of money. They can bill you for being crazy and if you don’t pay or can’t pay they can sue you, and if a court judgment is issued against you and you fail to comply, they can lock you up again, as being in contempt of court. (p 215)

As far as the philosophical content of the novel is concerned, Philip Dick mentions the material found in Egypt at Nag Hammadi in 1945. Valentinus, “an innovative, charismatic and politically prominent man, whose nearly successful election as the bishop of Rome *would*, had it been successful, have certainly altered the course of Christianity, (Rondo Keele)” stands out with great eminence. Interesting is the caveat: ‘would.’ Aren’t many of Dick’s books based on this ‘what would have happened, if...’ starting from his very first important novel: *The Man in The High Castle*. Gilles Quispel writes: “Valentinus knew only one Sophia; according to him a preexistent Jesus had left his mother Sophia and had ascended to the pleroma, (this was the spiritual body and heavenly flesh which Christ brought down to earth).” Dick is a scholar of ancient Gnosticism. Quispel states: a “shorthand definition of Gnosis [is] an intuitive knowledge of man’s origin, essence, and ultimate destination. It is christocentric: Christ delivers spiritual man from the world and reveals to him the Unknown God and his deepest Self.”

By drawing back to Dick’s “two source cosmology,” there is a passage that affirms again, not only the corpus philosophicus in which his speculations are set, but also how they perfectly mirrored his existence:

The One grieves for this death, since the One loved both twins; therefore the information of the Mind consists of a tragic tale of the death of a woman, the undertones of which generate anguish into all the creatures of the hologramatic universe without their knowing why. This grief will depart when the healthy twin undergoes mitosis and the “Kingdom of God” arrives. The machinery for this transformation – the procession within time from the Age of Iron to the Age of Gold – is at work now; in eternity it is already accomplished. (p 256)

Quispel quotes an interesting passage from the *Tripartite Treatise*:

She (Logos/Sophia) was *not able to bear the light*, but she looked into the abyss, she became double-minded. Therefore she was divided, she became deeply troubled and turned her gaze away because of her self-doubt and division, her forgetfulness and lack of gnosis, because her pride and expectation that she could understand the Incomprehensible, had become strong in her and were in her. 77,19-29

In VALIS, when Fat and his friends are invited by the Lamptons to leave Sophia alone, Kevin does not obey and walks back to talk to her. A little later, as soon as they are back home in Santa Ana, Ca, Dick – by now merged with Fat – still feels all permeated by the divine light he had breathed through Sophia, the child, when a new truth emerges:

“They had a wire running to her head,” Kevin yelled, “and a microphone at the other end of the wire, and a speaker inside her face. It was somebody else talking.” (p 368)

The reader is left with no further explanation about the child until Dick receives a telephone call from the Lamptons:

The phone rang.  
Picking it up I said, “Hello.”  
I heard Eric Lampton’s voice. It sounded twisted, like an old root, a dying root. “We have something to tell you. I’ll let Linda tell you. Hold on.”

A deep fear entered me as I stood holding the silent phone. Then Linda Lampton's voice sounded in my ear, flat and toneless. The dream had to do with her, I realized; Linda Ronstadt; Linda Lampton. "What is it?" I said, unable to understand what Linda Lampton was saying.

"The little girl is dead," Linda Lampton said. "Sophia."

"How?" I said.

"Mini killed her. By accident. The police are here. With a laser. He was trying to—"

I hung up.

The phone rang again almost at once. I picked it up and said hello.

Linda Lampton said, "Mini wanted to try to get as much information—"

"Thanks for telling me," I said. Crazily, I felt bitter anger, not sorrow.

"He was trying information-transfer by laser," Linda was saying. "We're calling everyone. We don't understand; if Sophia was the Savior, how could she die?"

Dead at two years old, I realized. Impossible.

I hung up the phone and sat down. After a time, I realized that the woman in the dream driving the car and singing had been Sophia, but grown up, as she would have been one day. The dark eyes filled with light and life and fire.

The dream was her way of saying good-bye. (pp 371-372)

Thus Sophia, the ultimate truth, but split and without any memory. Or Sophia, Dick's twin sister who died just after two months of life? Or the two together, who survive in one and grow in an alternate reality?

This is the portrait of a Philip K. Dick that stands out in all his tragedy, an effort to get back to the truth, to identify it among the contradicting sources that build up his knowledge and to which, out of a critical and intelligent study, he has conferred to them the gift of wisdom in this particular writing, from Hinduism, Buddhism, the I Ching, the Rose Cross Brotherhood, the Hermetic alchemists, Richard Wagner's Parsifal, Pascal, Parmenides, Pythagoras, Ikhnaton, Elijah, Moses, Apollo, the Sybil of Cumae, Apollonius of Tyana, Hermes Trismegistos, Dionysos, Theodor Reik, Lao Tzu's Tao Te Ching, Schopenhauer, Zoroaster, William Wordsworth's Ode that carries the subtitle: "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood", Asklepios, Bowie, Zappa, Alice Cooper (whom he particularly liked), the Book of Daniel, the Genesis, Tim Leary, the same Thomas Disch is mentioned, Meister Eckehart, Carl Gustav Jung, Paracelsus, Heraclitus, the Book of Job, Nommo and Yurugu, Osiris and Seth. Pan, the Fibonacci numbers, the Cabala, the Sepher Yezirah, Empedocles, Jesus, Mani, the Dogon tribe, Paul of Tarsus, Boehme, Bruno. And I am sure some are missing, nor do they appear in this particular order.

VALIS ends with an appendix, 52 numbered entries of what he calls *Tractates Cryptica Scriptura*, i.e. his *Exegesis*. It is Sutin to tell us that Dick's *Exegesis*, subtitled *Dick Apologia pro Mea Vita*, counts eight-thousand pages. A handwritten book on which he has worked "night after night [...] (Dick's preferred time for creative effort), with no expressed intention of publication in his own lifetime" for eight years until his death, as Sutin explains, "in an attempt to explain 2-3-74."

For the sake of humor that characterizes Dick's writing, although gloom or dark or whatever definition you wish, still humor there is, which rarely appears in the present review, I would like to offer a quotation by Adam Roberts in his critical outlook on the third volume of the Library of America, even if it is a little too *English...*, I mean, English humor! Speaking of Philip's invention of the name of his schizoid alter-ego, Roberts says: "I suppose we can be thankful it [was Horselover Fat, and that it] wasn't Equinophile Thick."

I would also like to thank The Ralph Nader Library's online site that offers the editions from which Philip K. Dick has taken several excerpts present in the text. I am copying them here below, should the reader wish to investigate Dick's quotations through his own readings. On their site you can also find the entire free book, chapter by chapter. Reference in my review is made instead to the Library of Congress edition.

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In 1978, Dick will go back to Zebra in his "Cosmogony and Cosmology." He defines Zebra an artifact – the Urgrund - created by Jakob Bohme in 1616, called the maker. Bohme is "motivated to seek an instrument for self-awareness, self-knowledge, an objective opinion or appraisal and comprehension of the nature of itself." "It is oblivious" of itself. Why does this constitute an important speculative attainment for Dick? Because it offers a conclusion by which we get to know better the author behind his continuously twisting plots.

In this system, man is not accused of causing creation to fall (it is not satisfactory to state that man caused creation to fall inasmuch as man appears to be the central victim of the evils of the world, not their author). Nor does it hold God responsible for evil, pain, and suffering (which also is an unacceptable idea); instead, a third view is presented, that a limited entity termed "the artifact" is doing the best it can considering its limitations. Thus no evil deity (Iranian dualism, Gnosticism) is introduced.

Although intricate, this model successfully employs the Principle of Parsimony, since, if the concept of the intermediate artifact is removed, either God or man is responsible for the vast evil and suffering in the world, a theory that is objectionable.

Most important of all, it seems to fit the facts, which seem to be:

1. the empirical world is not quite real, but only seemingly real;
2. its creator cannot be appealed to for a rectification or redress of these evils and imperfections;
3. the world is moving toward some kind of end state or goal, the nature of which is obscure, but the evolutionary aspect of the change states suggests a good and purposeful end state that has been designed by a sentient and benign proto-entity.

