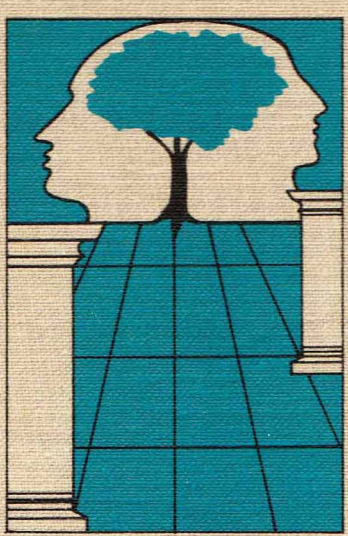
The Novels of Philip K. Dick

Kim Stanley Robinson



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The Novels of Philip K. Dick

by
Kim Stanley Robinson

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Introduction

Philip K. Dick (1928-1982) was the author of nearly forty science fiction novels. Several of these novels stand among the very best works of this still-young genre. This fact alone would make Dick one of the important writers of our time, and worthy of our study. But he has other claims on our attention as well. Science fiction is becoming ever more important to our culture, and this is the result not only of changes in the culture itself, but of changes wrought in the genre. Dick's novels, failures as well as successes, have always been near the forefront of these changes in the genre, challenging conventions that were thought central to the definition of science fiction. So Dick's novels deserve our study not only because of their occasional excellence, but because of their continual importance in the history of science fiction.

A literary genre is a grouping of conventional practices, which guide and limit writers when they write, and give readers a set of expectations when they read. All genres are mutable: they are born when writers transform and combine conventions from earlier genres; they change as writers adapt their conventions to particular needs; and they die when writers find them no longer useful, and readers find them no longer interesting. But there are periods of relative stability in the history of every genre, during which the majority of the texts produced conform to those central conventions that are the genre's definition. Indeed, it is from the body of works produced during these stable periods that writers, readers, and critics are able to abstract and articulate the central conventions that have been established.

Such a period in the history of science fiction occurred in the 1940s and early 1950s. This period has often been called The Golden Age of Science Fiction. During this time the publication of science fiction in America was restricted to a small group of magazines (and later to a few anthologies and novels). These magazines were dominated by the most successful of them, *Astounding Science Fiction,* which was edited by John W. Campbell, Jr. Partly because this man had such a tremendous influence in the field, and more importantly because there was a group of writers and a body of readers in agreement with his ideas about the genre, the conventions that defined the form became particularly fixed, almost rigid. The great majority of science fiction

works produced during this period share a common vision of the future, and writers used very similar methods and images to express this common ideology.

This was the situation when Philip K. Dick began publishing science fiction in 1952, but even as he entered the field it was changing. New magazines such as *Galaxy* and *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* challenged *Astounding's* dominance of the field, and the editors of these new magazines were willing to publish stories by writers such as Frederick Pohl, Cyril Kornbluth, Damon Knight, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., Robert Sheckley, and others, who regularly challenged the rigid conventions of the Golden Age. Dick immediately became one of the most important of the writers reacting against Campbellian science fiction.

One of the principal components of this shift was the increased use of science fiction as a tool for social criticism. The fictional worlds of science fiction are not direct or realistic representations of our present world; they are distortions, or estrangements. These distortions can be made randomly, merely for the sake of making a difference that will enable the writer to sell the work as science fiction. When this is done regularly, as it was during the 1930s, then the distortions are meaningless individually, and cumulatively they tend to reinforce the assumptions and values of the dominant culture of our time, for assumptions and values survive this sort of distortion and are presented as existing unchanged, thousands of years into the future.

If, on the other hand, the distortions and estrangements that constitute the elements of science fiction are made systematically, with an underlying metaphorical purpose, the genre can become a powerful instrument of social criticism. Used this way its distortions become somewhat like the exaggerations and the use of the grotesque in satire, which is surely one of the genres from which science fiction was born.

Philip Dick's science fiction is perhaps the best example of the estranging elements of the genre being organized and used for this critical purpose. The various elements of science fiction—the body of images and concepts that are used in it again and again—came into being as metaphors for various aspects of the human situation in an increasingly technological society. Dick's stories consistently make use of the metaphorical power that these images and concepts carry. At the same time, his fictional worlds reflect our own in a tendentious way; they make explicit structures and processes that are implicit in the infrastructure of our present world. By adding the historical continuity of the future to our social institutions he reveals the historical, contingent nature of those institutions. The fictional worlds of his novels contain political analyses that are both highly organized and highly critical. These novels thus increase the importance of the genre by making it a more engaged and historical fictional form.

These are large claims, and anyone picking up a Dick novel at random and reading it may wonder at them. The truth of the matter is that Dick's

accomplishments were uneven. Like all professional American science fiction writers of the 1950s and 1960s, he was forced to write hastily in order to make enough money to support himself and his family. He wrote nearly forty novels and over one hundred short stories in thirty years; this includes a period of five years in the mid-1960s during which he published sixteen novels. The result is a very inconsistent group of texts. Several of his novels are trivial commercial efforts, while others contain, side-by-side, illuminating metaphors for our present society and borrowed plots, conveyed in poorly-written prose. Even his best novels are often flawed, sometimes seriously. Such flaws lead us to suspect that Dick was not in full control of his fictions, and that the political analyses they embody were not consciously thought out.

My task, then, in writing a critical study of Dick's novels (by and large his short stories exist in relation to the novels as pencil studies do to oil paintings, and so I have confined my attention to the novels) is many-parted. First, I will make distinctions, and name what I believe to be the most valuable of the novels. As all of the novels use the same body of images and elements, I will point out what makes the best of the novels successful. To accomplish this I will make a close reading of a few of Dick's most valuable novels. At the same time, I cannot neglect the lesser works. Many of these, as I have said, include concepts and structures of great interest to us if we wish to understand Dick's artistry, and the reasons they fail can sometimes shed light on why other works, using very similar elements and methods, succeed.

Second, I will place Dick in the context of the history of science fiction, showing how his novels subvert and then openly challenge the conventions that for a time were central to the genre. Since the period of coalescence and definition in the 1940s, science fiction has undergone regular periods of change: in the 1950s came the frequent appearance of social satire; the 1960s brought the New Wave, with its interest in experimental literary technique and a wider range of subject material. Now that these periods have passed, we can see that Dick was very instrumental in the first, and that single-handedly he may have wrought as many changes in the nature of the genre as did all of the New Wave, with whom Dick was not closely connected. Dick's importance in the opening up of the genre needs to be fully explained, for though it is a commonplace to say as much in general studies of science fiction, few commentators have bothered to go into detail about why this is so.

Lastly, I hope to show how Dick's works comment on the society they were written in. I have said that Dick's fictional worlds are metaphors for our own culture. To neglect the history of the 1950s and 1960s, and the effect those years had on Dick's fiction, would be to neglect one term of the metaphor. What is most important in Dick's work is very nearly synonymous with what is most important in science fiction itself. As our culture becomes ever more heavily inundated by the products of technological advancement, it is more and more shaped by what technology can achieve. The accelerating speed of our

technological advancement leads to a certain acceleration in the rate of history itself, in the rate of historical change. Because of this we are in need of a literature able to meditate on the historical process, so that we can, in these thought experiments, contemplate where our history might lead us. Science fiction is this literature of historical meditation, and as such it can be a powerful and important tool of human thought. The history of this young, vital, and important literary genre should therefore be of interest to all; and in this short history Philip K. Dick is one of the major figures.

1

The Realist Beginning

Voices From the Street • *The Broken Bubble of Thisbe Holt* • *Gather Yourselves Together* • *The Man Whose Teeth Were All Exactly Alike* • *Mary and the Giant* • *Puttering About in a Small Land* • *In Milton Lumpky Territory*

> I am a poet and write in loftiness, but money doesn't come.
>
> Philip K. Dick, in correspondence

In 1948 Philip Dick was twenty years old. He was married, very poor, and working in a record store in Berkeley to make his living. He had written stories almost all of his life—he was first published in his elementary school newspaper—and sometime in the late 1940s or early 1950s he began to write in earnest, hoping to make money, and also to contribute something important to the literature of his time. For Dick, however, unlike most beginning writers, there existed deep and fundamental uncertainty about what genre he should work within. In a 1980 interview he described his divided sentiments: "I was in a curious position. I had read science fiction since I was twelve years old, and was really addicted. I just loved it. I also was reading what the Berkeley intellectual community was reading. For example, Proust or Joyce. So I occupied two worlds... which normally did not intersect."[1] Though there may have been readers who, like Dick, read both kinds of literature, there were certainly no texts that bridged the gap between the great realist masters and the stories being written for the American science fiction magazines. As a writer Dick was forced to make a choice, and yet he didn't. Instead he followed a "double track," writing both realist novels and science fiction short stories. In his first years of writing he seemed to emphasize the realist novels, and this choice revealed much about Dick's artistic concerns. Despite his love for science fiction, he devoted the majority of his first efforts to realism, because he wanted to write about the society he lived in. Dick was highly critical of the values of postwar American society, and in his fiction he wanted to make a social critique. The subject matter of science fiction was remote, and the great masterpieces of

realism provided stronger examples of social criticism. There was also the matter of the relative cultural positions of the two genres. Realism—"what the Berkeley intellectual community was reading"—occupied the central position in the culture's literature, while science fiction was regarded by most as a lowly, escapist paraliterature, one that included not a single work that could compare to the masterpieces of Joyce and Proust.

A prolific writer from the start, Dick wrote at least eight realist novels: *Voices From the Street, The Broken Bubble of Thisbe Holt, Mary and the Giant, Gather Yourselves Together, The Man Whose Teeth Were All Exactly Alike, Puttering About in a Small Land, In Milton Lumpky Territory,* and *Confessions of a Crap Artist.* The first seven of these novels were never published, and their manuscripts are now part of the Philip K. Dick Special Collection in the California State University at Fullerton's library. *Confessions of a Crap Artist* was written in 1959, and published first in 1975. Dick's estate is also in possession of another realist novel, *Humpty Dumpty in Oakland,* and there are titles for three lost novels: *Pilgrim On the Hill, A Time for George Stavros,* and *Nicolas and the Higs.* Apparently these novels were being written throughout the 1950s. None of the manuscripts are dated, so we cannot be sure of the order of their composition. The only evidence for dating them is the years they were received by Dick's literary agency, and Dick's own attempt at recollection, made in 1974.[2] Neither source is very exact, but combining those dates with internal evidence in the Fullerton manuscripts we can guess that *Voices From the Street* and *Mary and the Giant* are early efforts, perhaps Dick's first, from the early 1950s, while *The Man Whose Teeth Were All Exactly Alike, In Milton Lumpky Territory,* and *A Time for George Stavros* were from the late 1950s, with the others coming in between (except for *Humpty Dumpty In Oakland,* which the estate dates as "circa 1963"). Perhaps more exact dates for these novels will be forthcoming, as the estate hopes to eventually find and publish all of them.

The novels in the Fullerton collection contain many of the themes that Dick's more mature work will return to again and again. Sometimes these themes are expressed in ways that show that Dick's attitudes about these abiding concerns were not yet fully formed. In many of the novels an opposition is set up between manual labor and various forms of work that do not involve physical skill: administrative, clerical, or business work. In *Voices From the Street,* for instance, the protagonist Stuart Hadley suffers an identity crisis and breakdown while working in a TV sales and repair shop. The 652 pages of the manuscript chronicle a long sequence of Hadley's adventures, as he quits his job and wanders the Bay Area, eventually going mad and crashing through a glass door. After this climax he becomes a handicapped and nearly catatonic appliance repairman. Because of Dick's later work we might expect that this is an individual's "fortunate fall," for Hadley has escaped a world of commercial work that Dick shows, in exhaustive detail, to be meaningless and

inhuman. But the narrator is deeply ambivalent about this change in Hadley's work. On the last page of the manuscript the narrator tells us, "He had lost the driving fury that made him strike out, frenzied and irrational, against the indestructible glass wall of the world. He had broken himself against that wall; the world had remained. And he didn't even know it." Hadley's change is here seen as a diminution and a defeat.

Similarly, in *The Man Whose Teeth Were All Exactly Alike,* Walter Dombrosio, one of the novel's two protagonists, makes small scale-models for an advertising firm in San Francisco. He loses his job, and is reduced to working on his own models in his garage. Outside the context of a job, however, Dombrosio's manual skills mean nothing to him, and he loses interest in the projects that are only his own. This ambivalence in Dombrosio reflects an ambivalence in Dick himself. Manual skills, which in later Dick novels will be regularly defended and valorized as one of the highest forms of human work, are in these early novels presented more tentatively, as a potential alternative to the skill-less and meaningless labor that Dick himself was involved in: retail selling, "of all the degrading occupations in the world," as Milton Lumpky says in one of these novels. But Dick himself was not completely free of the dominant views of the culture, which disparaged hand labor.

In these early works Dick is much more certain about another abiding concern of his—the effect, in American postwar capitalism, of business relations on the personal relations between employer and employee, and indirectly on all personal relations. Dick believed this effect to be profoundly destructive. This belief lies at the center of most of these realist novels, and the destruction of human relations by business relations may be said to be their subject. In *Voices From the Street* Hadley is alienated from his wife and loses all of his friends, after the intense yet ultimately meaningless pressures of running a television store become too much for him. In *The Man Whose Teeth Were All Exactly Alike,* Dombrosio assaults his boss when his boss hires his wife. He becomes estranged from his wife after he is fired, and eventually tries to hoax his neighbor, with whom he once was friendly. In *Mary and the Giant,* Mary works in a record store for a disturbed owner and she is forced to conduct a sordid affair with him to keep her job. And in *In Milton Lumpky Territory* this theme is expressed most fully. The protagonist, Bruce Stevens, marries his fifth-grade teacher of years before and takes over her business, a typewriter sales and repair shop. Business difficulties make the marriage a perpetual battle, and as the business nears bankruptcy Stevens becomes obsessed, and one by one destroys all of his personal relationships.

In Milton Lumpky Territory, with its bitter indictment of the effects of capitalism, is not a bad novel, and it is probably the best of Dick's realist novels aside from *Confessions of a Crap Artist.* Still, it has weaknesses that are shared by all of the realist novels, and these weaknesses are no doubt part of the reason why these novels were never published, and the proof that Dick thought of

these novels in a way very unlike his thinking about science fiction. All of the realist novels are prolix in a way that is utterly unlike Dick's mature work. Every scene, no matter how important to the novel, is dramatized at equal length, in a profusion of unnecessary detail. This fault is most apparent in *Voices From the Street,* which takes 652 pages to tell a story that is simpler than many of Dick's later short novels. But it is obvious in all of these works that Dick had not yet developed functioning principles of selection for deciding what he needed to include to make his descriptions of characters and actions vivid and full to his readers. The great realist masterpieces of Joyce and Proust were inclusive novels, and when Dick wrote realist novels he imitated this quality without understanding or mastering it.

Another weakness in these novels is the uneasy mix of realism and the fantastic. Despite making a very serious commitment to writing realist works, Dick's interest in the arcane and the peculiar crops up everywhere in these works, without being fully integrated into them. The titles of the books are one very obvious example of this tendency, but within the novels fantastic elements also intrude regularly. In *The Man Whose Teeth Were All Exactly Alike,* for example, the job-related problems of Walter Dombrosio and his wife are quickly dropped in favor of a plot concerning a hoaxed Neanderthal skull, and a community with a history of deformities that resemble the jaw structure of Neanderthals.[3] Dick appears to have a helpless tropism toward the fantastic, and his resistance to it in these earnestly naturalistic works is uneven; time and again obscure interests of Dick's own incongruously invade the blandly normal worlds he presents. *In Milton Lumpky Territory* is freest from these intrusions, and is therefore the strongest of these novels (except for *Confessions of a Crap Artist,* where the intrusions become one of the subjects of the book). As the most coherent work, however, *Lumpky* reveals most clearly another of the flaws that all of these novels share: their humorlessness. This cannot be said of any of Dick's science fiction, but it is true that in these realist novels a uniform tone of deadly seriousness is only occasionally replaced by attempts at black comedy that go awry. The reader can see that certain awful events are meant to be funny, but the tone in these passages is still quite grim, so that nothing remains but the awfulness, which is of a piece with the serious or tragic passages. Dick himself seems aware of this flaw, for in an Author's Foreword to *In Milton Lumpky Territory* he writes, "This is actually a very funny book, and a good one, too, in that the funny things that happen happen to real people who come alive. The end is a happy one. What more can an author say? What more can he give?"

Dick's own explanation for the failure of these novels to be published, made in 1980, is similarly defensive. "They all contained the element of the projected personal unconscious, or the projected collective unconscious, which made them simply incomprehensible to anyone who read them, because they

required the reader to accept my premise that each of us lives in a unique world."[4] But this is not precisely right, for the novels are comprehensible, even on the level Dick is describing. The difficulty is that they are dull. This, the result of the unselective inclusion of inessential scenes in the plot, and of inessential details in every scene—apparently resulting from Dick's exaggerated feeling of seriousness in the realist works—is the primary reason they were never accepted for publication.

The "element of the projected personal unconscious" to which Dick refers is contained in his narrative method. Avoiding either the objectivity of the omniscient point of view, or the subjectivity of the first person point of view, Dick narrates in chapters confined to the particular viewpoint of a single character. This has been called the third person limited point of view, in which the author allows himself inside the mind of only one of the characters, usually the protagonist. Dick's version of this method (similar to Faulkner's in *As I Lay Dying*) is to shift the point-of-view character from scene to scene, or chapter to chapter, so that we can clearly see that the different characters have different understandings of the events they are tangled in. I will discuss this narrative method and its implications in detail in the next chapter, but for now it is important to remember that this is the method Dick used from the very start of his career. Some of the realist novels use it more extensively than others. The early *Voices From the Street* shifts a few chapters to the viewpoint of Hadley's boss, but most of the chapters are written from the viewpoint of Hadley himself. This is also true of Bruce Stevens in *In Milton Lumpky Territory,* and in fact it may be that this method is in the process of being discovered and worked out in these novels. But it is a process that starts at the very beginning of Dick's writing.

Another aspect of the realist novels that will endure in Dick's later work is the cast of characters, and the character system that he employs. The various character types that reappear so frequently in Dick's novels are almost all in *Voices From the Street:* the hapless protagonist, leaving his unimportant job and losing track of reality; the protagonist's boss, forced by business concerns to harm the protagonist in some way; the protagonist's apathetic and clinging wife; a dangerous, intense young woman, both attractive and repellent; and a mysterious, cryptic religious leader. The principal female characters in *Voices* are especially clear prototypes of the women in most of Dick's work. Dick has said that he modelled his female characters on the two main characters from Thackeray's *Vanity Fair:* Becky Sharp and Amelia. The Becky Sharps are ambitious, manipulative, attractive, and dangerous to the men who are attracted to them. The Amelias are passive, weak, clinging; they tend to be wives who complain to, but never help, their husbands. We will meet these types again and again, to the point where any individual example has little interest for us, for she is merely the representative of a type. One of the

distinguishing features of Dick's strongest novels is the ability to rise above this Becky-Amelia duality, and to show female characters who embody some of the humane and heroic qualities that mark the male protagonists.[5]

None of the realist novels was published, we should remember, except for *Confessions of a Crap Artist,* and even it was only published in 1975, sixteen years after it was written, when Dick's success in science fiction made a sympathetic publisher interested. (For discussion of this work see the next chapter.) The many years of intensive effort in realism produced no tangible result. Dick wrote at least 2,865 manuscript pages, and not one of them saw its way to print. Obviously it was time for a change of strategy. Dick's increasing frustration, of which the Author's Foreword to *In Milton Lumpky Territory* is a clear sign, was perhaps partially causing the increasing bitterness of the tone of narration in these realist works, and the ultimate effect of this circular process was that as each novel was refused for publication, it lessened the chances that the next one would be accepted. Something had to be done to break the circle.

Let us return to 1952, then, to the other path of Dick's "double track" of development. In his very first years as a writer, Dick put most of his effort into realism. This contributes to my impression that what Dick most wanted to accomplish was the depiction of contemporary society, to create in fiction a critique so all-encompassing as to be an indictment. He may also have wanted instinctively to avoid joining a literary community that was self-enclosed, a sort of cultural ghetto in which nothing of significance to the culture at large could be accomplished. Nevertheless, when Anthony Boucher, editor of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction,* encouraged the short fantasies Dick wrote for a weekly class of Boucher's, Dick wrote more, and in October of 1951 Boucher bought one for his magazine. Quickly Dick began to write more fantasy and science fiction short stories, and so he was launched on this second track of his split career. To understand what this shift in Dick's artistic development meant, we must quickly trace the development of American science fiction, and describe briefly its state in 1952, the year Dick joined this little community of writers and readers.

The beginning of science fiction is an enduring source of debate among critics, tied as it is to an even larger matter of dispute, the definition of the genre. Brian Aldiss, in his critical survey *Billion Year Spree* (1973), has made a sensible and convincing case for Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) as the first science fiction novel. As he points out, in that work the technological potential of the society, as revealed by the experiments of Galvani, is extrapolated in a simple linear way, and the implications of this potential are then explored. This is speculation inspired by the science of the time, which is certainly an intellectual act central to science fiction.