From *The Shifting Realities of PK Dick* (p 199).

Dick continues with other possible variations. A further chapter should be added in order to develop his idea properly.

## The Divine Invasion

Weep no more, sad fountains;  
What need you flow so fast?  
Look how the snowy mountains  
Heaven's sun doth gently waste.  
But my sun's heavenly eyes  
View not your weeping  
That now lies sleeping...

From the *Third and Last Booke of lute songs*, John Dowland (p 404).

The dedication, chosen by Philip K. Dick, is from a *Mysterious voice in the night*. "The time you have waited for has come. The work is complete; the final world is here. He has been transplanted and is alive." Far from me to be disruptive, but it is as if Dick was preparing himself to leave us, as if he knew it. The book, that received a nomination for a BSFA Award, was first published in 1981 by Timescape Books/Simon & Schuster, in both hardcover and paperback. It is the second part of the VALIS trilogy, and although it is not a continuation of VALIS, it was originally titled *Valis Regained*.

After the intelligent brilliancy of VALIS, but also the arduous reading of the novel, we are back to a well outlined science fiction story. Why is it then inserted in the trilogy? Well, because of the characters...

Elias Tate is mumbling. He has to put Manny in a special school which is what the government says. Manny, at the age of six, looks "lovely and strong" but unluckily "half-asleep all the time." (p 401) Can he remember Rybys on a hologram, his mother, the answer is "Just for a second." We get to meet Mr. Plaudet, head of the school, and understand that Manny's father, Herb Asher, has been in cryonic suspension all the time and is still waiting for a spleen. The small family had an air collision, his mother was killed, and Emmanuel (God with us) was placed into a synthetic womb. These are the official facts.

At the Cry-Labs, because of an interference, all those in cryonic suspension have to listen to elevator music; Herb, although clinically dead, remembers, and it is through his remembrance that we get to know what happened. It was the times of SKY OR FRY (p 404) when the Government encouraged people to emigrate from the Sol System, the alternative was to join the army where casualties were high and right there replaced. "It all came from the unification of the Communist Party and the Catholic Church into one mega-apparatus, with two chiefs-of-state, as in ancient Sparta. (p 405)" Thus, here's a new life in single domes on the CY30-CY30B star system. Herb is an audio engineer, and keeps on playing John Dowland's songs interpreted by Linda Fox (alias the singer Linda Ronstadt). The autochthons are Clems. It must be said that at this point Herb is scared of contacts with other human beings, shut as he has been in his isolation. Although the location of his dome is not that safe:

The local throng of Clems had explained it to him when the interference had first set in several months ago. In the old days before humans had migrated to the CY30-CY30B star system, the autochthonic population had worshiped a mountain deity named Yah, whose abode, the autochthons had explained, was the little mountain on which Herb Asher's dome had been erected. (p 414)

Yah persists. Herb has to go and see how his neighbor Rybys Rommey is, who is suffering from multiple sclerosis,

The myelin sheath of the nerve fibers develops hard patches and this eventually results in permanent paralysis. (p 478)

is pregnant (six months) and the son of God is in her womb.

Reaching out her hand, Rybys patted [Herb]: "[...] Well, I guess Job had it right. God afflicts those he loves." (p 445)

Elijah takes the form of Elias Tate, and reaches Rybys's dome in the moment in which Herb is there. Although they are not exactly happy to be part of all these marvels, Herb is willing to become the legal husband and father of the future God. What most bothers Herb is the fact that there is no free will, everything had already been planned. The idea is to get Rybys back to earth with the excuse that she

needs special care for her disease. Yah has to be born again in order to confront Belial, who – since the fall of Masada in the first century CE (Common Era) – has ruled the earth. A thick presence that obscures their future.

Elias said, "His name means 'He Brings into Existence Whatever Exists.'"

"Including evil?" Herb Asher asked.

"It says in Scripture," Elias said, "thus:

"... So that men from the rising and the setting sun

May know that there is none but I:

I am the LORD, there is no other;

I make the light, I create the darkness,

author alike of prosperity and trouble.

I, the LORD, do all these things."

"Where does it say that?" Rybys said.

"Isaiah forty-five," Elias said. (p 447)

And then it is Rybys's time to protest:

"Yes," she said, "I guess it is. But it's brutal. What's happening to me is brutal. And there's more ahead. I want out and I can't get out. Nobody asked me originally. Nobody is asking me now. Yah foresees what lies ahead but I don't, except that there's more cruelty and pain and throwing up. Serving God seems to mean throwing up and shooting yourself with a needle every day. I am a diseased rat in a kind of cage. That's what he's made me into. I have no faith and no hope and he has no love, only power. God is a symptom of power, nothing else. The hell with it. I give up. I don't care. I'll do what I have to but it will kill me and I know it. OK?" (p 448)

The Big Noodle, Earth's A.I. system, detects them on their trip to Earth:

Big Noodle, after analyzing the data, informed the authorities that something sinister had been smuggled past Immigration and onto Earth; she felt their recoil, their aversion. Incredible, she thought. To see the Lord of the universe through their eyes; to see him as foreign. How could the Lord who created everything be a foreign thing? They are not in his image, then, she realized. This is what Yah is telling me.

[...]

They are living in a cheap horror film, she thought. There is something wrong when you fear little children. When you view them, any one of them, as weird and awful. I don't want this insight, she said to herself, drawing back in aversion. Take it away, please; I've seen enough. (p 454)

and although the couple is able to get "abroad a Yellow flycab, rising up from the Washington, D.C. spaceport, heading in the direction of Bethesda-Chevy Chase, while Elias is left back to divert the immigration agents from them, "a large commercial flycar" hurtles against them at reckless speed (p 499). Cardinal Fulton Statler Harms, Chief Prelate of the Christian-Islamic Church on Earth, and Nicholas Bulkowsky, Procurator Maximus of the Scientific Legate, who have been trying to trap the Ashers, do not know of the accident, they are reported on their escape by flycab. But Bulkowsky's expression "could not be read," while Statler Harms is out of his brains.

QUMRAN SCROLL "THE WAR OF THE SONS OF LIGHT AND THE SONS OF DARKNESS," SOURCE: JEWISH ASCETIC SECT ESSENES [...]

He reflected, John the Baptist. Stipulated by Christ to have been Elijah returned, as promised by Jehovah in Malachi:

Look, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. He will reconcile fathers to sons and sons to fathers, lest I come and put the land under a ban to destroy it.

The final verse of the Old Testament; there the Old Testament ended and the New Testament began.

Armageddon, he pondered. The final battle between the Sons of Darkness and the Sons of Light. Between Jehovah and – what had the Essenes called the evil power? Belial. That was it. That was their term for Satan. Belial would lead the Sons of Darkness; Jehovah would lead the Sons of Light. This would be the seventh battle. (pp 490-491)

This was Harms pondering, but he had it the other way round by thinking he was with the Sons of Light. And in the meantime Philip K. Dick doesn't miss an opportunity to enlighten us on the Old and New Testament.

The monster in her womb is Belial, Cardinal Harms realized. He has returned to overthrow us. To overthrow Jehovah, whom we serve. (p 491)

It is only in Chapter 10 that Herb Asher finally wakes up.

He had spent – not weeks – but years in cryonic suspension. The doctors could not explain why it had taken so long to obtain replacement organs. (p 502)

How does Herb feel after such a long time, 'grief' is the only word:

"I dreamed again and again about my wife." He felt bitter grief hover over him and then descend on him, filling him, the grief was too much. "Always I found myself back there with her. When we met, before we met. The trip to Earth. Little things. Dishes of spoiled food... she was sloppy." (p 502)

He finally meets Elias, as a blind beggar, who takes him to Manny. It would be too difficult to try to summarize the endless dialogue that takes place between Manny, who is ten by now, and Zina. Because of its theological complexities. I will transcribe several extracts so that the reader can get to the intensity of the passage that brought Manny from childhood to the knowledge that he is God, and to the discovery of Zina Pallas, who is a Shekhinah.

Here are Manny's first impressions as a child:

Thereupon he saw the Lower Realm – not as a place – but as transparent pictures permutating at immense velocity. These pictures were the Forms outside of space being fed into the Lower Realm to become reality. He was one step away; now, from the Hermetic transform. (p 449)

Their friendship starts out with a gift, Zina gives Manny 'an information slate, as soon as he turns it on the word 'Valis' appears. He simply has to ask a question and press the tab that it forms the answer (wouldn't that be a beautiful I-pad?). While Elias has a magnificent Hologram, "the total structure of Scripture formed, then, a three-dimensional cosmos that could be viewed from any angle and its contents read (p 458)." He would like to feed something new in it, but Elias reproaches him, he cannot. Manny thus thinks:

He knew of course, why the Christian-Islamic Church did not allow the transmuting of the Bible into a color-coded hologram. If you learned how you could gradually tilt the temporal axis, the axis of true depth, until successive layers were superimposed and a vertical message – a new message – could be read out. In this way you entered into a dialogue with Scripture; it became alive. It became a sentient organism that was never twice the same. The Christian-Islamic Church, of course, wanted both the Bible and the Koran frozen forever. If Scripture escaped out from under the church its monopoly departed. (p 459)

It is at this point that Zina introduces Manny to her parallel peaceful universe. Herb is in the retail home audio system business with Elias, and Rybys Rommey is alive. Zina helps Herb to meet Linda. But in a moment of naïve dream-like estate, both Manny and Zina open the cage to the goat who is Belial. He will intercept Herb on his trip to Linda, and Linda turns out to be Herb's savior in the moment in which she disintegrates the animal. A doll from a doll from a doll, that is the dream from the dream from the dream in a reality from a reality from a reality, and the starting point has already been forgotten the complicated the paper castle gets.

Here is Emmanuel in his phase of growth and towards the realization that he is Yah, the Creator:

What a tragic realm this is, he reflected. Those down here are prisoners, and the ultimate tragedy is that they don't know it; they think they are free because they have never been free, and do not understand what it means. This is a prison, and few men have guessed. But I know, he said to himself. Because that is why I am here. To burst the walls, to tear down the metal gates, to break each chain. Thou shalt not muzzle the ox as he treadeth out the corn, he thought, remembering the Torah. You will not imprison a free creature; you will not bind it. Thus says the Lord your God. Thus I say. (p 504)

And to go back to the concept of The Black Iron Prison with which Dick has already accustomed us:

There are two realities, he said to himself. The Black Iron Prison, which is called the Cave of Treasures, in which they now live, and the Palm Tree Garden with its enormous spaces, its light, where they originally dwelt. Now they are literally blind, he thought. Literally unable to see more than a short distance; faraway objects are invisible to them now. Once in a while one of them guesses that formerly they had faculties now gone; once in a while one of them discerns the truth, that they are not now what they were and not now where they were. But they forget again, exactly as I forgot. (p 505)

But the child can now see, and what he sees is traumatic, his mind is fully formed, he simply suffers from amnesia, in the sense that he cannot remember that he is God:

And, he thought, there is still so much that I do not remember. I am not as I was. Like them, like the people, I have fallen. The bright morning star which fell did not fall alone, it tore down everything else with it, including me. Part of my own being fell with it, and I am that fallen being now. (p 506)

And here comes the terrifying Day of the Judgment:

Why should I help any of them? He asked himself. They do what is right only when forced to, when there is no alternative. They fell of their own accord and are fallen now, of their own accord, by what they have voluntarily done. My mother is dead because of them. They murdered her. They would murder me if they could figure out where I am; only because I have confused their wits do they leave me alone. High and low they seek my life, just as Ahab sought Elijah's life, so long ago. They are a worthless race, and I do not care if they fall. I do not care at all. To save them I must fight what they themselves are. And have always been. (p 506)

When Zina asks him what is wrong, he gives voice to his sad thoughts:

"What is this for?" he said. "They are what they are. I grow more and more weary. And I care less and less, as I begin to remember. For ten years I have lived on this world, now, and for ten years they have hunted me. Let them die. Did I not say to them the talion law: 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth'? thousand years ago; I return; they wish me dead. Under the talion law I should wish them dead. It is the sacred law of Israel. It is my law, my word." (p 507)

Those who do not like this book probably read it quickly aiming to find action and sensational twists. Besides the unimaginable twists that with the Valis trilogy have started to stretch the action from BC to CE and beyond, there are some highly poetic passages that I did not find before:

"Zina?" She said. "It's just a name."

"It is the Roumanian word for-" He ceased speaking, the girl had trembled visibly, and her eyes were now wide.

"How long have you known it? She said.

"Years. Listen:

I know a bank, where the wild thyme blows,  
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows;  
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,  
With sweet musk-roses, and with eglantine:  
There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,  
Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight;  
And there the snake throws her enamell'd skin,  
Weed wide-enough

I will finish; listen:

To wrap a fairy in.

And I have known this," he finished, "all this time." (p 508)

Another exceptional book Philip K. Dick delivered to us. A wonderful interpretation of the Sacred Scriptures set in a contemporary story able to enchant those who are willing to go through it. Brilliance

and geniality are the marks that characterize our author who has excelled by now, not only in his genre, but in the literary field, tout court.

## The Transmigration of Timothy Archer

Heraclitus (p 668):

NO SINGLE THING ABIDES, BUT ALL THINGS FLOW

"However, the Old Testament gives us many instances of Yahweh addressing his people through the prophets. This fountain of revelation dried up, finally. God no longer speaks to man. It is called 'the long silence.' It has lasted two thousand years." (p 712)

The little acquainted I was with Philip K. Dick and his life before the present commitment, I was literally transfixed when after reading *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*, I read about James A. Pike, the iconoclastic Episcopal Bishop of California. A close friend of Phil, he had officiated to his wedding with Nancy Hackett, step-daughter of Maren Hackett, with whom Pike was involved and because of whom he broke up his second marriage. The verisimilitude of Pike with the Episcopalian Bishop Timothy Archer is just striking. A wonderful tribute to his life, although, as James Schellenberg keeps on pointing out: "those who make direct parallels to Dick's life are making a vast if subtle [if not sublime] mistake." Dick, we know, filters his people through his own self, and we are the more impressed by his indubitable transforming powers. Moreover, Dick's genre at this point, as Frank Thomas Smith says, is not science fiction but "'spiritual' science fiction."

*The Transmigration of Timothy Archer* was published in 1982 after Dick's death, but he lived long enough to see it accepted by Timescape Books/ Simon and Schuster. It is Philip K. Dick's last official book, despite his ongoing *Exegesis*, and the third book of the VALIS trilogy.

John Lennon died on December 8, 1980, and on that day our hero, the narrating I: Angel Archer, accompanied by Lennon's voice played over and over again, drags herself to the houseboat of Edgar Barefoot, the guru. She is distressed. Her husband, Jeff Archer, the son of Timothy Archer, who committed suicide is ever present. She starts remembering back in 1966 when Jeff arrived home with *Rubber Soul*. She dates the breaking up of her marriage "from listening to 'Michelle' one billion times, day after day. (p 617-618)" Her attitude towards the guru is the following: "In California you buy enlightenment the way you buy peas at the supermarket, by size and by weight. (p 619)" I am tempted to add, like anywhere else, logically since the Californians coined it because they were more brilliant and ahead of the others at the time, it does not mean that it happens only there.

We get to know soon why she is so fucked up:

I am terribly frightened of death, I thought. Death has destroyed me; it isn't Sri Krishna, destroyer of all people; it is death, destroyer of my friends. It singled them out and left everyone else undisturbed. Fucking death, I thought. You homed in on those I love. You utilized their folly and prevailed. You took advantage of foolish people, which is truly unkind. Emily Dickinson was full of shit when she prattled about "kindly Death"; that's an abominable thought, that death is kind. (p 621).

Angel Archer is persecuted not only by death.