The rest of the nineteenth century contains many examples of what we now call science fiction, although the name did not then exist. H. Bruce Franklin has collected and discussed many of these examples, and shown that science fiction was being written by many of the major writers of nineteenth century American literature, including Poe, Hawthorne, and Twain. Science fiction at this time was merely a particular sort of romance, in which the subject matter was the extrapolation of a technological ability, or the possibility of a utopia being created by a scientific process.[6] Not until the appearance of Jules Verne and H.G. Wells were there writers who concentrated on science fiction, and even Wells and Verne wrote many works that were not science fiction. In Europe this tradition of eclecticism continued, and writers turned to the new genre, which had been quite accurately named by Wells the "scientific romance," when it suited their purposes. Rudyard Kipling, for instance, in collections of stories like *The Day's Work* (1895), felt free to include fantasies and speculative tales with his realist adventures. The great works of European science fiction—Capek's *R.U.R.*, Zamiatin's *We,* Forster's story "The Machine Stops," Huxley's *Brave New World,* Stapleton's *Last and First Men* and *Starmaker,* Orwell's *1984*—were written by writers who turned to science fiction only when their artistic purposes made it necessary, and their works remained within the culture at large. "Science fiction writers" appeared in Europe only after the Second World War, when science fiction magazines like those in America began to appear.

In America, however, the existence of the pulp magazines of the 1920s and 1930s created a situation in which magazines were devoted exclusively to works of a particular genre. Writers appeared who wrote for these magazines, and over a period of years they specialized, so that there were writers who wrote, principally, stories of a particular genre, published in a particular group of magazines devoted to that genre.

Hugo Gernsback started the first science fiction magazine, *Amazing Stories,* in April 1926, and he briefly named the genre "scientifiction," then changed the name to "science fiction." His magazine was imitated by a host of others, and joined by magazines started earlier, like *Weird Tales;* and the ghetto was born.

Gernsback's original editorial plan was to publish stories that would popularize science, educating readers at the same time they were entertained. He never could find enough writers to provide stories of this kind, however, and his first magazine was filled with reprints of stories by Wells, Verne, Poe, and Edgar Rice Burroughs. The appeal of these magazines to their audience was apparently the unlimited sense of scope, and power; anything could happen in them, on the largest scales imaginable, and through the 1930s in America they may have functioned as a sort of wish fulfillment for an impoverished and relatively powerless readership. The original Gernsbackian

goal of scientific veracity quickly fell by the wayside, and adventures of good and evil on the cosmic scale typically ignored physical realities as they repeated the format of the Western (horse opera) across the reaches of space (thus leading to the term space opera). E.E. "Doc" Smith was the most popular of this sort of writer, and the famous first sentence of his novel *Triplanetary* is a perfect epigraph for this first decade of undisciplined, exuberant magazine science fiction: "Two thousand million or so years ago two galaxies were colliding; or rather, were passing through each other...."

Thus Gernsback's idea was quickly changed in nature, for his conception was too limiting. He did, however, sow the seeds for the extensive system of organized fans of science fiction, by starting the Science Fiction League, a group of reader's clubs. Algis Budrys, in a perceptive short history of science fiction, describes the importance of this development:

> It is impossible to overstate Fandom's importance... while tens or perhaps hundreds of thousands of science fiction readers have never heard of it, everyone who publishes, edits, writes, or illustrates in the field must take its articulations into account. It is the repository of the amorphous oral tradition; almost all professionals who are now adults were imbued with its preconceptions as children.
>
> Thus Gernsback's major accomplishment... was to trigger the formation of a pocket universe—an enclave inside literature, equipped with its own readers, and, in due course, with its own writers, proceeding on its own evolutionary track as if the rest of the world's prose barely existed.[7]

For the growing technician class in America in the 1930s, the science fiction magazines often provided wish fulfillments, with their backyard inventors and victories of global importance. In these stories the scientists and technicians were often portrayed as the most powerful people on Earth, bypassing the political powers and leading mankind to a technological utopia, and often saving the American way of life from outside threat. One of the most prominent writers of these tales, John W. Campbell, Jr., became the editor of *Astounding* in 1939, and this is generally regarded as the beginning of the Golden Age of science fiction. Campbell quickly published a new generation of writers who could conform to his more rigorous and rational standards for science fiction. Under Campbell it was no longer true that "anything went"; stories had to "make sense" according to his particular sense of rationality and value. Robert Heinlein, Isaac Asimov, Theodore Sturgeon, Lester Del Rey, A.E. Van Vogt, L. Sprague de Camp, and Henry Kuttner, among many others, were given their start, and guided in their formative years, by Campbell. *Astounding* paid more and had better distribution than the other magazines it competed with, and in the 1940s when paper became expensive it emerged as the dominant force. In effect, for over ten years it became the single mouthpiece of American science fiction. Because of this Campbell's opinions and standards gained a disproportionate influence, and in fact when the "traditional

conventions" of science fiction are mentioned, it is often true that these conventions were established by editorial decree during Campbell's years of power. These conventions would include the preeminence of speculative concepts embodied in the story, a convention sometimes phrased as "ideas over characters"; the adherence to known physical law, and the necessity for a rational-sounding explanation for any events that seemed to contradict known physical law; an avoidance of any satirical mode, and of pessimistic endings, and indeed of the espousal of any values that contradicted Campbell's. (Campbell, for instance, is said to have refused to publish any story in which aliens were shown to be more intelligent than humans.) Campbell believed in a scientific meritocracy as the best social order, and he also believed that this meritocracy was a linear extension of the American political system. These beliefs influenced—or were shared by—Robert Heinlein, one of the most important writers in the history of American science fiction. Heinlein wrote a series of stories that were set in the same "Future History," and this "history" both reflected Campbell's beliefs, and imposed more rationality and order on the heretofore wild world of the genre. By publishing only stories that matched with his views, Campbell helped to form a relatively homogeneous ideological stance in the genre, and helped to create the rigid conventions that were used to express this stance. Within these conventions certain "master ideas," as Algis Budrys calls them, were worked over again and again in stories, developing ramifications, inversions and the like as different writers used them.

This homogeneity has been regarded in two opposing ways. Algis Budrys says that science fiction

> has thoroughly explored such subquestions (of "the White Man's Burden") as "Yes, it's obvious social responsibilities are incumbent, but what are they, exactly?" "What is 'superior' in this context?" "What is 'Skill?'" "What is 'less advantaged?'" "What is 'worth?'" etc. Each newly-broken-into level furnishes a fresh input of cash to its author, but the readers are simultaneously quick to question and expose meretricious thinking and false propositions, while they reward speculatively solid advances in what is essentially sociological philosophy. Reader approval translates into additional sales; therefore, the commercial format positively reinforces genuinely useful thinking and tends to winnow conclusions with general applicability to actual human situations.[8]

But Stanislaw Lem, discussing the same phenomenon of the closed world of American science fiction, says:

> Intellectual production likewise stagnates because of inbreeding in the form of incessant repetition of the selfsame creative patterns and techniques. The internal dynamics of the ghetto may appear to be intense, but with the passage of years it becomes evident that this is only a semblance of motion, since it leads nowhere, since it neither feeds into nor is fed by the open domain of culture, since it does not generate new patterns or trends, and since finally it nurses the falsest of notions about itself, for lack of any honest evaluation of its activities from the outside. The books of the ghetto assimilate themselves to one another, becoming an

> anonymous mass, while such surroundings thrust whatever is better downward toward the worst.... In such a situation publishing success not only may but must become the sole standard of evaluation.[9]

Algis Budrys is one of those writers who has spent his working life in the American science fiction community; Stanislaw Lem is Polish. Lem's view from a distance, although necessarily distorted and simplified, appears to be the more objective and accurate one when we examine the actual texts of the Golden Age. A comparison of Isaac Asimov's *Foundation* trilogy, widely praised in the science fiction community as one of the best works of the 1940s, and European work such as Olaf Stapleton's *Last and First Men,* will serve to prove Lem's point. Both volumes are attempts at a galactic history, charting human progress into the future for many thousands of years. Stapleton's work is written as a historical chronicle recounting a tremendously complex and sophisticated future history, in which humanity makes advances and suffers reverses that test all of our theories of sociology and philosophy, and becomes a race as alien to us as we are to apes. Asimov's work, on the other hand, was written in installments for publication in Campbell's magazine, and each chapter is a self-contained adventure on a small scale, a dramatized story. The large plan of the galactic history is based on the fall of the Roman empire, and the Dark Ages and Renaissance thereafter. The effect that the difference between the size of the Roman empire and our galaxy might have on the situation is ignored, so that the real extent of galactic space and time is severely distorted; human beings evolve in no way, physical or mental; and there are many anachronisms such as the one wherein a galactic leader of the very distant future is nicknamed "The Mule" because he is sterile. The *Foundation* trilogy, in both conception and execution, is often a weak work; yet it received a Hugo award (given by fans at a yearly convention) as Best Science Fiction Series Ever.

It may be objected that this comparison only shows that Stapleton was a stronger writer and thinker than Asimov, and this is probably true. (By this I do not mean to disparage Dr. Asimov, who is an excellent teacher, and a prolific and entertaining writer, and who has written works much superior to the *Foundation* trilogy; but Olaf Stapleton was a brilliant and very original writer, and few writers if any have matched his achievements in the writing of future histories.) The larger point here is that in the American science fiction community of the 1940s Stapleton *could not* have published his monumental work, for it fit the format of *Astounding* no better than it fit Campbell's notion of what science fiction should be. The writers of the Golden Age practiced a more rigorous and rational art than the writers of the 1930s who preceded them (compared to E.E. "Doc" Smith, Asimov's trilogy is indeed a model of intelligent and controlled speculation), and their strong feelings of accomplishment and *esprit de corps* resulted from this fact. A new genre can

only develop, and evolve, in steps; and the writers of the 1940s, led by Heinlein and Asimov, and guided by Campbell, took a very big step indeed. But the further contention, often made in the American science fiction community, that the Golden Age was truly the high point in the history of science fiction, is certainly wrong, as Lem and others point out, and as examination of the texts will show. It is a claim made from an attitude of nostalgia, and it must willfully ignore the much greater accomplishments in European science fiction.

But in any case, no matter what opinion one has of the worth of Golden Age science fiction, it is generally agreed that science fiction did constitute a ghetto culture. Here Algis Budrys is in complete agreement with Stanislaw Lem:

> Anyone committing himself to work in the field had to agree, either brokenly or defiantly, that his byline was cut off from respectability, from "literature"—that is, from anything written that was openly distributed in some way other than the way the pulps were brought to their audience.[10]

This was the situation in American science fiction as Philip Dick began writing in 1948. This perhaps explains why he began writing realist novels, despite his affection for science fiction; an instinct for preservation as an artist kept him from joining such an enclosed group. Something he said long after he had become a science fiction writer confirms this speculation:

> [In the 1950s] SF was so looked down upon that it virtually was not there, in the eyes of all America. This was not funny, the derision felt toward SF writers. It made our lives wretched. Even in Berkeley—or especially in Berkeley—people would say, "but are you writing anything serious"?... To select SF writing as a career was an act of self-destruction; in fact, most *writers*, let alone other people, could not even conceive of someone considering it.[11]

But Dick's realist beginning was, as we have seen, a failure. Not only that, but the monolithic nature of Golden Age science fiction was coming to an end. Increasingly, America was becoming a technological culture, and a natural consequence of this fact was a growing interest in fiction which dealt with this aspect of the culture. Paper prices went down with the end of the war, so it was economically feasible to start new magazines again; by 1950 about twenty science fiction magazines were in existence at any one time. Lastly, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had demonstrated unequivocally that science was not necessarily or automatically a force for good. Within the science fiction community itself there were writers who chafed in the strictures set by Campbell, and there was an audience receptive to stories that subverted the set of standards that Campbell imposed. Two new, important magazines had come into being: *Galaxy*, edited by Horace Gold, and *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, edited partly by Anthony Boucher. Gold was very interested in using science fiction as a vehicle for satire and social criticism.

Under his leadership Frederick Pohl and Cyril Kornbluth were able to publish *The Space Merchants* (serialized in *Galaxy* as "Gravy Planet"), a satire in which advertising becomes the dominant force in American society. This seminal work set the tone for much of the important science fiction of the 1950s, which was therefore very different in tone and purpose from the science fiction of the Campbell era. Anthony Boucher set about the task of opening up the rigidity of the conventions of Campbellian science fiction in other ways, allowing more stylistic freedom, and greater use of fantastic elements that could not be scientifically explained.

Thus by 1952, when Boucher published Dick's first sale, Dick had both models that indicated the new ways science fiction could be put to use, and markets for stories that used the genre in such a way. He could pursue his lifelong interest in science fiction, and still write critically about American society, as Pohl and Kornbluth had done in their book, and as Campbell would never have allowed before. The dystopian satire, absent from Campbell's magazine, became Dick's principal mode; in it he was able to express the same themes that concerned him in his realist work.

And these science fiction short stories sold. In 1952 he published four; in 1953, thirty; and in 1954, twenty-eight.[12] Only one was sold to Campbell's *Astounding,* despite the fact that it was still the largest science fiction magazine. On the contrary, in many of his stories Dick deliberately inverted a Campbellian value. About "The Golden Man," for instance, Dick wrote, "Here I am saying that mutants are dangerous to us ordinaries, a view which John W. Campbell, Jr. deplored. We were supposed to view them as our leaders. But I always felt uneasy as to how they would view us."[13] Practising reversals, Dick wrote story after story, and in this period of intense creativity he practised his craft as well. In the very short stories that the magazines favored, the skills of a dramatist were required, and Dick therefore learned techniques of compression and condensation—techniques that his realist novels sadly lacked, and which he never incorporated into his realist work, feeling, apparently, that it was a completely different *form* of writing. His short stories were fairly popular, and he quickly gained a reputation as one of the most versatile of the new science fiction writers of the 1950s.

At the same time he continued, apparently with unflagging energy, to write the long realist novels. The result was an artistic personality split down the middle. On the one hand were long, serious, turgid realist novels, not one of which sold; on the other hand were short satirical stories, which were very successful—within the bounds of the science fiction community. This division in Dick's creative life was to continue through the 1950s, and the study of Dick's development during these years must attend to how this division affected his work, and what he did to heal the split.

2

The Science Fiction Beginning

Solar Lottery • *The World Jones Made* • *The Man Who Japed* • *Eye In the Sky* • *The Cosmic Puppets* • *Time Out of Joint* • *Dr. Futurity* • *Vulcan's Hammer*

> It is not necessarily true that in so far as a novel departs from realism it is obscurantist and disqualified to make moral comments on the world... the best American novelists have found uses for romance far beyond the escapism, fantasy, and sentimentality often associated with it. They have found that in the very freedom of romance from the conditions of actuality there are certain potential virtues of the mind, which may be suggested by such words as rapidity, irony, abstraction, profundity. These qualities have made romance a suitable, even, as it seems, an inevitable, vehicle for the intellectual and moral ideas of the American novelists.
>
> Richard Chase, *The American Novel and Its Tradition*

Dick's first science fiction novel, *Solar Lottery,* was published by Ace Books in 1955. At this time Ace was one of the very few publishing houses that published science fiction, and despite the success of any number of science fiction magazines, there were not a great many science fiction novels put out in any given year. Thus any that did appear received a good deal of attention from the science fiction community, which was still not over the flush of success it had felt when works began to appear in book form, some eight or ten years before. *Solar Lottery* was well received; the principal reaction seemed to be surprise that a writer whose many short stories had been a bit anonymous should produce a novel so distinctive. With the appearance of *Solar Lottery* Dick shifted his considerable energy from short stories to novels, and his first was quickly followed by *The World Jones Made* and *The Man Who Japed* in 1956, *Eye in the Sky* and *The Cosmic Puppets* in 1957, and *Vulcan's Hammer,* which, though it was first published in book form in 1959, made its initial appearance in 1956.

All of these early works are dystopias, and in that way they continue the critique of American society that Dick began in his realist novels. Each novel exaggerates a different aspect of the American system for satiric purposes.

Solar Lottery is an economic dystopia; corporations have merged and merged until there are only a few left in the world. They are called Hills, and workers belong to their Hill in a distinctly feudal manner, one that also resembles the real Japanese employment structure that developed in the 1960s and 1970s. In *The World Jones Made* the dystopia is created by the growing power of the police. *Vulcan's Hammer* depicts a world controlled by computers and the elite group that runs the computers. In *The Man Who Japed* the dystopia is created by the rise to power of strict and self-righteous Puritan moralists. Dick believed that all of these powers—the power of large corporations, the power of the police, the power of centralized information, the power of self-righteous moralism—were growing in the America of the 1950s, and he emphasized each of them in turn, in a process of simple extrapolation. Damon Knight, in the first serious review of these works, describes the process in a nutshell: "Dick has made his future world a distorted mirror-image of our own. The distortion is what makes it science fiction: but the image is what strikes home."[1]

The action of these narratives is in every case the successful toppling of the dystopian state, which is then replaced by a more moderate and enlightened government, one compensating for the faults of the previous one. The methods used to create this displacement vary from full-scale revolutions *(Vulcan's Hammer)* to coups that trick the established order using its own system *(Solar Lottery)*; from alien invasions that throw the old order into disarray *(The World Jones Made)* to the simple expedient of satirizing the government until it is laughed out of power *(The Man Who Japed)*. Because the dominant world orders are by their very nature firmly entrenched totalitarian dictatorships, the successful revolutions recounted in these narratives are all more or less unlikely. The revolutionary forces cannot marshall the power necessary to topple these totalitarian states, which are by definition the most powerful forces in their fictive worlds, so the revolutionary groups must resort to tricks of one sort or another, which like moves in judo turn the dystopia's force against itself. In this sense all of these novels are wish fulfillments. They fulfill wishes of Dick's that various forces in American life be defeated, but because Dick has portrayed the forces as nearly omnipotent in his fictive worlds, their defeat in the plots contradicts probability.

The Man Who Japed is the clearest example of the wishful nature of these first novels, for in it the government called Morec (Moral Reclamation) is toppled by a single advertising man's japes, or satires. From the start of the novel, when the protagonist Purcell rearranges a statue of the government's leader so that the statue is kicking its head, to its end, when a new version of Swift's "A Modest Proposal" is aired on TV, the satires become increasingly effective. We can understand this novel as a meta-narrative, a work that describes—once again wishfully—the process of Dick's own fiction. For what Purcell is doing with his satires is no more or less than what Dick is doing with his: and Purcell's actions have toppled his government and changed his world.

Expressed here is a wish to change the world by the creation of engaged, critical fictions. The success of the venture in fiction shows an optimism and a faith in the power of art that is confined in Dick's work to these first novels.

Though these novels exhibit an optimism that is not seen elsewhere in Dick's work, the narrative method used in them establishes a constant that will very rarely change. This is the method that Dick has already explored thoroughly in the unpublished realist novels, and when he wrote the first science fiction novels he was not groping toward the method, as Darko Suvin implies in his introduction to Dick, but was rather using it fully, from *Solar Lottery* on.[2] Professor Suvin gives a detailed description of this narrative method:

> ... Dick as a rule uses a narration which is neither that of the old-fashioned all-knowing ... narrator, nor narration in the first person by a central character. The narration proceeds instead somewhere in between those two extreme possibilities, simultaneously in the third person and from the vantage point of the central or focal character in a given segment. This is always clearly delineated from other segments with other focal characters—first, by means of chapter endings or at least by double spacing within a chapter, and second, by the focal character being named at the beginning of each narrative segment, usually after a monotony-avoiding introductory sentence or subordinate clause which sets up the time and place of the new narrative segment. The focal character is also used as a visual, auditive, and psychological focus whose vantage point in fact colors and limits the subsequent narration.[3]

The effect of the constant use of this method is to give the readers a privileged glimpse into the thinking processes of more than one character in every narrative, without having recourse to an omniscient narrator. The limitation placed on the narrator—at any given time the action is being reported through a particular character's understanding—means that readers may understand more fully the world views of the characters. Tension is also created by the disparity between the different characters' understanding of the events that occur to them, for there is never a final judgment given on the matter by an omniscient narrator. These disparities are of central importance, for much of our interest in these characters is created not by their individual perceptions, but by the disagreements in the various perceptions. Meaning or significance is thus created by differentiation in a system without any absolute or final meanings. Dick himself has on more than one occasion acknowledged the importance, the metaphysical significance, of this narrative method:

> I have been very much influenced by the thinking of the European existential psychologists, who posit this: for each person there are two worlds, the *idios kosmos,* which is a *unique* private world, and the *koinos kosmos,* which literally means *shared* world (just as *idios* means private). Now, a person ... cannot tell what part of that which he experiences is the *idios kosmos* and which the *koinos*—in fact virtually no one even asks, because this theory of plural worlds is not generally known (the idea parallels Jung's concept of projections ... of unconscious archetypes onto the "real" world), and in all of my books, well, virtually all, the protagonist is suffering from a breakdown of his *idios kosmos*....[4]

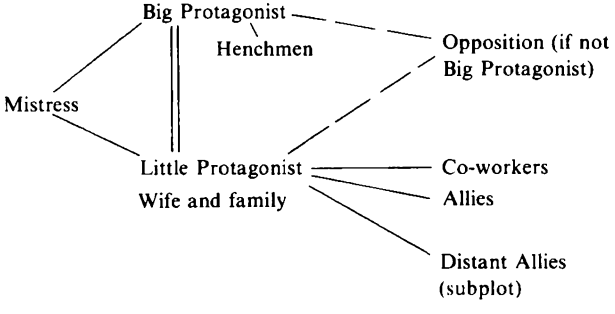
Thus, for Dick, one's individual understanding of the world creates a sort of perceptual and cognitive astigmatism, filtering and distorting one's reality. In his novels Dick presents us with a variety of private world views, and the reader is left the task of deducing the *koinos kosmos* himself. This is made especially difficult since Dick's worlds are various futures, and we cannot assume that the *koinos kosmos* of these fictive worlds will in every case be the same as that of our own. The reader thus becomes a collaborator in the construction of Dick's fictive world, taking over the functions of the absent omniscient narrator: making judgements, assigning values, and creating all meanings of the narrative larger than those of the individual characters. Of course Dick is directing these actions by his selection of viewpoint characters, and the varying amounts of time he gives them the privileged narrative focus, but this direction is never explicit, and we are left to make our own conclusions in every case—thus imposing our own *idios kosmos* onto the texts, and engaging ourselves in the process of creating meaning.