Berkeley and paranoia were bedfellows. The end of the Vietnam War was a long way off; Nixon had yet to pull out U.S. forces. Watergate still lay several years ahead. Government agents rooted about the Bay Area. We independent activists suspected everyone of conniving; we trusted neither the right nor the CP-USA. (p 627)

The people who will give consistency to her life and to all these pages are gone.

Personally, I report only three deaths, but three more than were necessary. (p 666)

Timothy Archer, the Episcopalian Bishop, is the last to die, after Kirsten's suicide, and finally after Jeff's suicide, Angel's husband, acquired mother-in-law, and actual father-in-law have disappeared. Let's step back to get a grip on the characters. Tim had become seriously interested in the Gnostic Zadokite scroll fragments

“Zadok, a preist of Israel, about the time of David,” Tim said. “He founded a priestly house, the Zadokites. They were of the house of Eleazar. There is mention of Zadok in the Qumran scrolls. Let me check.” He rose to go get a book from a still-unpacked carton. “First Chronicles, chapter twenty-four. ‘These also, side by side with their kinsmen the sons of Aaron, cast lots in the presence of King David, Zadok-‘ There he is mentioned.” Tim shut the book. It was another Bible. (p 655)

and had committed heresy, like Pike. To get a taste of Timothy, let’s read the following paragraph:

So bishop McClary back in Missouri was correct, Tim had in fact, committed heresy [since he did not recognize the Nicene Creed]. However, Tim had been a practicing lawyer before he became a rector of the Episcopal Church. He relished the oncoming heresy trial. Bishop McClary knew his Bible and he knew canon law, but Tim would blow golden smoke rings around him until McClary would not know up from down. Tim knew this. In facing a heresy trial, he was in his element. Moreover, he was writing a book about it; he would win and, in addition, he would make some money. Every newspaper in America had carried articles and even editorials on the subject. Successfully trying someone for heresy in the 1970s was really difficult. (p 630)

For the sake of those who cannot remember what the Nicene Creed is:

The Episcopal Church is Trinitarian; you cannot be a priest or bishop of that church if you do not absolutely accept and tech that –well, it’s called the Nicene Creed:

“... And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord, and Giver of Life, Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified.” (p 630)

Like Pike, Archer tries to contact his dead son together with his mistress. Tim died in the desert in Israel because he needed evidence for his theories on the nature of Christ. Pike dies in September 1969 in the Judean Desert in search of proof of the historical Jesus. His body is recovered in a creek bed. Timothy’s body will be found in a similar way.

Timothy’s partner, Kirsten Lundborg, a friend of Angel, as a matter of fact she was the one who introduced them, is quite a sui-generis character, and can boast to be one of the founders of FEM, the Female Emancipation Movement. The only person who is still alive is a schizophrenic, Kirsten’s son from a previous relationship, Bill, who besides being an excellent mechanic – in and out of institutions that take care of him – seems to hold Tim’s spirit inside, after Archer’s death, or might be seized by xenoglossia, the ability to speak or write a language the person is not supposed to know. The same Philip Dick is reported to have had several similar cases with Latin, for example. His wife Tessa testifies of this paranormal phenomenon in the documentary: *The Penultimate Truth*. The same Timothy, Kirsten, and especially Angel doubted the validity of the experience and the authenticity of mediums in the moment in which they were able to speak with Jeff’s voice and give details of his life only family members could have known, and attributed this fact to bouts of xenoglossia. It is anyhow interesting to notice how the paranormal is invited to enter for both, Timothy and Pike.

But let’s not run too fast otherwise the story ends up having no meaning. Angel works at the Barnes and Gleason Law Office and Candle Shop on Shattuck Avenue as a clerical typist, with lawyers who are active in the protest movement and defend people involved in drug cases. When they finally discover that selling drugs is much more profitable, she finds a job as “a retail record clerk at the Musik Shop on Telegraph Avenue near Channing way in Berkeley (like Dick when he was about her age), although she had graduated from the English Department at U.C. Berkeley. She is the man of the family in the sense that she is the one who earns for both. Jeff is studying at University and get’s caught in a – non-confessed, even to himself - deep love with Kirsten, his father’s lover. He gets away from his conjugal home where Angel will live on her own. Timothy is more and more plunged into his studies, instead.

In a very real sense, it also had to do with Q, or rather the source of Q, now referred to in the newspaper articles as U.Q., which is Ur-Quelle in German; Original Source. Behind Q lay the Ur-Quelle, and this is what led Timothy Archer to London and several months in a hotel with his mistress, ostensibly his business agent and general secretary.

No one had ever expected the documents behind Q to reappear in the world; no one had known that U.Q. existed. Since I am not a Christian – and never will be, after the deaths of the people I loved – I am not now

and was not then particularly interested, but I suppose it is theologically important, especially so inasmuch as the date assigned to U.Q. is two hundred years before the time of Jesus. (p 661)

From which the harrowing question, how could Jesus say the same words two hundred years before he was born? Question that took both Timothy Archer and Bishop Pike to Israel, on their final trip, recorded in a book that marked Philip Dick's final quest. But what is this all about?

What I remember most, in the first newspaper articles to come out, the first intimation we had, anybody beyond the translators had, that this was an even more important find than the Qumran scrolls, was (the articles said) a particular Hebrew noun. They spell it two different ways; sometimes it showed up as *anokhi* and sometimes *anochi*. (p 662)

Angel continues by saying that a certain Jewish writer, Hermann Cohen, wrote:

"[...] For here, a primeval language which is as yet without any philosophy, emerges and haltingly pronounces the most profound word of all philosophy. The name of God is 'I am that which I am.' This signifies that God is Being, that God is the I, which denotes the Existing One." (p 663)  
[...] And this is what turned up at the *wadi* in Israel, dating from 200 B.C.E., the *wadi* not far from Qumran, this word lay at the heart of the Zadokite Documents, and every Hebrew scholar knows this word, and every Christian and Jew should know it, but there at that *wadi* the word *anokhi* was used in a different way, a way no living person had ever seen it employed before. (p 663)

And that is why Tim and Kirsten stay in London twice as long as they had previously planned.

[...] The documents spoke as if *anokhi* were present at the *wadi*. It or he was referred to as *here*, not there, *now*, not then. *Anokhi* was not something the Zadokites thought about or knew about; *it was something they possessed*. (p 664)

But what is actually the problem that can be of such high interest to a person like Timothy Archer? Over which he 'agonizes.'

"There is a mysterious figure," Tim said, "mentioned in a number of the Zadokite Documents. He's referred to by a Hebrew word best translated as 'Expositor.' It is this shadow personage to whom many of the Logia are attributed."

"Well, then Jesus learned from him, or anyhow they were derived from him," I said.

"But then Jesus is not the Son of God. He is not God Incarnate, God as human being."

I said, "Maybe God revealed the Logia to the Expositor."

"But then the Expositor is the Son of God."

"Okay," I said.

"These are problems over which I've agonized – although that is rather a strong term. But it bothers me. And it should bother me. Here we have many of the parables related in the Gospels now extant in scrolls predating Jesus by two hundred years. Not all the Logia are represented, admittedly but many are, many crucial ones. Certain cardinal doctrines of resurrection are also present, those being expressed in the well-known 'I am' utterances by Jesus. 'I am the bread of life.' 'I am the Way.' 'I am the narrow gate.' These simply cannot be separated from Jesus Christ. Just take that first one: 'I am the bread of life. Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life, and I shall raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him.' Do you see my point?"

[...] He broke off. "The term 'bread' and the term used for 'blood' suggest literal bread and literal blood. As if the Zadokites had a specific bread and a specific drink that they prepared and had that constituted in essence the body and blood of what they call the *anokhi*, for whom the Expositor spoke and whom the Expositor represented." (pp 674-675)

[...]