The best fictional embodiment of this notion of *idios kosmos* and *koinos kosmos* in Dick's early work is, paradoxically, the only novel that does not employ the method of shifting the narrative point of view. This is because *Eye in the Sky* places the protagonist Bill Hamilton in the position that the reader usually occupies, and the reader follows Hamilton exclusively as he experiences the bewildering shifts of world view in a way that is usually the reader's. Hamilton and several other people visiting a "Bevatron" are victims of an accident, and a beam of the Bevatron projects them into some "other world." Over the course of the narrative we learn that the characters have been thrust into the *idios kosmos* of a religious fanatic. In this new collective reality God can reach down from the sky and punish them at any time. From this bizarre universe we are then shifted along with Hamilton into the private world of a Victorian prude, a paranoiac, and a secret Communist. The *koinos kosmos* that Hamilton finally manages to return to—the world of the readers, a world that he presumably fits into, in that he is moderate, rational, and unbiased, so that his *idios kosmos* is nearly synonymous with the American *koinos kosmos*—is early 1950s America, in which McCarthyism is running rampant. Hamilton has lost his job working for the defense industry because he was once slightly involved with socialists. His friend has lost his job because he is black. The *koinos kosmos* is now seen to be composed of individual visions similar to those that Hamilton has just suffered; it is equal parts religious fanaticism, moralistic prudery, fearful paranoia, and political extremism. Hamilton and his friend now reject a *koinos kosmos* that before their terrifying experience seemed reasonable, and they attempt to build a new collective reality by the simple expedient of dropping out of society and building record players for a living. Because Hamilton is placed in the position that the reader usually occupies in the construction of Dick's work, Dick can direct our response more

explicitly than usual, and so here we are directed to reject the American *koinos kosmos* in the same way that Hamilton has.

Eye in the Sky, however, is the exception to the usual pattern in Dick's work. In this work the protagonist is placed in the position that the writer/reader usually occupies, and as a result the rest of the character system is simplified, so that there is room in the text to record Hamilton's responses. The character system in the rest of the early novels, however, is extremely large and diverse.

Once again it is a system that has been worked up in the unpublished realist novels, especially *Voices From the Street.* The two characters who are the privileged viewpoint characters for most of the time we will call the little protagonist and the big protagonist, following Dick's own nomenclature. The little protagonist is almost invariably the main character in the narrative. He is little in the sense that he is poor and powerless, but he connects to the rest of the characters, and in these early novels he often becomes the hero of the action. Usually the little protagonist is employed by the big protagonist, and usually the action of the plot revolves around the opposition between these two figures, although they may begin as allies. Less often the two are allied against some larger threat. We are introduced to the female companions of both protagonists; typically the little protagonist's wife is the weak and passive Amelia character, while the big protagonist's mistress is the energetic and dangerous Becky figure, a woman who often becomes involved with the little protagonist. Subsidiary characters include the rest of the little protagonist's family, his coworkers and allies in the struggle against the big protagonist, and the employees of the big protagonist, who are enlisted either willfully or against their will in the struggle with the little protagonist. More distant allies of the little protagonist may work unbeknownst to him, and are usually the leading figures in a subplot. This cast of characters can be found in prototypical form in the first novel *Solar Lottery*; systems very closely resembling it can be found in *The World Jones Made*, *The Man Who Japed*, *Vulcan's Hammer*, and the early short novel *The Variable Man.* Later the system will appear again and again, with very little change, in all of the major novels of the middle 1960s. This character system generates the following structure.[5]



As long as Dick's novels describe the opposition to a dystopian state, this character system will be filled in at practically every position. It can stand as the model for the system of characters in almost every novel from *Solar Lottery* until 1967 or 1968, some twenty-five novels later, and it will serve for several novels of the 1970s.

The subplot deserves further explanation, for in it are the only characters that do not fit in a circle around the little protagonist, who is always the hub or linchpin character in the main plot. The subplot takes place in a setting that is distant from the main plot, and when it appears it is there to make a commentary on the main action. Having deprived himself of the judgmental position of an omniscient narrator, Dick must make comments about the action of the narrative in a more indirect fashion, and one of them is this use of the subplot, the action of which is often the reverse of the main plot, although sometimes it can be a microcosm of the main plot. More typically, however, its counterpoint serves as ironic contrast to the main action.

The little protagonist is the container for most of the virtues that Dick values most highly. These men are often manual workers, repairmen, or technicians, whose jobs require physical skills as well as intelligence. They are very empathetic people; their relationships with their wives are their only regular failures among their relationships, and the failures are usually the wives' faults. In the action of the plot that they are inadvertently caught up in, they are clever and resourceful, but more importantly, dogged and tenacious.

The big protagonist is the opposite of the little one in many ways. He is extremely ambitious, ruthless, and isolated; though he is intelligent, he is very often vulgar in the extreme. This vulgarity is revealed as a tremendous insensitivity to other people as well as to matters of taste and protocol. His work is administrative, and requires no physical skill; he wields great power, which is the usual and major distinction between him and the little protagonist. Though he appears to be far more intelligent and more likely to succeed than the little protagonist, arrogance leads him into mistakes. When, in the novels of the 1960s, the big protagonist shifts more often to become an ally of the little protagonist, he then takes on some of the qualities of the latter, such as tenaciousness and empathy, while retaining his essential vulgarity. Those big protagonists that shift during the course of the narrative from ally to enemy or vice versa, are therefore among Dick's richest characters (Kott in *Martian Time-Slip,* Bulero in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*).

These recurring character types exist in worlds that are jammed with the various elements that make up the genre of science fiction. The way in which Dick combines elements such as aliens, androids, and telepathy, and the effects created by these combinations, are so complicated that an entire chapter will be devoted to discussing them. What should be pointed out here is that these combinations, these jammed landscapes, were not typical of the

science fiction of the 1940s, and they are one of Dick's innovations in the genre. Up until Dick's first novels, science fiction works tended to concentrate on one element at a time, so that there were postholocaust novels, robot novels, telepathy novels, and so on. Dick was one of the very first writers to present fictive worlds in which all of these elements coexist, thus giving his worlds a complexity that reflects the complexity of the culture from which the novels spring. At the same time, Dick seemed to be experimenting with each of these elements in turn, trying different mixtures in order to discover which of the elements were most useful to his purpose of social criticism and metaphysical inquiry. In this sense, the early novels were experiments. Taken as novels in their own right, however, these works stand with the best long narratives of the science fiction of the 1950s. They are in the same tradition as the work of Pohl and Kornbluth, and of Damon Knight's *Natural State* (1951). In these works science fiction is being used as a vehicle for social criticism, so that their mode is satirical, and their extrapolations—the ways in which their fictive worlds are different from our present world—are being made tendentiously, with a critical point in mind. This was a new development in the genre, a new use for it, and observing it Kingsley Amis wrote one of the first important books of science fiction criticism, *New Maps of Hell* (1955). In this study, whose title reveals its interests, Amis declared that Frederick Pohl was the foremost practitioner of science fiction. This judgment naturally shocked the American science fiction community, who were used to the giants of the Golden Age being declared the best writers of the genre. But if science fiction is considered as a vehicle for social criticism, as Amis considered it, then in 1955 Frederick Pohl was indeed the foremost writer. Very quickly Philip Dick had seized on this style and made it his own. Damon Knight acknowledged this in his study *In Search of Wonder* (1956): "At his intermittent best, Dick is still one of the most vital and honest working science fiction writers. I don't believe he has mastered his form as yet; but his journeyman work deserves our respectful attention."[6]

Despite this promising and well-received beginning, Dick's career in the late 1950s showed little signs of development. In fact, after a certain point his novels begin to seem no more than repetitions of the first two or three, and his craftsmanship degenerates. Also, the appearance of *Solar Lottery* and the other works we have discussed so far, was matched from the beginning by the appearance of lesser works that show the marks of hasty composition. *The Variable Man* (published 1957, written 1952) is an early effort, and is strongly reminiscent of Isaac Asimov's *Pebble In the Sky* (1947), in which a contemporary man is catapulted into the future and must save the human race. *Dr. Futurity* (1959), one of Dick's first experiments with time travel, repeats this theme, adding local color from Drake's Bay, near Dick's home. *The Cosmic Puppets* (1957) is a story of the struggle over the fate of a small

town; the appearance of evil aliens in one of Dick's novels, we will find, is in every case the sign of a weak book, and this is the first example of that phenomenon.[7] *Vulcan's Hammer* (1959) is very much a repetition of *Solar Lottery* and the other opposing-dystopia novels. As we will see in later chapters, expansions from shorter works are rarely successful as novels, and this work is one of the first examples of that. All of these lesser efforts are marred by a sketchiness of conception and execution. Indeed, as we are discussing a five-year period during which Dick published ten books and twenty-seven short stories, the surprise is that so many of the novels should be the considerable works that they are. But the rapid appearance of all these novels worked against Dick in the science fiction community, for he was not growing as an artist, and the community began to take him for granted as he slid into the niche of adequate craftsman and minor social critic.

All during these years, we must remember, Dick was continuing to write the long realist novels he began with, and this too must stand as an important factor in his failure to progress. He was a divided writer, perhaps more so in 1959 than in 1952. In both his realist works and his science fiction he did what he could to make analytic critiques of American society, but the methods used were completely different. His works were divided in a way similar to those of Graham Greene, who made a distinction between his novels and his entertainments. But in Dick's case only the entertainments were published, so that he might come to consider himself an entertainer and not a novelist. *In Milton Lumpky Territory,* by internal evidence one of the last of the realist novels (1957?), reveals the frustration Dick felt at this situation. And frustration only added to the carelessness with which he composed the science fiction novels, thus increasing the artistic split within him.

Nothing displays this division better than the matched pair of novels *Confessions of a Crap Artist* and *Time Out of Joint,* both written in 1959. *Confessions* is a realist novel, *Time Out of Joint* science fiction. The latter was published in 1959 while *Confessions* was not published until 1975, when Dick's fame as a science fiction writer influenced a small publisher to print it.

Both novels take place in small towns in America, *Confessions* in Marin County, where Dick lived, and *Time Out of Joint* in an unspecified town farther inland. Both of them have as protagonists characters that represent aspects of the author himself, and in both of them the protagonist lives as a semidependent with his dominating sister and her husband, who is another victim of the sister.

In the realist world of *Confessions,* the portrait of the artist-figure Jack Isidore is painfully harsh and critical, reflecting Dick's discouragement at this time. At the beginning of the novel Isidore is living in a slum apartment, and his job is retreading used tires so that they will look new again. His sister invites him to stay with her, hoping thereby to gain a babysitter. He moves

into her house in Marin County, and the events of the plot develop from there. Isidore is not so much simple-minded (though he seems so) as he is odd, and hopelessly out of touch with his times. He is the sort of person or mentality who is attracted to oddball science: Atlantean lore, facts out of context, Charles Fortean anomalies and sport fossils, comic books, and, we are left to infer, the literature concerned with this sort of knowledge—science fiction. After the blunt realities Isidore encounters at his awful sister's house, he surveys his tattered collection of interests and declares "everything I know is bullshit." That this moment of disgust is self-referential to the writer is most strongly indicated by the fact that Isidore's sections of the text are written in the first person, while the other sections describing Isidore's sister and brother-in-law are in the third person. (These first person sections are the only thing Dick wrote in first person until 1972.) Isidore is a representation of the science fiction artist in the real world—the crap artist.

In the science fiction novel *Time Out of Joint,* the representation of the science fiction writer is, naturally enough, more sympathetic and proud. In this context he has power; in fact, he is the center of this world, the most important person in it, which is perfectly appropriate when we realize that he represents the creator of worlds of this sort, Dick himself.

The protagonist in this world is Ragle Gumm, who lives with his sister and brother-in-law, in a small town in 1959. He makes his living by staying home all day and figuring out a newspaper game, "Predict Where the Green Man Will Show Up Next." As such Ragle is held in low esteem, and is the subject of his neighbor's gossip, for he does not work at a "real" job. Ragle himself worries that he is spending his adult life playing at an adolescent hobby, and sometimes he fears for his sanity.

Ragle's world begins to break down for him, however, in a prototypical Dick scene. Ragle walks up to a soft-drink stand in a park, and suddenly the stand disappears, replaced by a small slip of paper on which are printed the words "Soft-drink stand." This reality breakdown, the first major one of all of Dick's many reality breakdowns, starts Ragle on an investigation that eventually reveals that his disreputable job and low status are a sham, disguising the importance of his job for the sake of his sanity. For in actuality, the year is 1998, and the whole world depends on Ragle Gumm. His newspaper contest predictions actually spot where the next missiles from Luna will fall, which is the only way Earth can survive its war with its colony.

That Ragle's job is, like Isidore's hobbies, another image for the science fiction enterprise, is made most explicit when a defense minister disguised as a newspaper employee comes to talk to Ragle. It is quite clear here that Ragle's job is a metaphor for Dick's:

> "You work from an aesthetic, not a rational, standpoint. Those scanners you constructed. You view a pattern in space, a pattern in time. You try to fill. Complete the pattern.

> Anticipate where it goes if extended one more point. That's not rational; not an intellectual process. That's how—well, vase-makers work. I'm not disapproving. How you go about it is your own business. But you don't dope it out; I doubt if you've even solved the content of the clues. . . ." [*Time Out of Joint,* chapter 3, p. 28]

Science fiction, then, like Ragle's job, is disreputable and meaningless to the world of 1959, vital to the world of 1998. The attempt in this novel, twin in so many ways to *Confessions of a Crap Artist,* is to justify and valorize the art that in *Confessions* is so disparaged.

At the same time, Dick has finally found a method (as he did provisionally in *The Cosmic Puppets*) to publish a novel that is a direct representation of current American reality. For despite its final revelations, most of *Time Out of Joint* is set in the year 1959, even if it is an "illusory" 1959. Not surprisingly, it is a very convincing illusion. Much attention is given to the details of everyday life in this small town, and the life of its residents is fully achieved. The world of 1998 is markedly less detailed, and it occupies only the last thirty pages of the text. The science fiction device used to make this novel about 1959 is slighted; we are never given an explanation for the prominent first breakdown in the sham reality, when the soft-drink stand turns into a slip of paper. Two things are important to Dick in this work: he can finally write scenes about the contemporary society that will be published and read; at the same time, the process of creating science fiction can be defended and valorized.

So it had come to this: Dick was using his realist novels to discuss his position as a science fiction artist, and he was using his science fiction novels as a means to write about his own time, twisting the devices of the genre beyond their traditional level of plausibility in order to do so. It was an odd and awkward position to be in, and yet the tension engendered by Dick's creative split gave him a sort of energy, and a subject matter. The twin novels *Confessions of a Crap Artist* and *Time Out of Joint* are individually Dick's best works of the 1950s, and taken together they are an impressive and revealing work. But *Confessions of a Crap Artist* was not published, despite its many virtues. *Time Out of Joint* was, and it was well-received by the science fiction community.

This unequal reception of his twin pair must have been the last straw for Dick, for *Confessions* was the last realist novel he wrote.[8] At the same time, aside from the expansion of *Vulcan's Hammer,* which as we have said was a sort of automatic repetition of earlier work, Dick published no new science fiction novels in 1960, and nothing of any kind in 1961.[9] It must have been a period of personal difficulty, and of reflection and reevaluation for Dick. By abandoning all efforts in realist fiction, he was committing himself fully to the genre that had taken him in eight years before. This shift had immediate implications, for if he wanted to continue to try achieving the effects he had repeatedly

attempted in the realist novels, they would somehow have to be integrated into his science fiction. *Time Out of Joint* pointed the way, showing him that science fiction could be used to make what was nearly a direct representation of his culture. Earlier works, such as *The Man Who Japed,* showed him how the distortions and estrangements of the science fiction process could actually be of value in depicting his culture, rather than merely be something that had to be added to get a work published. Each of the elements or subgenres that made up the genre could be put to some useful purpose; they all could serve as metaphors for some aspect of the here and now—and those that were not so useful in this way could be avoided. In his next project, Dick committed himself fully for the first time to science fiction, applying all of his talents, and the concerns that up to this point had been confined to his realist novels. It was as if he were combining *Confessions of a Crap Artist* and *Time Out of Joint* into a single work, one that exhibited the best qualities of both of them, and in fact contained the increased strength that a successful synthesis can have.

The novel was *The Man In the High Castle* (1962). Before discussing it, however, we need to examine more closely the individual constituent elements of this genre that Dick had at last joined as a whole artist.

3

A Table of the Elements

dystopias • postholocaust worlds • aliens, robots and artificial humans • psychic phenomena • time travel • other planet colonies • alternative histories • spaceships • the reality breakdown

> The remotest discoveries of the chemist, the botanist, or mineralogist, will be as proper objects of the poet's art as any upon which it can be employed, if the time should ever come when these things shall be familiar to us....
>
> William Wordsworth, "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*

Science Fiction is a general term used to name and classify narratives which use a variety of topics, motifs, or image-systems—I will call them *elements*—which have little in common with each other, except that the situations they express do not exist in our world, and they tend to be placed in some future of ours. A partial list of these elements would include utopias and dystopias, postnuclear war worlds, encounters with aliens, robots, time travel, colonization of other planets, alternative histories, spaceship travel, and psychic phenomena or expanded psychic abilities.

These elements are different in kind; the chances of the situations they express ever appearing in our actual future vary widely, as does their value as symbols for facets of our current society. Some of these elements—dystopian societies, robots, spaceship travel, colonization of other worlds—are fairly straightforward extrapolations of history and of our current understanding of the physical laws of the universe. Others—postatomic worlds and encounters with aliens, for instance—are physically possible, but there is no way to calculate the probability of them happening.[1] The expansion of psychic powers is likewise impossible to predict, and present-day science would be at least temporarily unable to explain the mechanisms involved, so that this element stands on the border of the impossible. Alternative histories, or parallel histories coexisting with our own, would exist in a metaphysical realm unavailable to us, and so will presumably always remain in the world of literature. Lastly, both time travel and faster-than-light travel are impossible for human beings, according to our current understanding of the physical laws

of the universe. Nevertheless they are both staple elements of science fiction, commonplaces used to overcome the problems presented to fiction by the immensity of space.

The disparate nature of these elements is one of the important reasons that science fiction as a genre has proven so difficult to define, and is why it is so hard to distinguish the border between science fiction and fantasy. Time travel and faster-than-light travel are elements as fantastic as magic and witchcraft, but they have become an important part of science fiction through repeated use. It has become a convention to accept these modes of transport as possible, when they are described as technological achievements, and placed in the context of "realistic" futures, that is to say, futures with a history that leads back to us. Elements such as magic are labelled fantasy because their vocabulary is not scientific, and because they are placed in vaguely medieval worlds that are not historically connected with our present. Yet time travel is just as magical as turning lead to gold. The distinction is in the history, or the lack of one. Any fantastic motif can be science fiction if a history is even implied that leads from our world to the world of the text. If this history is dispensed with, the text is a fantasy. This, however, does not remove the differences between the various elements that have become conventions of science fiction. The elements are still disparate, and the appearance of more than one of them in the same text (a common occurrence) can result in that sense of generic discontinuity which Fredric Jameson first described in his study of Brian Aldiss's *Starship*.[2]

Dick regularly uses all of the above elements except for the spaceship, and typically he combines several in each novel. It could be said that the success of each novel depends on the appropriateness of the mixture of the elements; their compatibility, so to speak. These elements do not exist in a vacuum. Each one implies a world that would allow it to come into being, and very often these worlds are different enough that they cannot be reconciled if the two elements are combined. This occurs fairly often in Dick's work; he cannot reconcile the differing implications of the elements he has combined (for instance, who could continue to manufacture robots in a world completely devastated by nuclear war?), and so the fictive world is not internally, logically consistent. By generic discontinuity, Jameson meant in his article to describe a shift from one set of conventions to another, so that while reading the reader must shift with the text, and apply one new set of expectations after another. In Dick's works, however, these differing sets of conventions need to be applied simultaneously, so that the reader must try to balance two or more at the same time. This creates for the reader a clash rather than a discontinuity. The unsettled feeling evoked by many of Dick's narratives is therefore created, in part, by the element combination. Objections to this unsettlement are couched in the terms "shoddy construction," "cardboard world," and the like. This alone can partially explain the popularity of *The Man In the High Castle,* which proceeds from a

premise that uses only one element, the alternative history. In a similar fashion *Martian Time-Slip* concerns itself with the other-planet colony. These two novels exhibit that aesthetic wholeness that our generic expectations have taught us to appreciate. Several of the most important novels, on the other hand, contain a large number of elements, and the clash of implications in these works is part of their effect. Certainly the overloading of elements is part of Dick's strategy for writing about the America of the 1960s (a strategy shared by many other writers), and its varying success—from triumphs of multiplicity to outright failure—deserves explanation. In the chapters devoted to the individual novels we will often return to this matter of a generic clash, but first we will reverse the process and discuss each element in turn, attempting to isolate, if possible, those elements that Dick makes the best use of, and also those that might be most consistently harmful to the novels.

Dystopias. Some elements form the background or setting against which the action takes place, while other elements are part of the foreground action. A dystopia is an element of the former sort, and it is the most common element in all of Dick's work. Even those works that have utopian aspects to them, *The Man In the High Castle* and *Dr. Bloodmoney,* take place in worlds where nuclear war is imminent or has actually occurred, so there is still something of the dystopia in them.

The Man In the High Castle marks a watershed in Dick's use of the dystopia that we will describe fully in the chapters to come. Briefly, in the novels before *The Man In the High Castle* the reigning dystopian system is overthrown by the book's protagonists. These novels are in that sense wish fulfillments, for the protagonists seldom have the power to accomplish these revolutions, as we have pointed out. In *The Man In the High Castle* and the novels which follow it, Dick acknowledges this difficulty, and increasingly his subject matter becomes not how to overthrow a dystopian system, but how to live within one, and his solutions change as the years pass.

Postholocaust worlds. The World Jones Made (1956), *The Man Who Japed* (1956), *Vulcan's Hammer,* (1959), *Dr. Bloodmoney* (1964), *The Penultimate Truth* (1964), and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), all take place in worlds that have recently experienced a nuclear war, and *Game-Players of Titan* (1963) takes place in a world devastated by a war with aliens. In most of these novels, especially the earlier ones, the atomic war serves only as a device to allow as many changes in the society as Dick wants for the purpose of his story. The distinguishing feature of this sort of story is that capitalism survives, even flourishes. *Vulcan's Hammer* is the best example of this development. The rare exception to this use of the element is *Dr. Bloodmoney,* and this is also—not coincidentally—the only novel that depicts the war itself, and the immediate results of the war. In essence *Dr. Bloodmoney* is the only

postholocaust novel in which Dick is seriously attempting to depict the effects of a nuclear war; the rest merely use atomic war as a device to disengage history and allow Dick to take it where he will. Paradoxically, he uses this freedom to construct dystopian societies much like ones that in other novels are linear extensions of our history, that require no cataclysm. Only when he takes the topic seriously does it lead him out of the dystopian cycle. Thus it could be said that while the postholocaust world is a fairly regular component of Dick's dystopian settings, it is not a very important element in Dick's work as a whole.

Aliens. Aliens do not appear very often in Dick's work, and when they do appear they do not fulfill the classic role of the Other. "It is not by chance that the classic figure of the Alien is almost totally absent in Dick's fiction; instead, his humans are often endowed with paranormal qualities, or they are poor madmen lost in a cruel and incomprehensible world, or again, mechanisms, androids that reproduce not only the physical but also the psychological structure of man."[3] In other words, Dick prefers to locate the Other within his human characters.

Thus the aliens that do appear in the novels are typically more humane than a good proportion of the human characters sharing the stage.[4] The Bleekmen in *Martian Time-Slip* are a perfect example of this tendency. Struggling to survive either as servants of humans or aborigines in the desert, they are more compassionate and wise than Arnie Kott, more connected with the world than Manfred, and their words and actions are consistently helpful to the human characters. Similarly, Lord Running Clam in *Clans of the Alphane Moon,* a "Ganymedean slime mold," has nothing but helpful telepathic advice for the hero. In *Now Wait For Last Year* this move to humanize the alien, and make alien the human, is explicit. Terrans are in contact with two alien races, one exactly like humans, the other like huge ants. The Terrans are allied with the humanlike aliens in a war against the ant creatures. As it turns out, the ants are benign, peaceful creatures, while the humanlike aliens are evil and power-mad, as anxious to dominate their allies as they are to defeat the ant creatures.

It is because of this desire to locate the inhuman in human activities that Dick's aliens are usually sages in disguise. One of the few examples of hostile aliens appears in *Game-Players of Titan,* and the result is a weak novel. *Ganymede Takeover,* echoing *Game-Players* without the latter's complexity, is weaker still. The only other evil alien in Dick's work is Palmer Eldritch, a threat to humanity as so many aliens in science fiction have been. He is a human possessed by an alien, however, so the figure is ambiguous in its otherness. Once again the alien has been placed within the human, and since the alien entity could be said to represent the spirit of capitalism, the alien becomes a very human institution, suddenly estranged.

By and large the aliens in Dick's novels serve to make comic, enlightened commentary on the action of the humans, who are made to seem more alien

than the aliens. The use of this element, depending heavily on the reversal of the topic's usual value in the genre, thus gives Dick the opportunity to make comical thematic comments on the action of the whole, and has strengthened the novels in which it appears.

Robots and artificial humans. The image of the robot is another classic motif in science fiction, and clearly it is, or can be, an actualized metaphor, a metaphor made real in the context of the fiction. (We will discuss this use of metaphor further in Chapter 6.) In the use of this element the process of reification is vividly dramatized, by the introduction of a character that is literally a machine human. In the positivist tradition of Golden Age science fiction, the influential stories of Asimov and Simak contained the message "the robot is just like us." Their stories portrayed robots and androids as childlike, humorous, cantankerous—humans made of metal, so that they were slightly simpleminded, and dangerous if not properly controlled, but full of sentiment. To an extent they were portrayed in much the same way as were the slaves in the Uncle Remus tales, and this was appropriate, for they formed a slave caste, and were the replacements for human slave labor. Dick's short fiction reacted against this comforting and patronizing image from the very start of his career, but the novels only began to use the element in this serious way with *The Simulacra,* in 1964. Once again Dick reversed the element's value for the Golden Age. Instead of "the robot is just like us," Dick's robots—seldom robots as such but rather androids or simulacra, emphasizing their human exteriors—convey the message "we are just like the robot." Almost every novel written between *The Simulacra* and *We Can Build You* (1972) uses androids. Very often these are the political leaders, presented to the populace as human, but actually programmed by powerful behind-the-scenes people. Definitions of humanity become more and more difficult, until in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* it takes a complex psychological test to determine who is human and who is machine. The interpenetration of artificial and natural is complete. Cars and doors and stoves argue with or advise their owners, while artificial humans can love, and fight for their survival. The humans in these landscapes lose contact with reality in any number of ways, withdrawing into one-dimensional, mechanical relations to the world, or using machines to help them fight such reification. The larger role Dick assigns to artificial humans in the second half of the 1960s is, once again, the result of factors both artistic and social. The complications of this natural/artificial interpenetration give opportunities for a whole range of thought experiments exploring and displaying the motif. At the same time, every one of them is a dark image or representation of what Dick felt were dark times.

Psychic phenomena and expanded psychic powers. In *The World Jones Made* (1956) Jones was precognitive (a "precog" in Dick's terminology) to this extent:

he could see one year into the future with absolute precision, but could see only that one year. This bizarre ability (explained only as a mutation caused by atomic war) gave Dick as much trouble as it gave Jones, for Dick faithfully followed the premise to its logical end, which meant postulating an entirely determined universe, devoid of free will, since Jones could see what happened before it actually occurred. This made the ethical choices, indeed all the choices, of the characters meaningless. After that experiment Dick avoided the use of psychic abilities for several years, but they reappear in the novels of the 1960s as "psi powers," proliferating into an entire system of precognition, telepathy, telekinesis, inertia (the power to negate others' psychic abilities), and communication with the dead. Sometimes atomic war is the very unsatisfactory explanation for the growth of these powers, other times the growth is left unexplained. To avoid the problems created in *The World Jones Made,* precogs only see probabilities in later Dick. A common image is that of pigeonholes, with four holes filled by one eventuality, two by another, one by a third, and so on, so that the precog can only give odds, and free will remains in existence.

The change in the power of precognition avoids the problem of determinism, but it does little in a positive way to make psychic powers a useful element in the novels. In fact, the introduction of this element nearly always creates flaws of logic, philosophy, and aesthetics. The element is never the principal one in any of the novels, but is rather part of the overload effect. The origin of these psychic powers is not explained, and so the reader must accept them as givens. The implication is that "everything has changed, so this has changed too." But this lack of a history marks the element as not within the usual conventions of science fiction, and so the introduction of the element often helps to create the generic clash so prominent in many of the novels. When a history for the element is given, it usually involves an atomic war or a similar catastrophe; the contradiction between the negative effects of powerful radiation and the positive growth of psychic powers is ignored, thrown under the rug of the word "mutation." This barest of scientific rhetoric used to bring the element within the realm of the rational is insufficient to disguise the element's origin in the genre of the supernatural tale.

Even when the topic is made science fiction by providing it with a historical explanation, the implications of the new mental abilities are rarely worked out in full. They do not change the structure of society as a whole, as happens, for instance, in Alfred Bester's famous novels *The Demolished Man* (1953) and *The Stars My Destination* (1956). The paradoxes and contradictions engendered by such powers as precognition and telepathy are likewise ignored, or exploited only insofar as they aid the construction of the plot. This underdeveloped use of the element contributes to the impression of shoddy craftsmanship about which some critics of Dick have complained.

Lastly, paranormal psychic ability as such is a relatively weak science fiction element, in that it has little of relevance to say about the society generating the text. Science fiction is a collection of funhouse mirrors, images that objectify some concept of the world. Earlier elements such as the artificial human or the alien are good examples of this function, which is chiefly metaphorical. Psychic powers, on the other hand, have little metaphorical power of that sort, no doubt because of their origin in an older genre, the supernatural or Gothic. They do little to help represent human existence in a technological society.

Dick evidently did not agree, and most of the novels after *The Man In the High Castle* include this element. The best defense for this practice is that it helps to create that sense of fantastic strangeness that fills the novels of this period. "Dick is among the few writers of SF who think of the future in terms of *total* change. Even the psychic, religious, sentimental sphere of man is modified. . . ."[5] This is true, and it constitutes one of Dick's strengths, but there is a danger inherent in the method, which is that the changes wrought may seem arbitrary if they are sweeping. A change is arbitrary if it logically contradicts other changes made in the fictive world. Also, in a fictive world *totally* changed, the reader has nothing to invest his understanding in, and cognition and affect are both lessened.

Time travel. Unlike psychic phenomena, which when introduced must be naturalized to science fiction to avoid a sense of generic clash, time travel is firmly within the realm of the genre. This is so despite the fact that time travel is impossible according to both the common experience of humanity and the theories of modern physics. Like faster-than-light travel, time travel has been made acceptable by repetition, by scientific rhetoric, and by the unspoken belief in the limitless power of human technology to manipulate nature. The technique for creating this acceptance has remained constant since Wells invented the subgenre in *The Time Machine:* a machine is described, its exterior impressive, its interior complex; a vocabulary is introduced into the syntax of present day scientific discourse. Thus explanations "sound right," but are rendered opaque at certain critical points by the new vocabulary. The readers are satisfied, for there are in existence today impressive, complex machines, performing tasks that were considered impossible before the machines were constructed, and the description of these machines is opaque to all but their makers. That travel either forward or backward in time is a task of a different order is a fact that can be glossed over by writer and reader alike, for the sake of playing with the concept. Here more than in any other science fiction element, the intellectual play involved is obvious and undeniable. The concept is very much like a game, but as it is a game playing with ideas of history, it can be instructive, can have serious uses.

Stanislaw Lem has described what happens when the time travel element is used trivially.

> Thanks to time travel and faster-than-light travel the cosmos has acquired such qualities as domesticate it in an exemplary manner for story-telling purposes... the development of a totally false, domesticated universe was a gradual process of self-organization, and therefore all together are responsible for the final deformation—and nobody. Thanks to the first SF invention all occurances in space have become easily reversible, but the authors who "just" want to shine with a new version of time travel have forgotten the larger context.... Nature was softened in the cruelty of the irreversible flow of time that is its hallmark... the universe of SF is not only miniscule, simplified and lukewarm, but it has also been turned towards its inhabitants, and in this way it can be subjugated by them.[6]

This description of the underlying function and effect of time travel has much truth in it, but its argument is stronger when applied to faster-than-light travel. The latter's single function is to erase the immense distances between our solar system and any other, and thus as a convention it distorts the reality of space. Time travel, however, can be used in more than one way. Certainly one use it is put to is the convenient solving of plot problems. Another is the creation of meaningless paradoxes of the "what if I killed my grandfather?" type. Lem in this passage concentrates on the trivial uses: "As popular fiction, SF must pose artificial problems and offer their easy solution."[7] But the serious examination of time travel, beginning with Wells, nearly always ends up underlining the fact of time's irreversible flow, and the reality of entropy. Time travel can be used to prove its own uselessness, to spotlight that very aspect of nature that in its other function it is meant to obscure.[8]

Dick uses the element in both of these ways. In *Dr. Futurity* (1959) and *Counter-Clock World* (1967) the use of time travel (in *Counter-Clock World,* the reversal of biological time) as the principal element in the novel results in two of Dick's weakest works. This fact illustrates a principle that in application proves useful. In Dick's novels, when time travel is a real-world fact in the fictive world of a novel—something created by a machine, or by some other reliable codified process that can be experienced by any of the characters—then the element is being used in its trivialized, domesticating function. It is when time travel is a private, uncontrollable, perhaps illusory experience, achieved by drugs or a descent into madness, that it is used as a method for a serious examination of the nature of time and the human experience of it. In these hallucinatory time trips the time traveler does not gain power over his destiny; on the contrary, he becomes more aware than ever of his entrapment in time, and is forced to relive segments of it repeatedly or to make changes in the past that only create the very future he is living in. Once again the popular and conventional use of the element during the Golden Age has been reversed by Dick. This has happened with enough of the elements to suggest a general principle: Dick reverses the value of any element that was given a simplistic

positive value in the Golden Age. A corollary to this—another indication of its truth—is that when Dick gives his characters superhuman powers, they are not a blessing but a curse.

The Simulacra and *The Penultimate Truth* provide good examples of time travel created by machines. In both cases the element is inessential to the main action. In *The Penultimate Truth* especially, it is the element that, being least necessary to the book, most contributes to the confusing sense of information overload. *Martian Time-Slip, The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch, Now Wait For Last Year,* and *Ubik* are good examples of the "private cosmos" time travel. Adrift in time as a result of drugs or madness or both, the protagonists of these four novels learn to regard a return to the past as a horrifying regression into a dead, immutable world. These four emphasize the time travel element's relationship to the alternative history, a time trip of a different sort, for in their helpless jaunts through a hostile universe both protagonist and reader are forced to contemplate the nature of history itself. Infinitely mutable in the moments of its creation in the present, history itself is fixed, a return to it useless. Visits to any of the infinite series of "alternative histories" that represent the future only emphasize that our actions in the present determine which alternative history will take its fixed place in the past. No guides for those actions are provided, and the protagonists invariably conclude that the exercise of rational free will would be made easier if they were simply left in the present to make their choices moment by moment. Again, a superhuman power is revealed to be a curse, and so Dick's serious use of the element repudiates Lem's blanket condemnation of the element.

Other planet colonies. Alternative histories. These are two more setting or background elements, against which other elements can be placed. Both serve as relatively new worlds, clean canvases onto which Dick can introduce as many changes as he wishes. His other planet colony, Mars—used in *Martian Time-Slip* and *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*—is a representation of the America in which Dick wrote the novels, in which certain facets of the society have been augmented, others suppressed. This process creates that "cognitive estrangement" that Darko Suvin, borrowing a concept from Brecht, claims is the primary effect of science fiction.[9] In this process the cultural givens of a society are displaced and made strange by giganticism or some other deformation, forcing the reader to acknowledge that the given is not a law of nature but a cultural creation; an artifact of history that, since it is changeable in the future, could conceivably be different now. This process constitutes the special power of science fiction for social criticism, for in these new worlds or other histories the possibilities for estrangement extend into every aspect of life, and the estrangements are not a matter of a character's private perception, but are part of a collective experience.

The Man In the High Castle is Dick's only serious alternative history. *The Crack In Space* (1967) is a skeletal, hasty effort, and the scarcely glimpsed alternative history, in which Peking Man is the dominant human species, is a simple pastoral vision. For that reason a detailed discussion of the alternative history is placed in the chapter on *The Man In the High Castle.*

Similarly, the closely related Martian societies of *Martian Time-Slip* and *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* are the only other planet colonies fully realized by Dick, so discussion of this element will take place chiefly in the chapter on those novels. Other planet societies do appear briefly elsewhere in Dick: in the early *The Man Who Japed* there is a vacation resort placed on another planet, merely for the sake of exoticism; in *Game-Players of Titan* the crucial game is played in a nebulous fog on Titan; in *Now Wait For Last Year,* the regressive private Disneyland called Wash 35 is placed on Mars, evoking strongly the two big Martian novels, and Manfred's autistic vision of an entropy-leveled American colony. More importantly, in *Galactic Pot-Healer* another planet serves as the setting for a parable about the struggles of the creative process, but the planet itself is scarcely evoked. In a similar fashion *A Maze of Death* (1970) takes place on some poorly realized planet of the mind, in a landscape reminiscent of that traversed by Childe Roland in Browning's poem.

One other planet remains, the Alphane moon in the novel *Clans of the Alphane Moon.* This distant little world is nothing more than a mental hospital, and the greatly increased distance between Earth and this moon corresponds to the increased distance between our lived society and this representation of it. In this novel the distortions, huge and grotesque, are made in the comic spirit of satire. The scope of the distortions make this novel a good example of the freedom given to the writer who uses the element of the other planet colony.

Spaceships. Dick does not use the spaceship element, and now that we have discussed the other elements it may be possible to say why. In an essay called "The Known and the Unknown," Gary K. Wolf has pointed out that many common science fiction images or elements—the city, the alien, the spaceship—separate the known from the unknown, and that the typical plot moves from the former to the latter.[10] In this schema the interior of the spaceship represents the known world—it is typically a microcosm of our society—and this microcosm is venturing into the unknown. The crew of the spaceship must eventually leave it to explore, and hopefully make known, the unknown.

Given this view of the spaceship element we can better see why it is not suitable for Dick's concerns. First, the spread of Dick's character system, encompassing as it often does ruling, middle, and working classes, needs more

geographic and economic space than the spaceship can give. Often, too, the spaceship is manned by a military crew—and Dick does not write about the military.

More importantly, as we have seen in the discussion of the alien, Dick prefers to locate the Unknown firmly within the human circle, reversing the pattern that Wolf has outlined. Thus if Dick were to use the spaceship element, we would imagine him populating it with civilians—perhaps passengers—and we would not be surprised to find the unknown appearing inside the spaceship—inside the humans, in fact—while the humane, comforting aspects of the known world would appear from the outside, where one would least expect it in works conforming to the convention. And indeed, in the very few instances of spaceships in Dick's work, this is very close to what happens. In *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* the spaceship voyages include moments of possession by the evil Eldritch. In *Galactic Pot-Healer,* again during a brief spaceship voyage, the protagonist is seduced by a human who is the very image of the dangerous Other. Essentially, then, there are no privileged areas of the known in Dick's work. Any sphere of existence is likely to become, or to reveal itself as, the unknown.

The reality breakdown. This leads us directly to the consideration of an element that is in many ways Dick's own creation, which we will call the reality breakdown. No matter what the device—future drugs, hypnotic trance, time travel, postdeath "half-life," the actions of aliens or androids, technological accident—the result is the same: the surface appearance of reality breaks down for the protagonist. His assumptions about the nature of the universe no longer hold true, and he is forced to live from moment to moment, existing perhaps in a false reality, perhaps in the world of Platonic ideal forms that are revealed beneath the surface of our sensory reality. This reality breakdown occurs so often in Dick, from the accident at the Bevatron in *Eye in the Sky* (1956) to the beam of pink light in *VALIS* (1980), and so many of the other elements of Dick's science fiction are used to create just this situation, that it has often been considered the central experience of Dick's fiction. "The world gone mad, with a spasmodic flow of time and a network of causes and effects which wriggles as if nauseated, the world of frenzied physics, is unquestionably his invention. . . ."[11] The insistent return to this element—the building of this element from the earlier ones we have described—draws our attention to it, and requires explanation. Why is this experience the central one in Dick's work?

The first and most limited answer is that the experience is a reflection or echo of the experience of the science fiction reader. Just as the protagonists fall through their sensory realities to conceptual realities they are ill-equipped to deal with, so the readers fall through their lived reality, into a fictive world (another conceptual reality) that is radically different. The generic assumptions

of the reader cannot be trusted to guide him in his reading of a Dick novel, just as the physical assumptions of the protagonist cannot be trusted to guide him in his actions inside the Dick novel.

A larger answer would concern itself with the relationship between the protagonist and his experience in the fictive reality, and the experience of the reader in the world at large. We live in a world in which modes of transport have changed from horse to spaceship in the span of a single lifetime, to cite only one very obvious example. Changes in our way of life as drastic as that have occurred in many aspects of existence. A literature that wishes to represent these rapid, shocking changes might well begin to speak in terms of a reality breakdown. In short, Dick's many reality breakdowns are depictions of human existence in a technological age. They are metaphors for our own experience.