Tim said earnestly, "Something they drank; something they ate. As in the Messianic banquet. It made them immortal, they believed; it gave them eternal life, this combination of what they ate and what they drank. Obviously, this prefigures the Eucharist. Obviously it's related to the Messianic banquet. *Anokhi*. Always that word. They ate *anokhi* and they drank *anokhi* and, as a result, they became *anokhi*. They became God Himself." (p 676)

After Jeff's will is made out, and Angel inherits the house, which she finds quite right since she was the one who worked for both, she thinks that she would lose touch with Tim and Kirsten, which is not right, because it is as if Tim finds in her someone he can talk to. But Kirsten shows "progressive symptoms of a deteriorating physical condition (p 681)" finally diagnosed as peritonitis. Hospitalized in San Francisco, Angel visits her when she can. It is during one of these visits that the following dialogue takes place:

Kirsten said, "I got to go nowhere. While Tim hung around those old faggot translators. Did he tell you that Jesus is a fake? Amazing. Here we find out two thousand years later that somebody else entirely made up all those Logia and all those 'I am' statements. I never saw Tim so downcast; he just sat and stared at the floor, in our flat, day after day."

[... and Kirsten continues]

"They haven't really published the important part. About the mushroom. They're keeping that secret for as long as they can. However-

"What mushroom?"

"The *anokhi*."

I said, incredulous, "The *anokhi* is a mushroom?"

"It's a mushroom. It was a mushroom back then. They grew it in caves, the Zadokites.[...] They made a mushroom bread out of it. They made a broth from it and drank the broth; ate the bread, drank the broth. [...] Apparently the *anokhi* mushroom was toxic but the Zadokites found a way to detoxify it, at least somewhat, enough so it didn't kill them. It made them hallucinate." [...]

"So then Jesus was in effect a dope dealer," I said.

She nodded. "The Twelve, the disciples, were – this is the theory – smuggling the *anokhi* into Jerusalem and they got caught. This just confirms what John Allegro figured out ... if you happened to see his book. He's one of the greatest scholars vis-à-vis Near Eastern languages... he was the official translator of the Qumran scrolls." [...] "Allegro figured out that the early Christians were a secret mushroom cult; he deduced it from internal evidence in the New Testament. And he found a fresco on wall-painting... anyhow, a picture of early Christians with a huge [...]" *Amanita muscaria*. [...] "And they saw cartoons. (pp 683-684)

Later on in the book, another hint to a mushroom comes from Tim:

[...] There is a *vita verna* mushroom mentioned in Pliny the Elder's *Historia Naturalis, Book eight*. He lived in the first century... it would be about the right time. And this citation was not something he derived from Theophrastus; this was a mushroom he saw himself, from his direct knowledge of Roman gardens. It may be the *anokhi*. (p 719-720)

It is at this time in the story that Angel goes back home, and meets Bill, Kirsten's son. She is shocked. The only being her wild cat has ever let himself be touched, let alone petted and duly fed, he has made her cat tame... Angel's thoughts are stirred by the sight of this boy who seems to be almost sacred:

Batter me, oh God, I thought, remembering for some strange reason. Batter and kill me; they have injured this sweet kind baby until there is almost nothing left. Burned his circuits out as a pretense of healing him. The fucking sadists, I thought, in their sterile coats. What do they know about the human heart? I felt like crying. (p 686-687)

And soon after Dick quotes John Donne's Holy Sonnet, 14:

Batter my heart, three-person'd God ; for you  
As yet but knock ; breathe, shine, and seek to mend ;  
That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend  
Your force, to break, blow, burn, and make me new.  
I, like an usurp'd town, to another due,  
Labour to admit you, but O, to no end.  
Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,  
But is captived, and proves weak or untrue.  
Yet dearly I love you, and would be loved fain,  
But am betroth'd unto your enemy ;  
Divorce me, untie, or break that knot again,  
Take me to you, imprison me, for I,  
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,  
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

As readers we are also quite taken aback by Bill's description of how a suicide, in order to be effective, has to be carried out. Bill adds:

"[...] You learn a lot in the hospital. You know a whole bunch of things that people on the outside never find out. It's a crash course in reality, which is the ultimate-" He gestured. "Paradox. [...]" (p 690)

Dick through Bill explains that "Much mental illness stems from people repressing their hostility and trying to be nice, too nice. The hostility can't be repressed forever. Everybody has it; it has to come out" (p 692). On the other side, as a person who wrote great part of his books, at least at the beginning of his career on methadone, he wrote at night and during the day took care of the other activities that needed his attention, Dick later states, probably out of direct experience: "Much of what looks like toxic brain psychosis in speed freaks is in fact a deficiency in their galvanic electrolytes. Which are easily replaced." But as far as Bill is concerned, Angel has to comply, and at the end of Chapter 6 comments:

But in truth, as Tim would say, as Jesus used to say, or the Zadokites said, this person was totally schizophrenic, according to the Benjamin Proverb Test. I felt a vague, haunting ache, realizing this, seeing him sit there so young and physically healthy, and so unable to desymbolize, to think abstractly. He had the classic schizophrenic cognitive impairment; his ratiocination was limited to the concrete. (p. 694)

Angel flashes us back to her guru who is teacher her anumana, which is Sanskrit for:

"Measuring along some other thin, inference." It has five stages and I will not go into it because it is difficult, but what is important about it is that if these five stages are correctly carried out – and the system contains safeguards by which one can determine precisely whether he has indeed carried them out – one is assured of going from premise to correct conclusion. (p. 700)

Angel talks of pervasion when observation is needed all the time. And her thoughts fly out to the Bishop of California, and realizes that "Whether the people who believe in God are making an error I don't know, since their belief system cannot be tested one way or another. It simply is faith." (p. 703) She also realizes that she 'wanted' to see them: "I did not share their fixed idea. But I did as they did and talked as they talked" (p. 704), to which she adds: "I guess this is how the world is run: by weakness. It all goes back to Yeats' poem where he speaks of 'the best lack all conviction'" (p. 705). I am reproducing the poem here below for the reader, although Dick does not and interjects: "You know the poem; I don't have to quote it to you."

Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;  
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.  
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out  
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi  
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert  
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,  
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,  
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it  
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.  
The darkness drops again; but now I know  
That twenty centuries of stony sleep  
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,  
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,  
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

Angel cannot stop digging up past times: “I took pride in the fact that I knew a man who had marched with Dr. King at Selma, a famous man whom David Frost interviewed, whose opinions helped shape the modern intellectual world. There you have it, the essence of it. I defied myself to myself – my identity – in terms of being Bishop Archer’s daughter-in-law and friend.” And she continues: “[...] by participating in the life and times, the customs and habits of Bishop Archer, I lost my own self-doubts – or, at least, felt them diminish.” (p 705)

Bishop Archer swept us along with him because we loved him and believed in him, even when we knew he was wrong, and this is a terrible realization, a matter that should incite moral and spiritual dread. It does that, in me, now; but it did not then; my dread came too late; it came as hindsight.  
This may be tiresome prattle to you, but it is something else to me: it is my heart’s despair. (p 706)

Faith is another red thread that runs through the entire novel, it was Timothy Archer to let Angel know of the importance of faith right at the beginning of the book. In a conversation with Bill, Tim states: “We call people who speak to God pious and we call people to whom God speaks lunatics. This is an age where there is little faith. It is not God who is dead; it is our faith that has died.” (p 714)  
Angel is in dire need of faith, as we all are. Let’s listen to what Tim reads to us:

[...] Let me get my Bible.” Tim reached for a copy of the Bible which lay on the end table. “First Corinthians, fifteen, twelve. ‘Now if Christ raised from the dead is what has been preached, how can some of you be saying that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, Christ himself cannot have been raised, and if Christ has not been raised then our preaching is useless and your believing it is useless; indeed, we are shown up as witnesses who have committed perjury before God, because we swore in evidence before God that he had raised Christ to life. For if the dead are not raised, Christ has not been raised, and if Christ has not been raised, you are still in your sins. And what is more serious, all who have died in Christ have perished. If our hope in Christ has been for this life only, we are the most unfortunate of all people. But Christ has in fact been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of all who have fallen asleep.’” Tim Closed his Bible. (p 718)

In her ongoing soliloquy, Angel finally states: “Tim and I are of a kind” (p 730). And Dante with his Canto 33 of Paradise comes back to her:

I beheld leaves within the unfathomed blaze  
Into one volume bound by love, the same  
That the universe holds scattered through its maze.  
Substance and accidents, and their modes, became  
As if fused together, all in such wise  
That what I speak of is one simple flame.

The superb Laurence Binyon translation; and then C. H. Grandgent comments on this passage:

“God is the Book of the Universe.” (p 730)

And faithful to his own self, Philip K. Dick has his main character state: “*I am no different, then, from Timothy Archer. To me, too, books are real and alive; the voiced of human beings issue forth from them and compel my assent, the way God compels our assent to world, as Tim said.*” (p 731)

“My hoe is in Jesus Christ,” Tim said. “While you still have the light, believe in the light and you will become sons of light.’ John, twelve, thirty-six. ‘Do not let your hears be troubled. Trust in God still, and trust in me.’ John fourteen, one, ‘Blessings on him who comes in the name of the Lord!’ Matthew, twenty-three, thirty-nine.” (p 760)

Quite some words for a heretic, I’d say. Or for a science-fiction writer.

When Angel hears on “the big new coverage, the late-breaking sensational story of Bishop Archer’s abandoned Datsun found, its rear end up of f the little rutted winding road, up on a jutting rock, the gas station map still on the right-hand front seat where he had left it.” (p 784) she realizes that:

I loved him the most of all of them. I knew it when I heard the news, knew it in a different way than I had known it before; before it had been a feeling, an emotion. But when I realized he was dead, that knowledge made me into a sick person that limped and cringed, but drove to work and filled the register and answered

the phone and asked customers [...] I wasn't sick as a human is sick or an animal is sick; I became ill like a machine. I still moved but my soul died, my soul that, Tim had said, had never been fully born; that soul, not yet born, but born a little and wishing to be born more, born fully, that soul died and my body mechanically continued on. (p 785)

This is Chapter 13, Dick picks up Angel where she was left on Chapter 1, or better, we are back, at the end of Chapter 13 to Chapter 1. Chapter 14 will relate of Angel's relationship with Barefoot. Bill will appear with the guru, and with his xenoglossia gifts. Angel will promise to take care of Bill.

This book is not only a eulogy to Bishop James Albert Pike (February 14, 1913 – September 1969), but an encomium to what is unseen, to a religious philosophical belief, to *faith*, and the most moving book an author could leave behind as his last complete work. Sketched out in a transparent and clean way, it highlights the importance of both love and faith, making of Angel an intelligent adept, and of Timothy Archer the tormented charismatic medium of a higher will that, right for the fact that they as characters exist, exists. Philip K. Dick's message could not be clearer.

Lawrence Sutin underlines the impossibility of defining Dick in his mystical experience, he is not a mystic, not a philosopher: "Dick clearly does not fit the modern mold of the 'philosopher'; his true affinity is with the pre-Socratic thinkers, whose gnomic and evocative writings -- adamant, fragmented personal visions of the universe, its nature and purpose -- have resisted definitive textual analysis for more than two millennia." Although he suggests quite a variety of answers, his speculative mind brings him back to vivisection carefully: "Dick himself never made up his mind as to whether it was God or 'psychosis' or 'something other' that he contacted in 2-3-74."

As Alexander Star points out, the interpretations of Philip K. Dick's works are contradictory and usually used to state the point of the policy represented by the critic. The critical definitions of Dick range from a "prophet of hyperreality," to "a beleaguered and heroic humanist, championing 'moral sanity' as his mind suffered; and as a Gnostic visionary of the suburbs." He continues by pointing the finger at Marxist critics and theorists of postmodernism who have "busily sifted through his work, investigating its debased commodities and corporate conspiracies, its cold war fears and its elevation of paranoia into principle." Slavoj Žižek, the Lacanian Marxist, and right to the point, quotes Dick's *Time Out of Joint* (1956) and compares it to *The Truman Show* by seizing their common "underlying experience," which is the one of a "late capitalist consumerist Californian paradise, in its very hyper-reality, in a way IRREAL, substanceless, deprived of material inertia." Jean Baudrillard, as quoted by Star, is milder, as he is usually in his criticism, by defining our author's fiction, "a total simulation without origin, past or future."

My position in relation to the author will be made clear in the following section.

## Writings on Philip K. Dick's writings

Lawrence Sutin is by far the best critic who studied Dick's novels since he views not only the author within the history of literature but he reads the man behind the words. That is also my position. Phil is the communicator *par excellence* all along the three decades taken into consideration, if not until around 2010. Then something changed. Did it all maybe start on 9/11 2001? Probably. The great pragmatic positive thinking that belonged to the States, the wonderful wish of living with its gravest disappointments in the moment in which it was cringed, the open projections to the lives of the others mixed with the embrace to all religions, the multi-ethnicity that had already found its way to a middle-class way of living, the fat Hollywood movies that enchanted and triggered a counter-criticism worth the stand of Lars von Trier who – behold – employed none less than Nicole Kidman in *Dogville* (2003), the great monster – the most powerful lung able to breathe life into life, hope into hope, despair into despair, disappeared, and out of the fall of the towers we were left with some Gothic crumbles from Europe, we were re-projected back to Europe, to its left-over, let alone miserable political scenarios, pettiness, pain, loneliness, the fear of our neighbors, where multi-ethnicity has found its expression in a flux of beggars who if black have beleaguered the passer-bys with junk at a paltry price, if from Morocco they have pestered our clean apartments with the stench of their Muslim slaughtered meat, if from South America or the Eastern European States, they have started cleaning up condos or invented professions of which they had never heard of, like nursing the elderly and the sick, and thus 'freeing' our universe of the elderly and the sick they had been nursing. Not all, but many. An invasion from the bottom, climbing up or better, gravitating at the bottom trying to survive and probably sending money back home, buying land there, houses, to mimic us and become what they think we are, we the over-tired Europeans, the exhausted generation, the offspring of those who can/could still remember the nothingness of the Big War, and who built and built without ever spending what the new migrates envy, we who still work, because that is the only thing we know of life. In this 'vale of tears' as the *Hail Holy Queen Prayer* recites, that is exactly where we are. As lost as ever. Bitten by the new generations who are pushing us up and out of where we are to get hold of possessions they also paint as being comfortable and luxurious, when they are actually made of chilling alarm clocks, tiring trips, wearing commitments, much responsibility and little pay/play.

This said, and going back to Philip K. Dick who literally illuminated the '50s, '60s, '70s, as much as the first years of the '80s, with the halo of his light down to the turn of the century, to find Dick we have to let Sophia enter. Sophia is the most possessive of lovers. You need to be on your own and - if you *do not want to collapse from the sky* [like a sack full of potatoes, they'd say in Italy] – you have to proceed in an almost scientific way, methodically and upon confirmed facts. Philip Dick makes large use of the Book, like Hawthorne Abendsen, the author of *The Grasshopper lies heavy* in *The Man in the High Castle*, in this specific case the Book is the *I Ching*. But in *Valis* and it could be extended to the *Valis* trilogy, it could be the *Bible*, Parmenides, Heraclitus, Paul of Tarsus, Luke, *the New Testament*, .... He believes that there is Wisdom, a Mind that is the sum of all Knowledge, and right in *Valis*, that there are theophanies by which you can enter in contact with the essence, or whatever other designation Dick gives to a state of enlightenment. In *A Maze of Death*, Seth Morley (Dick's temporary alter-ego) asks the Intercessor to become a cactus and sleep and enjoy the sun for a thousand years. Logically Horselover Fat (*Valis*) is mad because of desperate situations we slowly get to know, weren't he mad - as his same alter-ego, the narrating I, states - he would have never looked for a theophany, nor would he had ever rejoiced just by remembering it to the point that it becomes his entire belief system, i.e. his exegesis, as he defined it. So yes, probably, all creeds stem from desperation. Adam and Eve realized they were naked in the moment in which they were sent out of the Garden of Eden. By Dick, be it earth, Mars, a distant colony, we are out and sooner or later the appointment with the search for Truth to go beyond / stem above / make sense of / reach out from our daily routines and / or adventures, clicks.

That easy, fundamentally. What is difficult – and I am going back to my very first statement regarding Dick, is the sophistic speculation that has to have ground enough to develop, Sophia has to be invited in. Each one of us alone. There is no importing something premade at this point because that would be another tiny activity bound to be suffocated by the lack of meaning it would inevitably show to our own selves.