Of course, all fiction can be said to be metaphors for our own experience, and one could add that human existence in a technological age is one of the central subjects of Modernist, realist literature. The difference between the tales of alienation and breakdown that we find in the realist works of Woolf, Faulkner, Salinger, Pynchon, and a host of others, and the reality breakdowns found in Dick and other science fiction, is that in the former the breakdown is essentially a private, individual experience. Characters, individual realities break down, and because of this the reader is free to conclude that the breakdown is a matter of individual psychosis, something with no direct relation to him; it is someone else's problem. In science fiction, however, this conclusion is taken away from us by attributing the breakdown to some external and collective force. To finish the quote cited above concerning "the world gone mad," Dick's fiction is "an inversion of our familiar standard according to which only we, but never our environment, may fall victim to psychosis."[12] The reader's identification with the protagonist can remain complete, for it is not the protagonist who is mad, but his world. This world being but an image of our own, its madness cannot be easily dismissed. Thus in Dick's reality breakdowns there are three levels—the protagonist in his fictive world, the reader reading the text, and the reader in his world—and each reflect the other two, and this resonance lends the text significance.

Lastly, the reality breakdown in Dick invariably leads the protagonist to meditate on the nature of reality, and often his experience becomes not a reality breakdown, but a breakthrough *to* reality. This more basic reality that is revealed to him is the reality of the law of entropy, the gradual falling apart of all form. Much of our cultural activity could be called form building, and often it is meant to disguise the effects of entropy. Culture is reasonably successful in this enterprise, but in Dick's work the protagonist has all the successes suddenly stripped away from him, and nothing but the fact of entropy is left. So the reality breakdown that is depicted so many times in Dick is not merely a confusing hallucination, but the revealing of some basic truths. In the struggle

against entropy we experience many local victories, but in the larger picture, on the sort of universal scale that science fiction is best equipped to portray, the tale is one of continuous defeat. This does not invalidate the attempt to create form, and indeed in Dick this is the activity that is valorized again and again. His novels represent this struggle between form creation and form destruction repeatedly, and for Dick, to struggle on after having all illusions of success stripped away is the greatest heroism. An acute awareness of entropic forces lies at the base of Dick's tragic vision, and impels him to use all of the other elements of the science fiction genre to tell this larger tale.

Dick's use of the above elements is therefore unsettling to some of the reader's most fundamental assumptions, both social and metaphysical. Dick accomplishes this unsettlement both by the content of his novels and by their form, which are mutually reinforcing. By combining so many of the elements into each work he often establishes a generic clash, a dissonance that the attentive reader takes away as the primary impression of the work. Peter Fitting, in an essay called "The Deconstruction of Bourgeois SF," has argued very cogently that Dick refuses to provide "logical" solutions to the plot problems he sets up in order to deny the reader's desire for reinforcement of his world view, to unsettle him in the course of the novel and to leave him so when the book is done.[13] The plot knot that is *Ubik* is one method to achieve this unsettlement; another is to bundle together elements from contradictory subgenres, and present this bundle of contradictions as a coherent science fiction novel. As we have said, a genre's function is to set limits on what the reader expects from the work, so a genre invokes a set of conventions that the individual text will then work within or against. But the science fiction genre is a sprawling one, with edges in fantasy and realism that do not match well. Any given text tends to stay within one subset of conventions in the genre. Thus robots are from the technological end of the genre, while mindreading comes from the fantastic, with strong ties to the older supernatural genre. To have both in one novel (or to have mindreading androids, for instance) is to stretch generic conventions to the breaking point—and this is what Dick does time and again. In the discussions of the individual works that follow, we will examine how these complicated combinations of science fiction elements work to disrupt the reader, by disrupting the genre that the work purports to rest within.

4

The Leap Up

The Man In the High Castle

> Mrs. Thea Cadence. Mr. Nobusuke Tagomi. Do those names mean anything to you? They do to me; a good deal. They are the names of two of the first Mrs. Browns I met in modern science fiction.... They are people. Characters. Round, solid, knobby. Human beings, with angles and protuberances to them, hard parts and soft parts, depths and heights.... Thea, shrewd and tragic in her madhouse, Mr. Tagomi, shrewd and tragic in his business office, both of them trying, in a half-conscious, muddled agony, to reach freedom, both failing or succeeding depending on how you look at it, "very small and very tenacious, at once very frail and very heroic..."
>
> Welcome aboard the spaceship, Mrs. Brown.
>
> Ursula K. Le Guin, "Science Fiction and Mrs. Brown"

Dick took at least a year to write *The Man In the High Castle,* and he struggled to get it into final form, for this book was a new start. Out of the many elements of science fiction he chose a single one, the alternative history, which was one of the few he had never handled before. By now his habit was to combine several elements into a single novel, but in this case he dropped scenes that would have added elements, preferring the simplicity of dealing with a single topic.[1] In this work Dick combined the attention to characterization, and quality of prose, that he had given to the realist novels, with the estrangements of his science fiction, and the result was one of the very first great American science fiction novels.[2] At the same time it was a tremendous leap in the quality of Dick's novels, comparable to the shift from *The Beautiful and Damned* to *The Great Gatsby* in Fitzgerald's career—except, in Dick's case, he was writing in a genre in which the great majority of the works were at the level of *The Beautiful and Damned* (or below it), so that in this case he helped to draw an entire genre up with him.

There are many differences between *The Man In the High Castle* and Dick's earlier novels that help to account for this quantum leap in quality. First, *The Man In the High Castle* is simply longer than any of Dick's previous science fiction novels, and at the same time, it has fewer characters in it than the

earlier books do. This allows for a simple increase in the amount of information we receive about each of the characters in *High Castle,* and there is a corresponding increase in the depth of characterization.

The relationships between these characters have changed in their nature from the system of relationships that we described in chapter 2. In those early works a dystopia, often run or supported by the big protagonist, was overthrown by the little protagonist and his allies. All of the characters in these narratives are drawn into the central action, no matter what their stations in life. The central action of the revolution overwhelms the normal events of all of their private lives.

In *High Castle* this is not so, for the very important reason that the dystopia in this novel is not overthrown. This is a significant shift in Dick's typical narrative action, and it marks a permanent change in Dick's work. Henceforth the dystopias that Dick pictures will be powerfully entrenched (as they were in the early works), and we will not be allowed to see them overthrown by cleverness or by their own mistakes. The wish fulfillments are finished; here the best that can be accomplished by the protagonists is the holding action of keeping things from getting immeasurably worse. In the case of *High Castle,* the Axis has won World War Two, and there is never any question of overthrowing the dominion of the Germans and Japanese. The success of the protagonists, if indeed they achieve it, is to keep the Germans from beginning World War Three. This is far from wish fulfillment.

The immediate effect of this change on the character system is that the big protagonist, in this case Mr. Tagomi, is no longer the leader of the dystopia, but merely a functionary of it; and he is now allied with the little protagonist, Frank Frink. The conflict is now between all of the principal characters, and an outside threat more dangerous than any of them.

Another change stimulated by this shift in the central action is that now there is no main action that overwhelms the individual lives of the rest of the characters. In the early novels the scheme for the character system presented all of the characters in a circular fashion around the little protagonist, for what happened to him affected the whole world, in the style of Van Vogt's novels. In *High Castle* the action moves away from this superhero plot to something much closer to the traditions of realism. There are four main characters—Mr. Tagomi, Robert Childan, Frank Frink, and Juliana Frink—and each could be said to be the protagonist of his or her own plot, which touches only incidentally (although sometimes very significantly) the others' plots. Tagomi saves Frank Frink from deportation, but it means nothing to Tagomi; the two characters never meet. Frank and Juliana Frink are divorced, and communicate not once during the novel. Frink and Childan are economically intertwined because Frink sells his products to Childan, but they don't know each other well. The same is true of Tagomi and Childan. Personal relationships have to an extent disappeared from this novel, or been made

absent to deliberately emphasize those relationships that still exist. An indication of this is the fact that Tagomi has a wife, but we never encounter her, as we would have in earlier Dick systems. By and large this is a novel filled with characters strange to each other, and those few personal relationships described in the narrative thus take on value all out of proportion to what we would normally feel. When Frank Frink and his business partner Ed McCarthy become friends, we are affected in a way that at first seems inexplicable. In the novel Dick will channel our desires in this fashion quite often.

The principal characters, then, have been spread out into their natural environments, and they are not hauled out of them by the larger demands of a superhero plot. Darko Suvin has shown in his overview of Dick's opus how the principal characters exist on different levels of power in the political system: Mr. Tagomi is on the highest level of the administrator (though there are levels higher than his that we briefly glimpse); Robert Childan is on an intermediate level occupied by Americans collaborating with the Axis government; Frank Frink exists on the lowest level, of powerless Americans who have no dealing with the Japanese rulers.[3] Juliana Frink exists outside this system, which is set up in San Francisco. She heads the subplot, which as usual in Dick serves to comment on the action of the main plot. Each of the characters is limited by his or her position in the political system, and we do not see the Van Vogtian action witnessed in the earlier novels, in which the little protagonist, on the lowest or next-to-lowest level of power, suddenly rises to take a critical position in the world-shaking events of the main plot. We have seen how in *Vulcan's Hammer* the protagonists fly around the world, defeat the tiny clique of evil rulers of the dystopian world state, and change the system. In *The Man In the High Castle,* a renegade German named Wegener is a member of a small group of Germans who oppose the Reich's plan to start a nuclear attack on Japan. The most this group can do is to get Wegener to San Francisco, disguised as a Swede named Mr. Baynes. Mr. Baynes waits helplessly day after day for his contact, and he only manages to get his message through with the crucial help of Mr. Tagomi. After this small success the message itself moves out of the realm of the story, to an uncertain fate in Japan. Meanwhile, Mr. Baynes returns to Germany and pays for this action with his life. Nothing could be in starker contrast to the Van Vogtian superhero plot that Dick had been content to use before. He is no longer content to express wishes; modern realism has invaded the realm of science fiction.

Realism invades the highly estranged fictive world of this novel in more ways than one. As we have mentioned, *The Man In the High Castle* is an "alternative history," one of the rarest of the science fiction elements, and one of the most valuable. Although it may at first appear to be a mere frivolity, an alternative to our history made substantial in a work of fiction will remind us constantly that

history is not inevitable, that it could have turned out differently than it actually did, if even a very minor human act had been different. This theory of history is therefore decidedly not deterministic, and it assumes that history is, rather, a collection of persons with free will, some of whom are in strategically important positions.

In most alternative histories, then, the change that makes the history different from ours is some violent shift in political leadership, or an altered result of a critical battle. In one of the first major American alternative histories, Ward Moore's *Bring the Jubilee* (1955), the South won the Civil War because they were victorious at Gettysburg. In Keith Roberts' *Pavanne* (1969), Queen Elizabeth I was assassinated, the Armada conquered England, and the Reformation was crushed, leaving a Europe dominated by the Catholic Church far into the twentieth century. Dick pays homage to both these traditions: in his alternative history Franklin Roosevelt is assassinated in 1932, so that America never recovers from the Depression, and an isolationist administration gives the Axis time to invent the atomic bomb and win the war. But Dick also adds another, later change, one that is not contingent upon the first, so that it takes two shifts to alter history in the way Dick has. In this case, rather than alter a major battle of World War Two, Dick merely alters a small one that many historians consider crucial. In Dick's world, Hermann Goerring convinces Hitler that the Luftwaffe should bomb radar stations during the Battle of Britain, instead of cities. This is what Goerring wanted in the world that we know, and in Dick's 1940 he succeeds in getting his wish. Thus the Germans win the Battle of Britain, and ultimately the war. History, we see, is mutable; it shifts at a change in the smallest strategically placed decision. If we acknowledge this to be true, then we acknowledge also that we create history ourselves, that our own actions have their effect, and that we must take the responsibility for the history of our time. This is the tremendous power of the alternative history when taken seriously, and Dick makes the point explicitly through his character Frank Frink.[4] When Frink consults the *I Ching*, as most residents of Dick's San Francisco do, he learns that "the hour of doom is at hand." Struggling to understand the message, he has a flash of intuition:

> War! he thought. Third World War! All frigging two billion of us killed, our civilization wiped out. Hydrogen bombs falling like hail.... I open a book and get a report on future events that even God would like to file and forget. And who am I? The wrong person; I can tell you that.
>
> ... I'm too small, he thought, I can only read what's written, glance up and then lower my head and plod along where I left off as if I hadn't seen; the oracle doesn't expect me to start running up and down the streets, squalling and yammering for public attention.
>
> Can *anyone* alter it? he wondered. All of us combined... or one great figure... or someone strategically placed, who happened to be in the right spot. Chance. Accident. And our lives, our world, hanging on it. [*The Man In the High Castle*, chapter 4, pp. 47-48]

It is Mr. Tagomi who becomes this strategically placed person in the world of the novel, and the fact that he takes on this burden of action, as Frink does not, is what makes him, petty bureaucrat that he is, heroic.

An alternative history is useful precisely to the extent that it forces us to contemplate our own history, and the notion of history in general. Given that this is true, it is Dick's inspiration, the finest touch in a book filled with brilliant touches, to include in his world a science fiction novel that is the mirror image of his own. That is, in this world in which the Axis won World War Two, someone has written a novel in which the Allies won the war. And this speculated alternative history is not, naturally enough, exactly our own; no human being could have imagined the actual history of the years 1945 to 1962. So there is yet another alternative history contained in this novel, one in which the Allies did win the war, but then proceeded differently from the way we are familiar with. The characters in the novel contemplate the possibility of an Allied victory with the same fascination and unease with which we contemplate the possibility of an Axis victory. Recognizing the mirror-facing-mirror effect, we are forced again and again to contemplate the very idea of history, and, as a sort of by-product, our notions of whether it has gone well or ill since 1945.[5]

The Nazis won World War Two; this is *The Man In the High Castle*'s first and primary message to us. As Carlo Pagetti has pointed out, the first way of interpreting this message should perhaps be literal.[6] *The Nazis won World War Two.* That is to say, the spirit of fascism is still strong in the world and in America, the setting of the book. The international corporations that supported Hitler and survived the war are still powerful—more powerful than ever—as are the forces of racism, the practice of genocide, hyped-up nationalism in the service of military expansions, and massive disregard for the Earth and for nature at large—so much so that Dick's list of Nazi projects, from the draining of the Mediterranean to the extermination of all Africans, seems not much of an exaggeration of what has really occurred.

The Allies "won" the war, then, but fascism prevailed. This is certainly one message of the novel. The mirror image of the statement is also a message conveyed to us by the book: the Axis won, but humanism prevailed. This possibility—that an Axis victory would have resulted in a more human and humane San Francisco, 1962—is perhaps the harshest criticism, although it is indirect, that the novel makes of our society. The San Francisco portrayed in *High Castle* is one reminiscent of the San Francisco of the 1920s, one in which postwar capitalism did not have its way with the landscape. This is implicit throughout the street scenes, and in the general tone of life in occupied San Francisco, but it is made explicit in the scene in which Mr. Tagomi "falls through" into our own world. Tagomi contemplates a little silver pin until he wakes up and sees the Embarcadero Freeway, and this vision, of America in 1962 as we know it, is for Tagomi a vision of hell:[7]

> No pedcabs. He walked along the sidewalk instead; he joined the crowd. Never can get one when you need it.
>
> God, what is that? He stopped, gaped at hideous misshapen thing on skyline. Like nightmare of roller coaster suspended, blotting out view. Enormous construction of metal and cement in air.
>
> Mr. Tagomi turned to a passer-by, a thin man in rumpled suit. "What is that?" he demanded, pointing.
>
> The man grinned. "Awful, ain't it? That's the Embarcadero Freeway. A lot of people think it stinks up the view."
>
> "I never saw it before," Mr. Tagomi said.
>
> "You're lucky," the man said, and walked on.
>
> Mad dream, Mr. Tagomi thought. Must wake up. Where are the pedcabs today? He began to walk faster. Whole vista has dull, smoky, tomb-world cast. Smell of burning. Dim gray buildings, sidewalk, peculiar harsh tempo in people. [*The Man In the High Castle,* chapter 14, pp. 221-22]

As Darko Suvin has pointed out, this is in the great utopian tradition of treating the return to the real world as a vision of hell. Acknowledging this, we also acknowledge that Dick's Japanese San Francisco is at least in part a utopia. When we realize this we immediately search for the history of this utopia. How is it that this has developed, out of what was our own history? We search for a history that explains the shift from a harsh Japanese wartime fascism to the benign Buddhist government ruling San Francisco, characterized by Tagomi. After all, the book contains a detailed postwar history of Nazi Germany, which makes us hope that we may find this matching Japanese history.

But it is not there. Dick offers us no explanation for the mellowing in Japanese policies; the history is an absence in the novel. This fact serves to confirm our feeling that this representation of San Francisco is utopian, for the "missing history" is a famous problem in studies of utopian literature. Ever since More's *Utopia,* which was set on an island, there has never been a major utopian work written in which there is a history that shows the development of the utopia out of contemporary, nonutopian times. Utopias do not *develop;* they are born like Athena, fully grown. They always have a separate history of their own, and they are begun out of whole cloth by social engineers, or by the lucky, wise, unconscious choices of some founding fathers. Two of the most significant twentieth century utopias, *Island* (1960) by Aldous Huxley and *The Dispossessed* (1974) by Ursula K. Le Guin, say it even in their titles. A utopia needs a new start.[8]

So the development of a benign Japanese rule is not shown, but the end result exists. We should not be surprised when we find that an analogous situation exists in *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy,* the mirror book within *High Castle.* In *Grasshopper* a utopian Allied rule is postulated, one very unlike our real history, as we are reminded more than once. Almost all of the characters in *The Man In the High Castle* are reading *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy,* and at

first, when we are shown people reading about the alternative ending to World War Two, it sounds like a book of atrocities. The British and Americans divide the world between them just as the Germans and Japanese have, and they slaughter their opponents, we learn, just as ruthlessly. But later on Juliana Frink is reading further along in *Grasshopper,* and she exclaims, "Why, this is a utopia!" She reads an excerpt directly from the text of the interior novel, and we hear of a world in which the Americans distributed little television sets to all the destitute peoples of the Earth, for one dollar each. On these televisions the world's unprivileged are taught to read their own language, and then a flood of technological information follows: agricultural information, weather disaster prevention, medical information, engineering techniques. The whole of American know-how is given freely to the world. Here Dick is offering us a poignant alternative history, in which America did more with the postwar Pax Americana than attempt to dominate the world. But the author of *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy,* Hawthorne Abendsen, (who is the man in the high castle), can no more provide a plausible history leading to this utopian situation than any other writer can. The break between wartime atrocities and postwar American generosity is complete.[9] Dick has arranged things so that his two alternative histories are symmetrical in almost every respect.

The characters in *The Man In the High Castle* are among the most fully delineated in all of science fiction. This is one result of Dick's integration of his realist writing with his science fiction. Mark Rose says of them, "Dick's characters are conspicuously 'particular,' especially when seen in the context of the abstract representative figures usual in science fiction."[10]

Mr. Tagomi is the privileged protagonist of the text. He is not only in the strategic position that Frank Frink mentions in his anxious contemplation of the possibilities of changing history, he also experiences the visionary breakthrough to our own world that we have described above. Tagomi is the key figure in the novel, and our attention is drawn to him as it has been to no other character in all of Dick's work to this point.

He is an important Axis official, but the Nazis appall him. They literally give him heart trouble. He is a devout follower of the *I Ching,* an ethical man, very polite, very based in traditional Japanese values. At the same time, he is intensely interested in America and Americana. When "Mr. Baynes" comes to visit him in his home, he finds that there is a buffalo head on Tagomi's wall, and Tagomi takes a Winchester rifle across his lap, and in his enthusiasm begins to play-act for Baynes the scout searching for food on the great plains. He wants to use American slang in his English, and says fleece-seeking when he means woolgathering, "first off the bat" when he means "right off the bat." He is saddened by the constant aping of fascist attitudes by the collaborationist Americans he comes in contact with, and he is saddened that Americans cannot hold their traditional values—Tagomi's sentimentalized version of them—when their country is occupied. In this situation the two cultures take on

aspects of each other. Tagomi eases the condition of occupation, and keeps oppressed values alive, by becoming the embodiment of American values himself. If he becomes American, then the country is no longer occupied. At the same time he remains thoroughly Japanese. Nevertheless, for lack of any other container, the American reader must invest all of his patriotic feelings, which are surging for an outlet in a fictional situation such as this one, not in any of the American characters, but in Tagomi himself.

Dick accomplishes this by doing more than just giving Tagomi an interest in American values. There is no American resistance, no underground opposition. Like postwar Japanese history, or the existence of Russia, it is an absence in the novel, a deliberate one. American readers feel this absence more strongly than the others, even if it is not consciously noted. Americans are the underdog in this fictional world, they're ruled by a dictatorship we have learned to associate with the worst sort of political evil. We therefore expect to see a vigorous resistance, as we would if this novel were in the pulp tradition that science fiction is here growing away from. We hope to see vigorous resistance, lots of heroism, and perhaps the eventual overthrow of the oppressors, perhaps the re-establishment of the Republic.

Yet in *The Man In the High Castle* there is none of this, no spirit of 1776, no groups out in the hills keeping the fight alive. Even the most sophisticated American reader has been stuffed with patriotism for too many years to be able to completely overcome it; this fictional situation cries out for resistance, and at some level we want to see it. When the novel progresses and we don't find it, we experience the fact as a sort of slap in the face, implying as it does that Americans are a nation of potential quislings. And we want it even more.

When we finally get this patriotic moment—there are two of them actually—one comes by way of Mr. Tagomi; but by this time it is an incongruity that we scarcely notice, at first. Tagomi has taken on the responsibility of defending the slim possibility of avoiding a nuclear holocaust, even to the extent of murdering two assassins who have burst in on him to stop his message from reaching Japan; he shoots them with his imitation Colt .44. Afterwards he is horrified by his act—it is partly this horror that propels him into the awful vision of the Embarcadero—but he also takes the responsibility of informing the SS chief in San Francisco that he has killed the man's thugs. During the conversation Tagomi, to his later distress, for he wishes always to be polite, loses his temper and insults the German, blaming him for his evil acts. The German protests:

> "You're holding me responsible for general conditions beyond my jurisdiction."
>
> "Chickenshit," Mr. Tagomi said. "I say that to that."[*The Man In the High Castle*, chapter 14, p. 229]

At last Mr. Tagomi gets his American slang right. It takes an American word to express the disgust he feels at the moral cowardice of the German official. And the American reader stands up from his chair and cheers at this moment of defiance and disdain, visions of John Wayne and Jimmy Stewart altered into the little figure of Tagomi, a member of the Japanese caste ruling America.

The other scene in which Dick allows the American reader a vent for some of his pent-up patriotism is even more twisted and intertwined than this one. It comes when Robert Childan shows the silver pins that Frank Frink is making to one of his Japanese customers. Up until this point the Japanese have been only interested in American art from the past, and American artists have been busy forging historical artifacts to meet the need. Childan profits from other Americans' labor by serving as the middleman in this trade. Through the course of the novel we come to know him well—he is one of the four main characters—and we know him to be vulgar, avaricious, and mean. He is a quisling who apes Japanesed English speech patterns, and Nazi attitudes. When he visits the Japanese customer's home earlier in the book, the man and his wife attempt to draw Childan into a discussion of the problem of human suffering in Nathaniel West's *Miss Lonelyhearts*. Childan is unfamiliar with the book, and insults the couple's sensibilities by observing that it couldn't be worth much if it was written by a Jew. When in their disappointment at his ignorance of his culture they withdraw from him, Childan concludes that, after all, they are subhuman. Childan is consistently like this, never so disagreeable as when he exploits Americans lower on the ladder, which he is always doing.

Nevertheless, the moment comes when Childan shows the customer these new pins of Frink's, and the Japanese likes them, even to the point of suggesting that they mass produce them and sell them all over the Pacific basin. At first Childan is enthusiastic, but then he perceives that by the Japanese man's code of values, this mass reproduction would actually diminish the work of art, and his suggestion shows that he does not respect it. Suddenly Childan becomes angry, declares that the pin is too good to be insulted by reproduction, and demands an apology, surprised and fearful all the while at his own act of defiance. Once again the American reader feels a tremendous surge of patriotic support at this small stand for integrity, a surge all the stronger since it is given such a small vent. But upon reflection, we see that we have been cheering for what we know to be a bad man, who is defending the individual integrity of a piece of art that was made by an American, it is true, but acording to a foreign aesthetic. And he is defending it from the process of mass production, which is almost to say the process of Americanization, it is a procedure so natural to us. Once again it is foreign values he is expressing. But by this time Dick has the readers so frustrated in our expectations of a resistance that to see an American, any American, even the most corrupt, holding out for values of any

kind, even those borrowed from the oppressor, becomes a victory and a moment to be savored. Indeed, this is Childan's finest moment. But only a moment's reflection shows us that we have been changed. By frustrating expectations, and constructing scene after scene in which the Japanese and the American interpenetrate each other, in which the real world and the fictional world likewise interpenetrate one another, Dick brings us to that quintessentially science fictional moment of cognitive estrangement, wherein we stare at a strange face in a window full of wonder, and then realize the window is a mirror. Moments of estrangement and recognition like this one are the reason science fiction exists.

The ending of the novel is weaker than scenes such as those described above. Juliana Frink visits Hawthorne Abendsen, the author of *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*. There is much in this scene that is deliberately anticlimactic. We have been told that Abendsen lives in a high castle in the mountains, a moated and barbwired place where he hides from Nazis who might kill him for writing his book. In actuality he lives in a normal suburban house in Cheyenne, Wyoming. This part of the anticlimax is deliberate and instructive.

The problem comes when Juliana pries out of Abendsen the fact that the *I Ching* wrote *Grasshopper;* that is, Abendsen consulted the oracle for every facet of his work of science fiction. Juliana consults the oracle right there, and it tells her that it wrote the book because its contents are true, because the Allies *did* win the war.

Now this is something that the reader already knows, so it does us no good to be told it again. The characters themselves don't know what to make of the news, and they can't believe it with the same intensity that Tagomi does during his vision, his visit to our reality. And it is Tagomi's vision that forces us most strongly to a contemplation of our world, so that this final scene is superfluous. It points to the mirror we are already well aware of, and repeats in a weaker, more self-conscious form the point already made so brilliantly by Tagomi's experience. We can accept Mark Rose's explanation of the incident:

> What Dick has done is to violate the ground rule that the text should regard its own world as real. All along the text has been looking forward to some form of dramatic revelation that will come when the man in the high castle is found. But the insight when it comes turns out to be a strategically anticlimactic admission that the entire world of *The Man In the High Castle* is a fiction.[11]

But still we have only explained it, and not justified it. It seems, simply enough, a mistake.[12] It wouldn't be the first time an American masterpiece has been marred by a weak finish; *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is the most prominent example, but there are others. And an examination of Dick's drafts for the work shows that he was struggling with this question of how directly he

should point back to our world. There is a discarded scene in his unpublished papers at California State University at Fullerton, in which the German high command break through by scientific means into a real alternative world in which the Allies won the war. They send agents to Abendsen to find out if somehow he has crossed over, and then written his book upon his return. This scene would establish too strongly the Allied alternative history, and recomplicate things to an unwanted degree, introducing another science fiction element. Wisely Dick dropped the scene. But it shows the issue was a problem for him, and it is possible that the final scene should have been changed as well, leaving the meeting with Abendsen, which is an appropriate finish to the book, but giving the scene some other content than the news that the *I Ching* declares their world a fiction. This message is in the pulp tradition of the "final twist of the screw" surprise ending, which we will discuss at more length in chapter 6, for it is a device that mars more than one of Dick's books. In this case, however, it is just one misplayed note at the end of a brilliantly composed and performed symphony.

The material of this symphony—the prose the novel is written in—should be mentioned, for it is unlike the prose anywhere else in Dick. Elsewhere Dick's prose is no more than serviceable; the experience of it *per se* is unmemorable. At its best, as in *Martian Time-Slip* or *Dr. Bloodmoney,* it is a concise, accurate, direct voice, striking because of its economy. At its worst it is sloppy and vague, and because of the economic pressures Dick wrote under, it was as often near its worst as near its best. But in *The Man In the High Castle* Dick intends to write an English transformed by a Japanese occupation; not just the pulp language of Mr. Moto, but an expressive, compressed, epigrammatic English, evocative as a haiku or a Zen koan. He varies this voice depending upon the viewpoint character of any given scene. In Tagomi's scenes we see it at its purest. Childan is deliberately trying to think Japanesed English, so he slips in and out of it; Frink doesn't try, but he is profoundly influenced by the *I Ching,* and he falls into it as the dialect of his time. In the Germans Reiss and Baynes it disappears entirely. This controlled variation is impressive, and the pruned English of the Japanese characters is exactly suited to Dick's strengths as a writer. The intersection of need and talents makes *The Man In the High Castle* a joy to read just for the sake of the language. This is not, in general, something we can say about Dick's other novels.

There are good novels in American science fiction before this one, but none of them, except perhaps for Walter Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (1959), combine *The Man In the High Castle*'s brilliant detailing and strong overall structuring. After many years of struggling, Dick had integrated all of his powers, producing something greater than his eclectic and somewhat

disorganized interests, greater than his limited abilities to shape prose, greater than his critical analysis of America's ills. When the book appeared in 1962 it went completely unnoticed in the larger field of literary discourse, but the science fiction community awarded it with a Hugo award for best novel of the year, and that was enough for Dick. Having done it once, he now knew it was possible, that he *could* do it—create an important work of literature in the science fiction genre—and his hidden and perhaps unrecognized doubts about the genre were laid to rest at last. Now the task became to do it again and, fueled by the novel's popular success and his own feeling of accomplishment, Dick set out to do so in an astonishing burst of creative energy that continued for three years—a time during which he wrote eight novels.

5

The Martian Novels

The Game-Players of Titan • *Martian Time-Slip* • *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*

> The inferno of the living is not something that will be; if there is one, it is what is already here, the inferno where we live every day, that we form by being together. There are two ways to escape suffering it. The first is easy for many: accept the inferno and become such a part of it that you can no longer see it. The second is risky and demands constant vigilance and apprehension: seek and learn to recognize who and what, in the midst of the inferno, are not inferno, then make them endure, given them space.
>
> Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

The years 1962 and 1964 have been characterized as the high plateau of Dick's career, principally by Darko Suvin in his important essay leading off the special edition of *Science Fiction Studies* dedicated to Dick, and also by Carlo Pagetti, Fredric Jameson, and others. There are strong reasons for this evaluation; *The Man In the High Castle, Martian Time-Slip, The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch,* and *Dr. Bloodmoney* were all published in these years. The impulse to interpret the fact of this clustering as proof of a simple rise, plateau, and falling off in Dick's career should be resisted, however, for this would be a simplification that would distort the reality. Important novels appear in the first five years of Dick's career, in the resurgence around *Ubik* in 1968-69, and more recently with the novels following *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said* (1975). On the other hand, novels as bad as any Dick wrote were published right in the middle of the "high plateau" years. No simple progression for the sake of critical neatness can be formulated, if one pays faithful attention to the texts and the timing of their appearance. A curve describing Dick's creative powers and accomplishments would resemble rollercoaster tracks more than any simple bell-shaped curve.

The Game-Players of Titan serves as a perfect example of the inconsistency of Dick's work. Placed between *The Man In the High Castle* and *Martian Time-Slip,* it resembles rather the novels of 1956 and 1957. It concerns itself with a

western United States devastated by a war with "vugs," aliens from Titan. Bombs exploded by the Red Chinese (apparently in the war with the vugs, although this is never made clear) have made nearly all humans sterile, and the survivors change sexual partners in a property-marital game in order to increase chances of a pregnancy. People live for two or three hundred years, many have psi powers, and they own very fast flying cars (one of the first of Dick's talking machines.) These physical, psychological, and technical advances are given no history, and exist in direct contradiction to the postwar devastation.

The lack of consistency between these elements is one similarity to early novels such as *The World Jones Made.* Another is the character system, and the plot which such a system generates. The spreading out of the narrative foci that we saw in *The Man In the High Castle* has been temporarily abandoned, and we have here a central protagonist surrounded by allies and opponents, engaged in a struggle to overthrow the evil rulers of the world. Pete Garden is the little protagonist, but there is no big protagonist, nor anyone exhibiting the big protagonist's usual drive and energy. Pete Garden is unlike the other little protagonists in that he has no job, and this is a crucial lack, for Dick is unable to invest him with the positive qualities that typically reside in the little protagonist's attention to his work. Garden is perpetually on the verge of suicide, and he is kept from it not by his own resolution but by the intervention of his talking machines. He is part of a group of landowners who play the property-marital game together. (The game is adapted from Art Linkletter's board game *Life,* popular in the early 1960s. This is the first of many examples of what we might call found objects in Dick's texts.) The group becomes involved with a group of telepaths and precogs opposing the ruling vugs, and Garden learns that these people are actually vugs in disguise. Almost accidentally Garden defeats the vugs at their own game, saving all humans from destruction. But the defeated vugs remount their attack in the novel's final scene, so all the previous action of the plot is rendered meaningless. The element most responsible for the plot—the fight to gain freedom from conquering aliens—sets up expectations in the reader that Dick denies. The hero is passive, his fight is poorly planned, and the climactic victory is immediately subverted.

The prose of the novel suggests that Dick hurried his execution in order to get to projects with more promise. The system of devoting chapters or sections to the viewpoints of several different characters is employed as always, but in this case no character aside from Pete Garden gets enough sections of his own to develop any distinctive world view. And the method's structure is not always used: instead of starting a new section for every switch in point of view, the switch will sometimes occur with no more marking than a new paragraph, which is confusing to the reader. More important confusion results from some lack of important information. Neither the vugs nor the game that is so vital to

the plot are described in any detail whatsoever. This appears to be a deliberate technique, but the result is unsettling, as large fuzzy patches exist at crucial points in the reader's envisionment and understanding of the story.

This unsettlement is the book's chief effect. The vagueness of the description of the vugs, the persistent suicidal despair of the protagonist, the dreadful situation all the humans are in, the violence of the action, and the terrific clash of logic in the combination of the elements, make this book the fictional equivalent of a nightmare. So many narrative, generic and logical conventions are contravened that the effect on the reader is disorienting and unpleasant to a degree out of all proportion to the power of any single scene. Here form and content are in complete agreement, and in that sense the book is a success—it has its own intent and achieves it—but reading it is a disturbing experience.

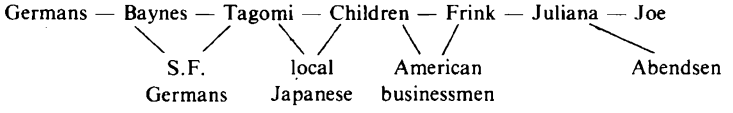
The novel in itself scarcely deserves as much discussion as I have given it, but coming as it does between two of Dick's finest novels, we want to ask why such a dramatic falling off should occur. First of all, the tremendous leap up in quality that *The Man In the High Castle* represents depended on a whole complex of factors, discussed in the previous chapter. There was no simple formula that Dick could codify and use in succeeding efforts, saying "now I will write masterpieces." In many ways *The Game-Players of Titan* returns to the methods used in the first half dozen novels, and this is natural, in that these methods had provided a certain measure of success. That these methods were insufficient to accomplish the tasks Dick was now setting himself could only be proved in the act of writing, in the failure of a project.

More importantly, the failure of *Game-Players* is due to the mix of science fiction elements. Plainly some of these elements represent a regression in human abilities and social organization, while others require a considerable advance. This clash is never resolved and the result is an incoherent fictional world. No action of consequence can take place in such conceptual chaos. At best the elements can be taken to represent symbolically a fragmented and incoherent reality. Logically, however, the book is flawed, and realizing this the artist in Dick ceases to struggle for sentence-by-sentence excellence; details don't matter when the conception is so confused, and the project is quickly finished off so that another with more potential can be begun. After *Game-Players* Dick will continue to include a large number of elements in his novels, but he will be more careful to make the background and foreground elements congruent. Elements resulting from technological advance will tend to be placed against backgrounds of triumphant capitalism, where all manner of bizarre advances can be made believable. Correspondingly, postholocast worlds will be devoid of technological advance, and will make better sense historically. Thus *Game-Players'* failure taught Dick some important lessons in the construction of fictional worlds, and in that sense it was a valuable experiment.

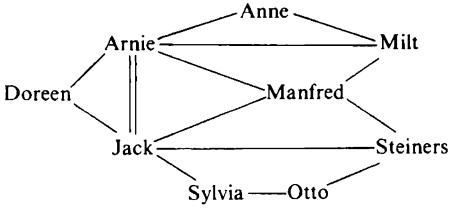
The world of *Martian Time-Slip* (1963) is much more fully articulated than that of *Game-Players,* and the first few chapters reveal a setting so full of the details of mundane life that the reader quickly surrenders disbelief. This Mars is realistic in a way that no other Martian novel before it had been. Rather than use the name *Mars* to locate a fantasy setting of one sort or another, Dick attempts to portray the harsh and boring colonial reality that might indeed come to pass.

The novel is constructed using the pattern established by *The Man In the High Castle.*[1] As in the earlier novel, a dystopian world order has been established, one that is impervious to the actions of the characters. It cannot be overthrown like the dystopias in the early Dick novels, and this in itself marks it as a work of Dick's mature period. In *The Man In the High Castle,* the plot is generated by introducing the possibility of a change—German domination of the world—that will intensify the dystopia. The most the characters can do is oppose this intensification. In *Martian Time-Slip* the same plot generation is used, but in this case the intensification itself is inevitable, so that the characters' power in their world is correspondingly reduced. The most they can accomplish is to resist the intensification's effect on their own lives. Thus this novel marks another stage in the development of Dick's political pessimism; each stage is marked by an increasing helplessness of the characters in their world.

The character system is also like that of *The Man In the High Castle,* in that there is no simple hero/villain opposition. The character system is not so dispersed as it is in *High Castle,* but that is only fitting, as we are dealing with a much smaller society on Mars. In *High Castle* the character system is somewhat linear. Each character knows the ones to the left and right of him or her, but seldom do they know any of the characters beyond those immediately linked to them. Thus:



In *Martian Time-Slip* the scheme would resemble more closely one of those character systems in Dickens, where eventually enough hidden relationships are revealed to give us the feeling that everybody knows everybody (the Small World Principle).[2] Thus:



(These are only the primary relationships, and simple meetings between characters who do not know each other are not marked. Most important of these meetings is that between Arnie and Otto. This scheme also corresponds closely to the character system drawn in chapter 2.)

The characters fill the slots in Dick's typology. Arnie is the big protagonist, Jack the little protagonist. Sylvia is the passive wife, Doreen the active mistress. All of the women characters, however, are presented more sympathetically in this novel than in most of Dick's work, which contributes to the book's balance. Milt Glaub fills the position that Childan filled in *High Castle:* an intermediary between ruling and working classes, who is presented first as a selfish and vindictive person, but who later undergoes a positive transformation.

Both characters and plot in *Martian Time-Slip* exist chiefly to articulate a setting: the harsh colony of America, an American suburb of 1963 simplified in order to make certain processes in it clearer. This simplification is a striking example of a process Fredric Jameson has named and defined. It is a process

> based on a principle of systematic exclusion, a kind of surgical excision of empirical reality, something like a process of ontological attenuation in which the sheer teeming multiplicity of what exists, or what we call reality, is deliberately thinned and weeded out through an operation of radical abstraction and simplification which we will henceforth term *"world reduction."*[3]

In *Martian Time-Slip* this world reduction has excised everything but two facets of American life: business, and personal relationships . The attempts to preserve the latter from the destructive influence of the former has been one of Dick's great themes since the first unpublished novels, as we have seen, but Dick has seldom used this method of world reduction to reveal the theme so clearly. It is not a method that characterizes most of his work, which is marked

rather by an extravagant *inclusion* of elements. But Mars itself, with its desert landscape, and lack of primary resources, not to mention luxuries, has suggested the method, and Dick makes full use of it. There are no wild plants or animals in the environment. Within the society we see not a single example of recreation, or of local art. What culture we do see is imported from Earth. Mars thus becomes the ultimate consumer society, for nothing but production and consumption is left to it. By stripping away all of the remaining creative outlets, and all of the entertainments and pleasures of life in capitalist society, Dick can display more clearly what remains: the work, and the effect of the work on the workers' ability to connect with each other, to form meaningful relationships. As Carlo Pagetti puts it:

> The values that dominate Martian reality are again the ruthless struggle for power: violence, deceit, and finally, the spiritual aridity of man. All the characters of the novel are implacably impelled toward neurosis, madness, homicide, suicide, adultery. In terms of traditional narrative, outside SF, the reality described by Dick is devastating... Mars is, therefore, another of the many images of the Wasteland that twentieth century culture proposes to us with obsessive repetitiousness.[4]

This is the network of dysfunctional relationships revealed to us by Dick's method of world reduction. In this reduced world everyone's hold on sanity is tested by economic pressure. The little protagonist Jack Bohlen is a repairman, a trade with higher value on Mars than back on Earth, for what would be thrown away on Earth must be repaired on Mars. Thus a repairman is a valued citizen on Mars, and this fact helps Jack combat the madness that attacked him on Earth. But valued also means valuable, and Jack finds he cannot leave the economic net. He is a commodity, and businessmen have bought him. The big protagonist Arnie Kott buys his contract from his employer, and Jack is again in the power of the force that on Earth was destroying him.

Arnie Kott is both a corrupt union boss—his most obvious model—and the president of a small country, for the Plumbers' Union runs a town of its own. On Mars Arnie is the most powerful economic figure, but no one on Mars has much political power, for the vital decisions concerning the planet's fate take place on Earth, in the U.N. The decision to intensively develop Mars reveals Arnie to be a provincial power only, and as he is pressured, so he pressures the people in his power. But because he is as helpless, ultimately, as the rest of the Martians, he remains a somewhat sympathetic character.

The corrupt value system Arnie adheres to is perpetuated on Mars by the schools. Dick shows us the educational system by having Jack Bohlen visit a school to repair a teacher. On Mars the values are taught by machine. This fact in itself reveals a value, and reveals the nature of the values to be taught: if a machine can teach them, then they are machinelike. The teaching machines are androids, built to resemble famous characters from history (this is another

found object, inspired by Disney's talking Lincoln): Socrates, Francis Drake, and Mark Twain are stripped of their historical characters and contexts, and are made to become spokesmen for values they would have despised, values that will make the young of Mars docile consumers. In this way some of the past's dangerous thinkers are co-opted by the dominant culture, and history itself is falsified, domesticated—stripped away in the general world reduction.