Dick has been widely read, he lived and supported his extended family for years, thanks to the sale of his writings, but Dick is also private, and does not lend himself easily to the usual schools of criticism, to the

point that those who have made use of them to explain his thought, have worked hard to make the author fit into schemes, very frail ones, that can be easily dismantled any time.

John Huntington succeeds in seizing one of the infinite and ever-changing aspects of our author's personality, which is anyhow a hue worth mentioning. In his writing: "Philip K. Dick: Authenticity and Insincerity," he deals with the complicated antithetical imprint that underlies probably every fiction writer but attributes it cunningly to our author. Huntington starts by defining the genre and states that "Dick's work is special." He continues by saying that science fiction is insincere, which it is, logically, there are no people living on Mars, let alone entire prosperous towns with androids and other mysterious facts. Further down, and talking about *Valis*, he states that it is a book that "certainly aspires to 'importance' even if it also undercuts it." A double standard, the critic says, "by which the writer or fan demands recognition and denies responsibility, is duplicitous and insincere as a strategy of defense, but it is also the main enabling device of Dick's imagination." Finally Huntington discovers what the same Dick states in clear words: "Sometimes [*Valis*] is a book of wisdom, and sometimes it is just the case-history of a wordy madman." That is why Dick separated the two protagonists in *Horselover Fat* and in the narrating I, and writes that the former is "mad," as I previously highlighted and commented under the *Valis* section. By referring to the use of the *I Ching* in *The Man in the High Castle*, Huntington rightly states that "the procedure enforces randomness. Writing under the constraints of such a method must be somewhat like working in a difficult verse form: the change is dictated by the mechanics of the form; the creative moment comes when the author finds a way to link form and content." We thus share with Dick, expectations and discoveries; what we read was written time ago, but it is as if we were progressing with the author on an unstable ground where anything could actually happen. The critic continues with quite an appropriate statement, by which the basic dichotomies in which we as readers are trapped, rational/irrational, real/unreal, become the point of absolute strength by Philip Dick: "One opposite of the hypothetical premise could be an equally hypothetical statement in which the 'rational' is the 'other' and, somehow, the irrational is us. But the opposite that is generated is a non-hypothetical statement in which the rational becomes the 'totally rational'." Yes, this is quite true, and it is here where Dick shines, as I have already stated various times. Huntington proceeds in digging into the fake/real opposition by which we are so often faced, see in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, the easiest and most glaringly obvious novel to quote when dealing with this specific topic. Yes, there might be an "angry satire on the false values of a capitalist, consumerist culture," Dick was a simple man at heart, and even when he had some money and his friends advised him to get a better place to live and a fast car, he did not. With reference to the novel I just quoted, I'd rather connect it to the Zeitgeist of the time, late '60s, and the influence of Marshall McLuhan's thought that stressed the 'electric envelope' in which we are wrapped. Huntington speaks of "the absence of conscious intent," but I would like to contradict him. From his conspicuous correspondence, Dick had very clear all the plots of his novels before he started writing them, as a matter of fact he had already laid out plot (one complete as far as I know) to develop after his last book. The theory of the *Valis* trilogy, that fits so well with a committed critical thought that views it as the apogee of a tormented life, well, even this theory topples down – as I am trying very hard to show how all theories crumble with our author. Dick loved life with its contradictions and his bet was to master the Maelstrom that invested him so fiercely. I finally agree with Huntington in the moment in which he ends by saying that "Dick's approach to narrative renders conventional modes of evaluating art and thought problematic." As a matter of fact it is from here that I started the present section.

Dick has made no secret of his aim, it is sufficient to read him and you can find all the keys necessary to interpret his writings. Here is his voice again as quoted in *The Shifting Realities of PK Dick*:

As I said to you earlier, my two preoccupations in my writing are "What is reality?" and "What is the authentic human?" I'm sure you can see by now that I have not been able to answer the first question. I have an abiding intuition that somehow the world of the Bible is a literally real but veiled landscape, never changing, hidden from our sight, but available to us by revelation. That is all I can come up with – a mixture of mystical experience, reasoning, and faith. I would like to say something about the traits of the authentic human, though; in this quest I have had more plausible answers.

The authentic human being is one of us who instinctively knows what he should not do, and, in addition, he will balk at doing it. He will refuse to do it, even if this brings down dread consequences to him and to those whom he loves. This, to me, is the ultimately heroic trait of ordinary people; they say *no* to the tyrant and they calmly take the consequences of this resistance. Their deeds may be small and almost always unnoticed, unmarked by history. Their names are not remembered, nor did these authentic humans expect their names to be remembered. I see their authenticity in an odd way: not in their willingness to perform

great heroic deeds but in their quiet refusals. In essence, they cannot be compelled to be what they are not.

A completely different style from John Huntington, is the one that characterizes Carl Freedman's "Editorial Introduction: Philip K. Dick and Criticism," and willingly I share his statement: that "Dick ranks as the most accomplished, interesting, and significant American novelist to have emerged since the Second World War."

In "The Shifting Realities of PK Dick" under the chapter titled "Ramifications of projected reality in terms of perceptual denial," Dick, after having previously illustrated his theory regarding the artifact's projected world, i.e. the frequency of intervention by the Urgrund, reaches a conclusion. That is, he hypothesizes that there is actually a certain authentic substratum, a reality that is untouched. In order to reach it, one would have to withdraw from the "assent to the spurious," and by doing so it would reach the "greatest esoteric knowledge that could be imagined." Dick, as a matter of fact, proposes that such "an invisible substratum does indeed exist," and he adds that there is a "hidden group or organization" that guards knowledge who "trigger off a perception, however limited, of the authentic substratum."

I term this group or organization the true, hidden, persecuted Christian Church, working throughout the centuries underground, with direct ties to the esoteric oral traditions, gnosis, and techniques dating back to Christ. I propose, further, that the induced triggering off of awareness of the authentic substratum by the true, secret Christian Church results ultimately in the subject finding or entering or seeing what is described in the N.T. as the Kingdom of God.

Dick speaks of theolepsy, which is an archaic word for a seizure or possession by a deity, through which Christ, the *vox Dei*, manifests himself. Set in a contemporary world, Dick could not talk of spontaneously and blindly accepting faith, which was a way to enlighten the self in the middle ages, or at the times of the Roman Empire, when Christ was still alive, he has to devise another way. And he does it. Towards the end of the Beat Generation, he speaks of the "disobedience and denial of the spurious world" which is the "reality of Christ Himself, the space-time of the First Advent; in other words, that portion of the spurious framework already transmuted by the penetration of the Urgrund." Thus the First Advent becomes an effective bipolarization "against the projected counterfeit." Since it is "outside linear time," outside the "limitations of the artifact's projected world, it is eternal and perfect." And, as the Bible recites clearly, it "is accomplished by none other than the Savior Himself." The dialectic principle follows the Christian against the Roman diatribe: where liberation is a synonym of salvation as opposed to enslavement which is at large, sin or the fallen state. The artifact "enslaves men, without their even suspecting it and its projected world can be said to be 'hostile' which means devoted to enslavement, deception, and spiritual death." I think that by these words, Dick is able to find a language that can be understood by people of his generation and of mine, and probably also of the generation that comes after mine, he succeeds in capturing a certain wish to dissent, whatever it might cost. Therefore, as a theologian and as a philosopher, he becomes one of the best contemporary interpreters, capable of getting through with some religious material that might be seen as too stuffed in, too baroque or pretentious for the rapid changing of fashions and of postures, of the 'artifact,' as the same Dick would have called the staging.

With Lam Stanislaw we enter the field of literary criticism in linguistic terms. Let's deal with consistency and coherence. He says that if the work lacks "a focal point, it cannot be rendered consistent." On the other hand, he dilutes such a statement by asserting that if it is impossible to find consistency, then the reader looks for a "constructive principle, [i.e.] the very thing that is responsible for lack of focus." And he continues: "If no such meaningful principle were discoverable, Dick's novels would have to be called mystifications, since any work must justify itself either on the level of what it presents literally or on the level of deeper semantic content, not so much overtly present in as summoned up by the text." And offers a solution by asking a rhetorical question: "What is inconsistency in literature?" Here is his answer: "It is a symptom either of incompetence [which is not Dick's case] or else of repudiation of some values (such as credibility of incidents or their logical coherence) for the sake of other values [see contemporary poetry, or of poetry in general, the very first example that occurs to me is *The Divine Comedy*]." And most interestingly, Lem suggests that by Dick we have an "indeterminacy as to genre," that when we have to talk of "genre placement," we meet obstacles similar to the ones "we have met with in the writing of Kafka." The successful evolution of a literary genre is the violation of the particular conventions within which that genre usually develops, there where a hypothetical "purity" would be seen as an anachronistic

fossilization by which, for example, “prosaists should keep on writing in the manner of Zola and Balzac.” A recent positive connotation of contemporary art resides in its being contaminated: contamination not only of genres, but of one art with the other, for example: poetic performances with avant-garde music soundtracks; acting orchestras (Marina Abramović), installation videos. Lem sets SF’s requirements to the “rational accounting for events that are quite improbable and even seemingly at odds with logic and experience.” Dick’s merit, as Lem puts it, resides in such a violation by which his writings “acquire broadened meanings having allegorical import.” There is something special that enlightens Dick’s work, like “the emergence of an aura of enigmatic mystery.”

But let’s step back to Carl Freedman and his highly interesting writing on Dick. He introduces the concept of a certain *Veralltdglichung* of critical writings in general, and in a note he explains that ‘routinization’ could be a close literal translation. This term stems from Weber and it refers “to the process by which the personal authority of the charismatic individual is translated into the mundane, legitimate authority of the established institution.” A negative process if you wish, which on the other side shows a positive tinge, it is at this moment in fact that “the criticism of an author becomes a most genuinely collective and (in that sense) dialectical project.” Compared with Shakespeare’s critical “quasi-bureaucratic rigidity,” Freedman says that Dick’s “critic today is more likely to relish the different (and comparatively unwonted) freedom of the collective routine.” Interesting is also the way Freedman sets Dick in history, he skips the ‘50s and starts out with the ‘60s: “If we accept that the ‘60s, as a distinctive socio-cultural period, begin with the Greensboro sit-ins and the election of President Kennedy in 1960 (beginning again, as it were, with his assassination in 1963), and that the decade ends with the American defeat in Vietnam in 1973 and the unraveling of the Watergate scandal between 1972 and 1974, then the great majority of Dick’s work falls squarely within the period.” And he continues by listing his favorite works by Dick: “*High Castle* (1962), *Martian Time-Slip* (1964), *The Simulacra* (1964), *Dr Bloodmoney* (1965), *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1965), *Androids* (1968), *Ubik* (1969), and *Flow My Tears* (1974, though a manuscript draft had been completed by 1970) – [in his view they] are all products of the most eventful decade in postwar American history.” A decade, by the critic’s comment that was characterized by the “commodified and conspiratorial character of monopoly-capitalist society in the US.” Although some mysteries have not been solved, nor ever will be, the questions posed by Freedman are still open: “Which governmental elements, if any, connived in the Kennedy assassination? Was Oswald a framed pro-Kennedy agent? Did the pro-Helms wing of the CIA use McCord as a double agent to help overthrow the Nixon Administration?” and as the same critic writes, they are finally less important than the realization that the state is conspiratorial “in the sense of being unresponsive to any popular will or interest.” In 1971, a burglar broke in Dick’s home, stole his manuscripts and vandalized his books. The affair remains unclear, and nobody has ever given any final statement, the same Dick, in his usual style, hypothesizes so many possibilities that he himself gets lost. Freedman seems a little surer than the same author and writes: “perhaps the most piquant explanation, at least for an SF critic, is that in one of his imaginings Dick had inadvertently described something strikingly similar to actual and extremely secret weapons being developed by the Pentagon.” This supposition seems more the dream of a fan rather than a serious statement. That the character of Dick’s writings is subversive, has been lengthily stated by the same author in intricate and extensive reflections on the Urgrund (the artifact) with the consequent need to deny it (see above). Freedman talks of the role television has played on the American society, with the big show as broadcast by the CBS anchorman Walter Cronkite of the assassination of John Kennedy, and with considerations on all what a similar ‘spectacle’ could mean at a sociological level. I already mentioned McLuhan, and by doing this, I went deeper into the topic with the assertion that electricity is the medium that creates a kind of humanity, as the Canadian philosopher so brilliantly brought forth, in the sense that it is the medium to forge a certain social thought rather than the message therein enclosed. It was in 1964 that he coined the phrases “global village” and “the medium is the message.” Ours is an age of implosion, depicted as it is/was by Samuel Beckett’s characters deprived of action, in the Theater of the Absurd. As far as Dick, as seen by Carl Freedman, is concerned, I would like to quote the following:

To this extent, the upsurge of interest in Dick during the '80s is reminiscent of a cartoon published by The New Yorker while the facts of Watergate were rapidly becoming public: a man lying on a psychiatric couch wanly asks the impassive shrink, "All that political paranoia you helped me get rid of, Doctor, what do I do now that it turns out I was right?"

In unison with Lem Stanislaw: "Dick's province is thus a 'world of pre-established disharmony,' which is hidden at first and does not manifest itself in the opening scenes of the novel; these are presented unhurriedly and with calm matter-of-factness, just in order that the intrusion of the destructive factor should be all the more effective." Stanislaw continues with an interesting point: "In a world smitten with insanity, in which even the chronology of events is subject to convulsions, it is only the people who preserve their normality. So Dick subjects them to the pressure of a terrible testing, and in his fantastic experiment only the psychology of the characters remains non-fantastic. They struggle bitterly and stoically to the end, [...], against the chaos pressing on them from all sides, the sources of which remain, actually, unfathomable, so that in this regard the reader is thrown back on his own conjectures." To which I would add, not only is he "thrown back to his/her own conjectures," but the same reader panics with the characters, and gets automatically closer to the author in search for answers. That is probably why Dick ventured into the metaphysical realm, because his same readers – from all times – were asking him to settle such an unsettling ensemble somewhere, seen that time and space delimitations had been completely erased. Which was tuned to Dick's same needs: after having drastically uprooted any bondage or reference within the social tissue, Dick was tragically looking for an answer *for himself* that could face his destabilizing and highly critical views. Again, *was I dreaming the butterfly or the butterfly dreaming me?*

I can easily see that in this particular moment in my life I read Dick as much less tied to an implicit revolution inside the commodification or the industrialization of the living being, but rather as a single human being who lived in one of the best systems at the time in a privileged area and had to deal with the undermining factors that interfere along the course of our lives. He was a volcano, in his correspondence there are plots, ideas to be developed, a friendly hint was able to open up his mind to impossible writings. He remained faithful to his numerous friends, and left an enormous heritage not only for the specific genre of SF but for literature and the study of man at large. I therefore praise his memory with this writing, as much as the one of my father.

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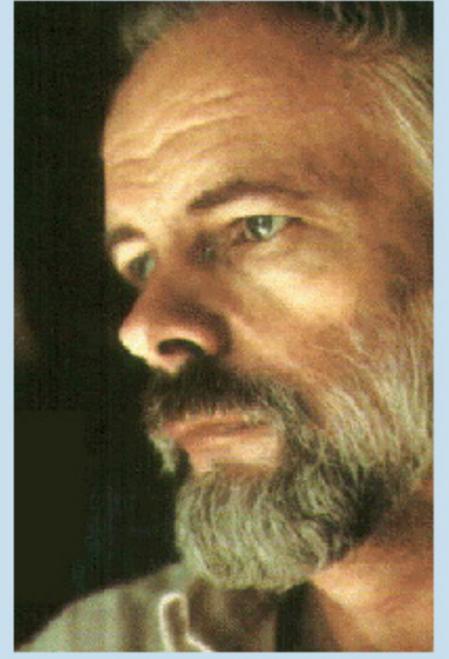
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