The school disturbs Jack not only because of what it teaches his son, but also because the nature of his mental illness on earth was to see people as machines. Thus the school is a very disturbing experience for him, because his delusion is made real. Under the impact of this experience Jack begins to perceive people as machines again, and his fight against madness must recommence. His vision is of course a symptom of acute alienation and reification. To these classical responses, or illnesses, resulting from life in capitalist society, Dick adds a third: the time-slipping of the title. The boy Manfred Steiner is literally slipping about in time, and he sees the future of the colony on Mars, after entropic forces have destroyed it. He also helplessly repeats certain moments in time, carrying the people he is involved with through the repetitions with him. Time travel here is not accomplished as a positive act, willed by men and achieved by machine, but is rather a psychic experience, profoundly negative and destructive. Unluckily for Jack, he is assigned by Arnie to be Manfred's caretaker, and so his struggles against madness are made more difficult by contact with the boy. In the central chapters concerned with the time-slip, Jack, Arnie, and Doreen all experience a particular hour or two several times over, living as if they were Manfred, who is there with them. Just who is experiencing any one of the repetitions—who the viewpoint character is, in other words—is impossible to tell. Here once again Dick is deliberately withholding an explanation, and for good reason. If one could, by carefully attending to the text, tag each section, so that segment one was clearly Jack's view, two Manfred's, three Doreen's, and so on, then the experience would have that logical structure that is exactly contrary to the experience of psychosis Dick is attempting to convey. As it is, the experience cannot be recuperated into the realm of the rational. In the central chapters we experience the hour twice sequentially and move on. Time passes and other events occur, but at any moment we can be thrust unexpectedly back into that hour again, and when several days have apparently passed in the narrative, we are suddenly back on the night of the time-slip with Jack, who realizes his reality has been invaded by Manfred's.

In this "schizophrenia" brought on by the pressure of Martian life, then, the ultimate loss is of one's location in time and history, both personal and public. "It is the stopping of time. The end of experience, of anything new. Once the person becomes psychotic, nothing ever happens to him again." (*Martian Time-Slip,* chapter 11, p. 143). Without a human community either synchronic

or diachronic, the individual is left with nothing but Manfred's awful precognition, in which the inevitable decay and ruin of any human enterprise is all that can be seen, no matter how new it is. Entropy, one of many principles of universal action, becomes the only one that matters, and the universe is perceived as hostile rather than neutral.

Against this nightmare reality, engendered by the naked capitalism of this particular experiment in world reduction, are pitted only the limited resources of human solidarity. They are not enough to save Arnie Kott, whose crude collaboration with the system, and manipulation of every relationship he has for business purposes, results in his own death. Nor are they enough to save Norm Steiner, whose economic incompetence has caused suicidal despair. But for Jack and the others, the effort to connect with their fellow human beings is the meaningful project in their lives. Jack and his wife Sylvia are kept apart by Jack's work, and they both have affairs, desperate and unsatisfactory attempts to break out of their isolation. The attempts alone do them good, however, for when they get back together they realize the continuity of their relationship, its history, is valuable in itself. In the final scene of the novel, Jack and his father are out in the dark searching for their neighbors' kids with flashlights; Sylvia is at the door to call them to dinner.

> 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. [*Martian Time-Slip*, chapter 16, p. 220]

It is the quietest, calmest, and most resolute of Dick's endings. There has been no world-toppling change, no end to dystopia. We know, in fact, because of Manfred's vision, that the intensification of the dystopia will come to pass. Against this developing nightmare history are offered only the acts of caring for family and neighbors, but for the moment it is enough. In the gradual progression of Dick's thinking, from the optimism of the early revolutionary works to the increasing pessimism of the later novels, *Martian Time-Slip* stands with *The Man In the High Castle* at that balance point when a meaningful private life can counteract the pressures of a dystopian society.

In *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* Dick returns to the Martian setting of *Martian Time-Slip,* but abandons the technique of world reduction used in that novel in favor of his more usual procedure of extravagant inclusion (which we would call world expansion in order to be symmetrical, but which might be named the Kitchen Sink Principle).

Every element of *Martian Time-Slip* that is used again in this novel has been exaggerated and made more extreme. Earth is devastated by pollution, and temperatures in New York rise to 180 degrees daily. Even so, Earth is far preferable to life on this particular Mars, which is a much harsher place than it

was in the earlier novel. The United Nations must draft citizens and make them colonize Mars, which, in keeping with the exaggeration of every element, is only one of six equally miserable off-Earth colonies. On this Mars people live in dwellings called hovels, deep underground. They ignore the surface and the pitiful gardens being buried by sand. To escape the reality of their lives they eat a drug called Can-D, which allows them lifelike hallucinations, focused on elaborate dolls and dollhouses that they buy, and in the hallucinations imagine themselves to become. (Here is another found object, for the doll system is based on the Barbie and Ken dolls of the mid-1960s.)

The element of precognition is used to a much greater extent as well. Precogs are common and have strong powers, but in this intensely commercialized world the only use they are put to is the prediction of fashions in the miniature dollhouses so important to the Martian colonists. These precogs, using their awesome talent for an absurdly trivial purpose, are the central characters of the novel.

Time travel is also used more in *The Three Stigmata* than it was in *Martian Time-Slip*. It is the main result of eating the drug introduced by the villain Palmer Eldritch to compete with Can-D; eat Eldritch's Chew-Z, and one enters a time-slip much more extensive than any experienced in the earlier novel, and indeed the second half of *The Three Stigmata* is spent in continuous time travel.

Lastly, the element of the alien is used to a much greater extent in this work. In *Martian Time-Slip* the aliens were cousins to humans, and very much like a primitive earth culture. In *The Three Stigmata* the aliens are the offstage villains, represented by the evil figure of Palmer Eldritch, who has been possessed by these aliens. This demonic possession posing as an alien is not the only alien in the novel, either; there is a whole host of Martian bugs, Ganymedean molds, Venusian foodstuffs and the like.

In addition to the elements shared by both novels, which are in every case exaggerated in *The Three Stigmata,* the latter novel contains a variety of other elements as well, all introduced within the first fifty pages. These include future drugs, and the doll layouts used when under the drugs' influence; artificially extended lifetimes; artificially enhanced intelligence, which is achieved by stimulating evolutionary growth in individual members of the species (for a price); computer psychiatrists, who are placed in suitcases and work to make their clients sicker so they will not pass their draft tests and be sent off-Earth; and the radically changed weather over the entire face of the Earth, spawning resorts in Antarctica, and a whole technology to avoid being cooked while crossing the street at midday.

All of these elements and more are introduced as quickly as possible, in a deliberate attempt to create a sense of cultural overload in the reader. The multiplicity does not create the clash of logic we have noted in *Game-Players of Titan,* because all of these elements spring from a single premise, which is that capitalism has triumphed. All of the technological advances listed above are

made to be sold and colonies are set up to create new markets. Against the background of this historical development, all of the foreground elements can be historically explained. They were brought about because they could be sold.

Capitalism requires expansion of both products and markets to be successful, and it is conceivable that this expansion could proceed with exponential speed. This is what has occurred in the implied history of the world of *The Three Stigmata,* and it partially explains the differences between the Mars of *Martian Time-Slip* and the Mars of this novel. In *Martian Time-Slip,* capitalism is expanding at an arithmetical or linear rate, so that the Mars colony is at first a provincial and reduced community. In *The Three Stigmata,* on the other hand, there has been a virtual explosion of goods and services, and necessarily an explosion of markets to produce and consume these goods. Although world reduction is emphatically not the process guiding the construction of the novel's fictive world as a whole, still the Martian colonies are even less a rounded society than were those in *Martian Time-Slip;* in this case humans produce and consume in conditions similar to those in which modern dairy cows produce and consume. In this setting, in which every facet of life has been transformed to the double purpose of production/consumption, all of the science fiction elements not only fit together logically, they are called for by the initial premise. The only exception is the element of psychic powers, in this case precognition. We will discuss why this is so later in the chapter.

The character system and the plot-generating device both repeat the model used so successfully in *The Man In the High Castle* and *Martian Time-Slip.* Barney Mayerson is the little protagonist, and his boss Leo Bulero is the big protagonist. Just as Tagomi and Arnie are threatened in the earlier works, Bulero is threatened by the return of Palmer Eldritch from deep space, with a drug stronger than the one sold by Bulero's company. The threat affects everyone who uses Bulero's drug, most of whom are powerless inhabitants of the Martian hovel Barney eventually moves to. The plot then consists, as in the earlier novels, of the story of the responses to this threat.

This novel, though, does not proceed as did the previous two. Its very setting prevents it from doing so. The frontier setting of *Martian Time-Slip* is gone; this Mars is the end-case example of a consumer society, and its members are prevented from doing anything else. They simply cannot participate in the action of the plot, as even the most oppressed citizens of *Martian Time-Slip* can. They can only consume or die.

So on one level the novel becomes a story of consumption and resistance to it. If Dick's novels are considered as thought experiments, in which various factors of the fictive social reality are altered to test the results on human beings, then *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* is the experiment in which Dick takes his characters into the most hostile social environment he can imagine. In this deadly cage world the offer of a drug even more powerful than

the totally hallucinogenic but short-lived Can-D is immediately and eagerly taken up. The colonists' only hope of escaping consumer society is ever-increasing consumption, and this solution—this failure to resist—damns them. In this experiment the death wish of the little protagonist is understandable, and the manic vigor of the big protagonist's struggle to remain within his bubble world (literally, a luxury satellite circling Earth) is equally congruent to the novel's setting.

This, then, is a rich and coherent opening, a fully articulated, extravagant two-planet setting in which Dick can depict a hypertrophic capitalist system taking advantage of the very conditions it has created. Nevertheless, almost every critic of the novel has called it flawed. Brian Aldiss writes, "To my view *Eldritch* is a flawed work, over-complicated, and finally disappearing in a cloud of quasi-theology."[5] Darko Suvin also locates the novel's problems in its latter half:

> The appearance of Eldritch . . . *inside* the other characters shifts the conflict into their psyches—can they trust their reality perceptions? The political theme and horizon begin here to give way to the ontological. While the ontological dilemmas have a clear genesis in the political ones, they shift the power relationships from human institutions to mysterious entities, never quite accounted for or understood in the narration. *3SPE* is thus that first significant station in Dick's development where the ontological preoccupations began to weigh as heavily as, or more heavily than, the political dystopianism.[6]

For Suvin, then, the problem lies in the choice of subject matter, in the content of the novel's latter half. A fairly simple criterion is set up: when the work's concern is political it is good; when it becomes ontological, it is bad. To an extent the dictum works in this case, where the ontological theme is represented by "mysterious entities" that amount to little more than the demonic-possession motif from supernatural fiction, lightly disguised as the story of an alien encounter. (In this regard the novel has surprising similarities to Robert Heinlein's *The Puppet Masters.*) A defense for the political nature of these "mysterious entities" could be made, however; Eldritch is clearly a "mad capitalist" (a term coined by Suvin to match "mad scientist"), and it could be said that the alien that invaded him during his voyages represents the spirit of capitalism, just as his product Chew-Z could be thought of as the ultimate consumer item.

The falling off of the second half of *The Three Stigmata* is not, therefore, caused by its content, as much as it is by formal shifts made by Dick—changes in form that are neither typical of Dick nor made necessary by the content of this particular novel. The typical form of Dick's novels, as we have shown, articulates a network of characters, and a multistranded plot is created by the interaction of these characters with each other and with the forces of circumstance. Often the characters are ignorant of each other, or at least of each others' motivations, and the effect of this ignorance and of circumstances

is invariably ironic. The clashing interests, understandings, and even world views of the characters, and the ironic dominolike movement of the various subplots against each other, constitute the distinctive quality of Dick's novel construction.

Now, in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* the usual web of characters required for this construction *is* established, in its beginning. Leo and Barney oppose Palmer Eldritch, and there are subsidiary characters to fit every plot in the scheme given in chapter 2. The network is gradually abandoned, however, from the moment when Leo has Chew-Z forced into him by Eldritch in chapter 5 of the novel (p. 88), to the point when Barney eats Chew-Z in chapter 10 (p. 204). The novel becomes the story of these two men's struggle to defeat Eldritch, and the last 200 pages of its 280 pages are told almost exclusively from these two men's points of view—the last seventy pages from Barney's viewpoint alone. This means that important subplots are left dangling. For example, the structurally important subplot of the Hnatts (the story of their submission to the "artificially induced evolution" of Dr. Denkmal emphasizes both the desire of the society's members for something more satisfying than consumption, and the characteristic method for seeking to satisfy that desire, namely, consuming more)—this plot is made prominent in the first third of the novel, but is then dropped and not returned to. The same is true of the subplot concerning the members of the hovel on Mars that Barney joins, who are prominent in the middle of the novel and then dropped. Eldritch's daughter Zoe, and Anne, a fellow traveller of Barney's on the trip to Mars, are introduced, but hardly more.

The result is that the novel's structure shifts to that of a simple conflict between hero and villain, and the outcome of the conflict depends on factors beyond our understanding, on "mysterious entities." Barney and other precogs "see" that there is "a good 45% chance" that Leo Bulero will eventually kill Eldritch, but how he will do this, given Eldritch's superhuman powers, is never explained, and in fact the novel ends before the deed is actually accomplished. The final scene creates that ambiguity—"did we defeat the evil or are we deceived?"—that is a staple of the demonic-possession tale, indicating again *The Three Stigmata*'s kinship with that older genre, as well as its similarity to *Game-Players of Titan*.[7] Once the polyphonic structure established in the first chapters is abandoned in this way, its several realistic conflicts replaced by this single supernatural one, then the burden of sustaining the reader's interest falls on Barney, and his struggle against Eldritch. There are no rules governing the struggle, however, so given the freedom of this magical drug Chew-Z Dick can manipulate text and reader in an arbitrary way, while we continue to hope for a continuation of other plot strands we have had our interest engaged in.

Truncating the novel's structure in this way also brings to the foreground the novel's weakest element, precognition. Every other element in the novel is given some historical justification by the rapid growth of capitalism. They have

appeared as the result of human efforts. Precognition, on the other hand, is just there. It can be taken to represent the pragmatic, market-analysis sort of thinking which is the only use capitalism has for speculation, and this is indeed its best defense. But the text also asserts that the power truly exists in the world of the novel, at the same time that it is given no history. In this lack the element is incongruent in a way that none of the others are.

Time travel as experienced in the novel, because it is caused by drugs and may be illusory only, is less of a problem. To the extent that the futures travelled to are the same as those foreseen by the precogs, however, the two elements are allied, and in this way time travel is an element that contributes to the novel's loss of its multiple plots. But it is the stripping down to a single plot strand that is the novel's great weakness. One feels that if Dick had kept all of the lines of the plot going he could have justified the questionable elements, or at least made them less prominent, as they would be part of a larger whole. This implies a 400- or 500-page novel, which commercial considerations would have discouraged. As it stands, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* is an early member of that group of Dick's novels that break in the middle to follow a single strand of the plot, allowing the larger structure of the work to collapse. The fictive world established in the novel's first half, however, is rich enough to make the novel one of Dick's most important.

These two Martian thought experiments follow the common pattern thesis-antithesis, in which Dick reverses not his premises, but his method. The first is an exercise in world reduction, the second an exercise in the extravagant overburdening of elements in one fictive world. Both of them yield similar Martian Americas; as Brian Aldiss remarks, "This is Mars used in elegant and expert fashion as a metaphor of spiritual poverty. In functioning as a dreamscape, it has much in common with the semiallegorical semisurrealist locations used by Kafka to heighten his ghastly Comedy of Bafflement."[8] By displacing even the most trivial and seemingly value-free cultural artifacts—those found objects such as the game of Life, Barbie dolls, the robot Lincoln at Disneyland—onto the wasteland setting of Mars, Dick forces us to acknowledge that these objects do have value, that they indicate a larger system of values. This is the use of the estrangement effect that Brecht defined, and it is used in the same way for systems as it is for artifacts. It is a metaphorical usage, in which one term is the fictive world, the other the real. American business looks like insanity on Mars (or at best like feudalism); personal relationships look fragile, and often meaningless. Yet a close reading forces us to recognize the metaphor, and to acknowledge that these are the same business and personal practices we employ in the here and now—so that the second movement of the estrangement effect, re-cognition, becomes a powerful shock.

In these novels Dick clarifies the themes that will occupy him during the novels to come and defines a contest that will be staged time and again.

> Below lay the tomb world, the immutable cause-and-effect world of the demonic. At median extended the layer of the human, but at any instant a man could plunge—descend as if sinking—into the hell-layer beneath. Or: he could ascend to the ethereal world above, which constituted the third of the trinary layers. Always, in his middle level of the human, a man risked the sinking. And yet the possibility of ascent lay before him; any aspect or sequence or reality *could become either,* at any instant. Hell and heaven, not after death but now! Depression, all mental illness, was the sinking. And the other . . . how was it achieved?
>
> Through empathy. Grasping another, not from outside but from the inner. For example, had he ever really looked at Emily's pots as anything more than merchandise for which a market existed? No. What I ought to have seen in them, he realized, is the artistic intention, the spirit she's revealing intrinsically. [*The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch,* chapter 5, p. 83]

The terminology is religious, or ontological, but the thoughts can easily be translated into the terminology of human institutions, relationships, and actions, as the character himself does in the second paragraph. We will see this precarious struggle to ascend—or to avoid descent—fought over and over as the novels appear in rapid succession through the years that follow.

The two Martian novels made full use of the displacement from the real, and the "open field" that the other planet colony offers to the science fiction writer. The rest of Dick's novels of the mid-1960s are set in the heart of his subject, America. In these other novels the displacements, exaggerations and estrangements will be just as severe as in the Martian novels, for of the two methods we have seen used here, world reduction and extravagant inclusion, the latter will be Dick's method of choice, so much so that it will come to seem the only mode available to him. But no matter how severe the estrangements, there will be no mistaking what society he is talking about.

6

The Triumph of Capitalism

The Penultimate Truth • *The Simulacra* • *Clans of the Alphane Moon* • *Dr. Bloodmoney* • *Now Wait For Last Year*

> All literature is at one and the same time both wish and alibi. It is a fantasy which satisfies out deepest longings, while it simultaneously attempts to justify our particular privileges and to perpetuate a status quo in which they may continue in existence. Literature is thus at one and the same time universal and class-bound; human and bourgeois; utopian and ideological; and the complete description of any given work of art—no matter how highly we may value it as a universal document, no matter how indignant its special class-pleading may leave us—necessarily involves an account of both of these apparently mutually exclusive functions.
>
> Fredric Jameson, "Marxism and Science Fiction"

It is interesting to think of the two protagonists of *The Penultimate Truth* (1964) as representations of two aspects of Dick himself, performing the two functions of literature that Fredric Jameson describes above. The big protagonist, Joseph Adams, is a speech writer for the ruling class, and with the help of a computerized cliché maker called a "rhetorizer" he helps to keep the working class deceived. The little protagonist, Nicolas St. James, is the president of his little underground workers' enclave, and he escapes to the surface, then returns to tell his constituents about the lies of the ruling class, thus precipitating the system's downfall.

We can read this fiction as a metaphor for the two roles of the writer that Jameson has outlined. In 1964 and 1965, Dick's books appeared at a faster rate than ever; they were poorly printed paperbacks that were available for a short time and then disappeared. Observing Joseph Adams, another of Dick's bitter self-portraits, we can see that Dick felt he was a small part of a large entertainment industry, helping to create the happy consciousness of the population. His work, like all science fiction, seemed no more than escapist diversion.

Yet the more Dick felt this to be so, the more he struggled against the situation in the content of what he wrote, in the attempt to establish the other function of literature, the utopian wish. Nicolas St. James, the little

protagonist, represents this side of Dick's work, and it is how Dick *wished* to see himself: as a leader of the community, who tells his constituents of the true nature of the political system oppressing them.

The fictional worlds of the novels of these two years use all the elements Dick has used before, to refer us insistently back to our own real world, in the manner of distorting mirrors. Satiric criticism is one first step in the utopian wish, and this first step is repeated several times, in several novels, until in *Dr. Bloodmoney* the wish is actualized in a fictional world, in what will be the only utopian work in all Dick's opus.

First, let us take a look at Dick's general strategy in these years. In *The Penultimate Truth,* most of the world's population is stored underground, and the only information these people receive comes through media controlled from above. They believe war is raging, and are spurred by this belief to frenetic production. The benefits of this labor are enjoyed by the international ruling class, who have inherited the earth by manufacturing the sham conflict.

In *The Simulacra* (1964), the president is a robot built by the ruling class. West Germany is the fifty-third state, the First Lady is the most important visible government official, and a secret cabal of industrialists are challenged by the national police for control of the country.

In *Clans of the Alphane Moon* (1964), a hospital planet is governed by paranoids, defended by manic-depressives, entertained by schizophrenics, and so on. The CIA is attempting to conquer this small independent political entity.

In *Now Wait For Last Year* (1966), Earth is ruled by humanoid aliens, who lead us in a war against buglike aliens. The insect aliens turn out to be much more humane than the humanoids ruling us.

Now, none of these fictional worlds are intended to be taken as rational, plausible, or even possible futures for our society. The situation in *The Penultimate Truth* is the best example of this. It would be absolutely impossible to house the population of the world underground, and Dick simply ignores the various technical and physical difficulties. In doing so he is breaking one of the central conventions of the genre as established during the Golden Age. This convention required that the writer give his fictional world at least the veneer of rationality and possibility, and more usually a close adherence to the physical laws of the universe was expected. This constituted the "realism" of Golden Age science fiction, and was therefore an important, central convention. Yet Dick breaks this convention repeatedly in these novels, because these fictional worlds are not *meant* to be read as plausible futures of ours, but rather as metaphors, or metaphor systems, arranged to make satiric criticisms of contemporary society.

These novels take metaphors that we use in our life in contemporary America, in describing ourselves and our institutions, and they make those

metaphors real, or literal, in the fictional world of the narrative. First let's take a small example of this process, to make it clear. People in America may say, "That commercial is a pest, or "That ad is really bugging me." In *The Simulacra* we read the following:

> The theodorous Nitz commercial squeaked, "In the presence of strangers do you feel you *don't quite exist?* Do they seem not to notice you, as if you were invisible? On a bus or a spaceship do you sometimes look around you and discover that no one, *absolutely no one,* recognizes you or cares about you and quite possibly may even—"
>
> With his carbon dioxide-powered pellet rifle, Maury Frauenzimmer carefully shot the Nitz commercial as it hung pressed against the far wall of his cluttered office. It had squeezed in during the night, had greeted him in the morning with its tinny harague.
>
> Broken, the commercial dropped to the floor. Maury crushed it with his solid, compacted weight, and then returned the pellet rifle to its rack. [*The Simulacra,* chapter 9, p. 116]

This is a perfect example of a metaphor made literal truth. In the world of this novel, commercials are little flying pests. And a transformation of this sort can be a real eye-opener, forcing us to look at the metaphor more seriously than we ever have before.

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson have shown, in *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), that much of our understanding of the world is metaphorical in nature. Many of our basic concepts are structured and made comprehensible by metaphor systems which compare the concepts to something in the physical world, or to more physically oriented concepts. For instance, "He attacked every weak point in my defense." "Your claims are indefensible," and a host of other common phrases, are generated from an underlying and unspoken metaphor, that *argument is war.* The metaphor is so crucial to our understanding of what we mean by *argument* that we may say that the concept is structured by the metaphor; if our culture's underlying metaphor was *argument is dance,* then the word would mean something different. Thus our basic understanding of the concept is metaphorical in nature, as argument is not literally war. In this way metaphors permeate most of our concepts, and our understanding of the world is vitally affected by the metaphors the culture uses to create meaning.

It follows, then, that our understanding of politics is also partly metaphorical in nature. And Dick has used some of these popular metaphors as the building plans for his fictional worlds. We may say, "The President is an automaton controlled by large corporations," to express our perception of the true balance of power in our society, while at the same time we recognize that whatever truth our statement may have is not literal. In *The Simulacra,* however, the statement becomes literally true, and this transformation draws our attention back to the mataphor in an urgent way, for the transformation is the equivalent of saying, "These statements are not wild exaggerations, they are

essential truths." "The ruling class keeps the workers underfoot": this is the reality of the world in *The Penultimate Truth.* "Our leaders are insane": literally so, in *Clans of the Alphane Moon.*

So, in these novels Dick is giving fictional reality to metaphors that already exist in our world. The power of this procedure is generated in two ways. First, the metaphor is greatly elaborated, presenting, in Lakoff and Johnson's terms, all of the *entailments* of the *primary metaphor.* Thus in *The Penultimate Truth* "The ruling class keeps the workers underfoot" is the primary metaphor, and a fairly common one it is in our culture. Entailments of this include the physical details of living underground, the system of creating lies about a nonexistent war (the function of which is now revealed, as it is necessary to "keep them under"), and the struggle it takes to escape to the surface, to get above the "poverty level." Another entailment concerns those who do escape to the surface. They are incarcerated in camps that are not much of an improvement over the underground tanks—and suddenly we perceive apartment complexes in a new way, in this bitter representation of the middle class. All of these entailments reveal the systematic nature of the primary metaphor of *levels,* and we realize just how basic this metaphor is to our understanding of the social structure we live within. We are usually content to exist in this system of levels, but reading about those trapped underground in *The Penultimate Truth* may cause us to think again; it can become an uncomfortable experience, for here the metaphor is real.

This "effect of the real" is the second way that the power of this procedure is generated. This effect is similar, but not identical, to *l'effet du réel* proposed by Roland Barthes. Here is how Jonathan Culler summarizes Barthes' idea:

> In a description of a room, items which are not picked up and integrated by symbolic or thematic codes and which do not have a function in the plot produce what Barthes calls a 'reality effect': deprived of any other function, they become integrated units by signifying 'we are the real, . . . Elements of this kind confirm the mimetic contract and assure the reader that he can interpret the text as about a real world.[1]

Now, unintegrated items of the sort described here occur all the time in Dick's work. For an example, let us return to the "Commercial bug" passage that I quoted above as a small example of a realized metaphor. Directly following that passage, the text continues:

> "The mail," Chic Strikerock said. "Where's today's mail?" He had been searching everywhere in the office since his arrival.
>
> Maury noisily sipped coffee from his cup and said, "Look on top of the files. Under *that rag we use to clean the keys of the typewriter.*" He bit into a breakfast doughnut, *the sugar-covered type.* [*The Simulacra,* chapter 9, p. 116, italics mine]

The phrases I have italicized contain just the sort of unintegrated elements Barthes means, and they have the same function, assuring the reader that "he can interpret the text as about a real world." But when we recall that immediately preceding these paragraphs Maury has taken a pellet gun and shot down a flying mechanical advertisement, we must ask, what is the *effect* of the "effect of the real" in science fiction? What is the reader to make of a text where fantastic elements are so closely yoked to everyday, mundane details of our world?

Ultimately, I think, the reader is forced to accept everything in the text as "real"; he suspends his disbelief. This means that, when reading Dick, he believes in fantastic, even physically impossible things—including the largest building blocks of Dick's fictional worlds, the primary metaphors that Dick has taken from the culture. And by this process the particular power of Dick's method is generated. As with the reality breakdowns discussed in chapter 3, when a situation is presented as a collective reality rather than an individual perception, it becomes harder for the reader to deny or reject it. If an individual says, "The president is a robot controlled by hidden forces," we can shrug it off; that is someone else's view. If a character in a fiction says the same thing, the rejection becomes even easier. But if, in the world of a novel, the president really is a robot controlled by hidden forces (as in *The Simulacra*), then the rejection becomes much more difficult. We have agreed to read the novel, and countless mundane details within it create the "effect of the real," and that effect of the effect is to cause us to accept the fictional premise as "real," at least while we are reading. When we finish the book and return to our own world, we can see that it was not a direct representation of our society, but one last method of the science fiction enterprise gives it added weight in our considerations: the world of the novel has been placed in our future. It is part of our history, at least conditionally, and as such it has the same instructive value that all history has for us. The combination of all these effects forces us to examine the primary metaphor that Dick has fleshed out as never before. We see how profoundly metaphors of the sort shape our political understanding, and the particular metaphor used by Dick can be used as a sort of conceptual template for drawing meaning out of current events. We may even recognize that we have already been using the metaphor to understand our political system.

This process of bringing metaphor systems to life, or bringing them into history in the form of our future, is a way of representing the present that necessarily emphasizes some aspects of the present while hiding others. It is a distortion, a funhouse mirror reflection, very similar to the distortions used to create satire. Because Dick's intent is often satiric, the results of his distorted representations are often exaggerated and grotesque, as representations in satire often are. Nothing could be more grotesque than housing the world's

population underground, for here the natural and unnatural are firmly yoked together, and as Mark Rose has observed, this is one way of defining the grotesque. The bizarre, impossible world of *The Penultimate Truth* is political satire, yet at the same time it merely fleshes out a primary metaphor in our political understanding, the metaphor of *levels of society*. We are forced by the text to acknowledge that when one of our primary political metaphors is made real in fiction, the results are a nightmare world.

At the same time, *The Penultimate Truth* and Dick's other novels of these years force our definition of science fiction to drop the requirement of strict rationality and scientific plausibility. Thus they contribute to the weakening of what had been a central convention of the genre.[2]

The Simulacra contains some formal devices that help to express Dick's growing political concern. The novel's extended subplot describes the journey of a group of recording engineers to tropical Oregon, where they plan to record a telekinetic pianist. As in Dick's early novels, the subplot serves as a commentary on the main action. The engineers find that Oregon is the home of a mutant colony, composed of abnormal people they identify as Neanderthals.[3] The Neanderthals are waiting for the world state to collapse, in the expectation of replacing Homo sapiens; once again a metaphor—"society is devolving"—is made literal.

It is the chronology of this subplot that makes it different from the earlier subplots in Dick, for here it is also used to time the events in the main plot. Small sections of chapters 1, 4, 6, 8, 11, 13, and 15 are devoted to the subplot, and the novel both begins and ends with it. So we return to it with a certain metronomic regularity, and the events in it take, as far as we can tell, about three days. But the events in the main plot, which include business transactions, diplomatic intrigues, and most of a national coup, should take a month at the very least, and it would be more reasonable to guess that they take three or four months. The subplot, however, is marked by shared occurrences with the main plot at both beginning and end, so the two *should* take the same amount of time.

The effect of this unequal coupling (an innovation of Dick's that I have never seen elsewhere) is to give the events of the main plot a sense of tremendous speed and acceleration. Combined with the cultural crowding achieved by the jamming in of a score of commercial and political innovations, it results in a sense of cultural overloading, an unmanageable acceleration of history. This sense of acceleration is achieved partly by quick cuts from scene to scene (their average length is five pages or less), but mostly by this new device, the matched yet unequal chronology of main plot and subplot.

Another innovation for Dick, which in concert with the first accentuates the impression of history accelerating out of control, is the absence in *The Simulacra* of the little and big protagonists. Those who might control history

are gone. In even the most crowded character schemes from the earlier novels, it was always possible to pick out the two protagonists through whom most of the narrative was told, and around whom the plots revolved. In *The Simulacra,* however, there are twenty-two characters, and eight or nine of them share the point-of-view time, and the linking positions in the plot, about equally. Here, then, is the Dick plot in its purest form: a web of characters, linked by personal and business relationships, react in their different ways to a social crisis impinging on them all. Each of their stories is equally important. This melting away of the protagonists into the rest of the character system takes the emphasis away from any hero or heroine of the story, and places it firmly on the society.

Another effect of this absence of the protagonists is that we understand better than ever that no one controls these histories. As I noted, *The Man In the High Castle* marks that shift in Dick's narratives when the dystopia can no longer be overthrown. A holding action to prevent the dystopia from worsening was the best that could be achieved in that story. In *The Simulacra* this shift has been carried a step further, for there are no protagonists to attempt the holding action. The coup at the end of the book is a palace coup, in which power may shift from one branch of the police state to another, but nothing significant will change. Those characters who might have achieved some sort of holding action—the First Lady, the leader of a revolutionary group, the head of the National Police, Hermann Goerring (who has been scooped out of the past by the government)—all are dead or in flight as the novel ends. Indeed, almost every one of the twenty-two characters we have been acquainted with is either dead or escaping, and the civil strife rages on between anonymous figures. The final scene shows the watchful Neanderthals, waiting in Oregon. Perhaps all of society will collapse; if not, control will merely shift from one branch of the police state to another. Just as the structure of little and big protagonist has disappeared, so has the holding action that it is their task to accomplish.

The one hopeful note in this dark novel (which is also filled with comic touches), is perhaps undercut by Dick, although here I am speculating. Three of the most sympathetic characters escape at the end of the novel in a spaceship—but note where they are headed:

> What would he need on Mars? Toothbrush, pajamas, a heavy coat?
>
> *You'll be all right now,* the papoolas were thinking...
>
> "Yes," Ian agreed. He lay back against the side of the jalopy and relaxed, as the ship shot upward into the night emptiness and the new planet which lay ahead. [*The Simulacra,* chapter 12, p. 189]

This is the only hopeful moment at the end of the novel, but because they are escaping to Mars, we must pause to wonder if Dick means this ironically. The advertisements the characters have read say Mars is fine, but we are never given

a direct view of it, and so we left with what we know of Mars from Dick's other works. In *Martian Time-Slip,* Jack Bohlen too thought he was escaping when he emigrated to Mars; he had heard the same sort of glowing advertisements. I suspect that Dick is here undercutting the idea of an easy escape from our society. If the characters in *The Simulacra* are fleeing to the Mars that Dick has already shown us, then they are going from the frying pan to the fire.

From the above discussion one might be led to believe that *The Simulacra* is one of Dick's best books, a harsh, witty representation of political power and everyday life in contemporary America. It is that, and it is one of Dick's most interesting novels, but it is seriously flawed as well, and the flaw is of a type that recurs in the novels of these years. The flaw is a natural consequence of Dick's strategy of "extravagant inclusion," and it is in the tradition of the American pulp magazines, and of the short stories of O. Henry, with their ubiquitous "twist" endings. Plots in the pulps were often designed to surprise the reader again and again, and just as the reader reached the end and felt that he understood the final surprise, there would be one more twist—and that constituted a satisfactory ending. The notion of twists calls up the image of a screw, and it helps to make clear the point that when a screw is screwed down tightly, further twists may do nothing but strip the threads. This is what happens to Dick's plots when he tries to add one twist too many. In *The Simulacra,* the twist is this: Bertold Goltz, leader of the resistance to the police state, gains access to "Von Lessinger time travel equipment" (note how a mechanical means for time travel is closely connected to a crippling weakness in one of Dick's novels), and he vexes and balks the government at every turn.[4] But at the very end of the book we learn that Goltz is both leader of the popular resistance, and head of the corporate cabal that controls the country. It doesn't work; with this revelation both character and plot coherence fall apart. We could argue that this reversal is Dick's way of indicating that the established powers will co-opt any organized resistance to it, but the problem here is that Goltz has been having great success as the underground leader, and has been seriously undermining the very power structure he heads. Also, Goltz fiercely opposed the plan to retrieve Hermann Goerring from the past, but after his real position is revealed we realize he could have stopped the Goerring project at any time. It just doesn't work. There is no rational explanation here. The surprise of Goltz's "true role" is the one twist too many that strips the entire thread of the narrative.

The Penultimate Truth contains a similar flaw, and it too is connected with the element of objective, mechanical time travel. The interesting setting that I have described as a political metaphor made literal, becomes in the second half of the novel nothing more than the background for an adventure concerning the character David Lantano, a Cherokee Indian chief who (like

Goerring in *The Simulacra*) has been scooped out of the past by a time machine. Darko Suvin identified this second-half plot as an intrigue from A.E. Van Vogt's *The House That Stood Still,* and comments, "alas... (it is) marring one of Dick's potentially most interesting books."[5] *The Penultimate Truth* is one of Dick's most important works for understanding his strategy during these years, but as an isolated work the book is deeply flawed by this one twist, or element, too many.

One way Dick avoided this problem of "One element too many" was by constructing fictional worlds that would allow the inclusion of anything he cared to add. The next novels to appear were of this type. *Clans of the Alphane Moon* (1964) is the story of the CIA's attempt to invade and conquer a small, independent moon. Thus the political content of the novel is explicit, and closely tied to the real world of 1964. Within the satire directed at the CIA is another satire, for the Alphane moon is a mental hospital, and is a satiric microcosm of the world at large. At one point in the text Dick makes his program clear:

> According to my theory the several sub-types of mental illness should be functioning on this world as classes somewhat like those of ancient India. These people here, the hebephrenics, would be equivalent to the untouchables. The manics would be the warrior class, without fear—one of the highest. The paranoids would function as the statesman class; they'd be in charge of developing political ideology and social programs... The simple schizophrenics... they'd correspond to the poet class, although some of them would be religious visionaries—as would some of the Heebs. Those with polymorphic schizophrenia simplex would be the creative members of the society. There would be... advanced forms of the obsessive-compulsive neurosis... the clerks and the office-holders of society, the ritualistic functionaries... their conservatism would balance the radical quality of the polys and give the society stability."
>
> Magebroom said, "So one would think the whole affair would work." He gestured. "How would it differ from our own society on Terra?"
>
> For a time she considered the question; it was a good one. [*Clans of the Alphane Moon,* chapter 7, pp. 73-74]

This satiric method is very close to that used by Ben Jonson in *Every Man In His Humour;* in each the psychological categories of the day have been used to create a character scheme, in which individual characters are the representation of a particular psychological type. The narrative in *Clans* divides its time equally between the moon of the title and Earth, and we see by the contrast that the so-called psychotics on the hospital moon function as a community as well or better than their Terran counterparts, while their motives are in every case clearer, and more honestly revealed. The "sanest" character in the narrative is the Pare (paranoid) leader Gabriel Barnes, whose logic is both hilarious and awful. The "craziest" character is, naturally, the psychiatrist. And the wisest

character is a Ganymedean slime mold, Lord Running Clam. All this is in accordance with one of central conventions of satire, which calls for reversals of the reader's expectations and definitions.

Also, to return to the problem of the excessive inclusion of elements, in a novel conceived as this one is there can be no clash of disparate elements, nor a twist too many, because here the use of the science fiction elements as metaphors for psychic states makes anything possible, and defensible. (Although perhaps time travel's inclusion, especially as an objective, mechanical "fact," would have caused the usual difficulties.) Here the science fiction elements are being used metaphorically to represent psychic states, and the conventions are drawn from one of science fiction's precursor genres, satire—not, I repeat, from the conventions of 1940s science fiction. Here plausibility and scientific rationality are not the issue; in fact, in the book's climactic battle the schizophrenic telepath defeats the rational CIA scientists, and achieves mastery over the physical world. Thus, within the text Dick repeats the story of his generic battle, and the result, appropriately enough, is one of his funniest books.

Let's take a closer look at the interaction between Dick's novels of this period and the conventions of the genre. Stanislaw Lem, who has written two articles on Dick, is the harshest critic of the elements Dick takes from the genre for repeated use.

> Trash is everywhere present in Dick's books; however, from time to time, in some of his novels, Dick succeeds in executing a master-stroke... He has invented an extremely refined tactic: he uses elements of trash (that is, those degenerate molecules that once had a sacramental, metaphysical value), so that he leads to a gradual resurrection of the long extinct, metaphysical-exotic values. In a way, he makes trash battle against trash.[6]

By "trash" Lem appears to mean precisely those elements (molecules) that appear everywhere in American science fiction, and that I have discussed in chapter 3. Each of the elements serves as the basis for scores of popular books, until (in Lem's view) they become unexamined icons, or indeed, were never examined in the first place, but were merely facile replacements for elements in earlier genres such as Westerns, war stories, or Gothics. Lem, a very serious science fiction writer, is appalled at the manner in which these elements have been used: their contradiction of physical laws ignored, their consequences if they somehow did exist likewise ignored. Space opera is the prototype for this trivial usage: spaceships replace horses, laser guns replace Colt .44s, and galactic space serves as the Wild West. None of the philosophical implications or the metaphorical application of the elements are explored, and for Lem this repeated misuse has made them "trash."

Now Dick is using these same debased elements, and in a way that is superficially similar to the way they were "misused" earlier. Lem winces at this:

"The surfaces of his books seem quite coarse and raw to me, connected with an omnipresence of trash... Dick cannot contain trash; rather he lets loose a pandemonium and lets it calm down on its way."[7] So Dick transforms these elements somehow, but Lem is not at all certain how he does it. He tries to clarify the process with a parable concerning Dick's relationship with the American science fiction reader:

> If many colored flags are put upon the masts of a ship in the harbor, a child on the shore will think that this is a merry game and perhaps will have a lot of fun watching, although at the same time an adult will recognize the flags as a language of signals and know that it stands for a report of a plague that has broken out aboard the ship. The SF readership equals the child, not the adult, in the story.[8]

So Dick has made a "language of signals" using the "trashy" elements (which are trash, after all, only because of the use they have been subjected to; in the parable they are merely colored flags, neutral things, and they are in fact elements that Lem himself has often used)—and perhaps this language is similar to the metaphorical systems I have described above. Even with the help of his parable, Lem still cannot understand fully how Dick has managed to create his private language: "Dick succeeds in changing a circus tent into a temple... [and] it is extremely difficult to grasp analytically the means that make it possible for him to do so."[9] My contention is that Dick accomplished his feat by arranging the elements of the genre into larger metaphorical systems, and it seems to me that Lem is close to saying the same thing.

The process may have worked something like this: through the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s, popular science fiction gave to American society a series of images that reflected and in some ways led the technological development of the society. That these images were in some cases laid over older images (spaceship/horse, alien/ghost) only gave the changing society a certain continuity, and helped to give the images power. These new elements entered the language as apt ways to describe the changes appearing in the increasingly technological society. The images became enough a part of the language to be called dead metaphors, or at least the debased metaphors we call clichés. The fiction concerned with them, reusing the same images again and again for the same trivial purposes, was likewise debased to the point of cliché. In resurrecting these images, Dick fearlessly tossed several elements into each novel, echoing the multiplicity and cultural crowding of the society he was writing for and about; and more importantly, he organized these elements into the entailments of large and central metaphorical statements concerning the basic political nature of the society. It is the metaphorical coherence of Dick's orchestration of these old elements—not always perfectly achieved, as I have shown—that transforms the elements. This is the process that Lem called the "language of signals," in which debased individual elements, arranged properly, can signify.

I think we are justified in seeing in this passage a description of Dick's own working methods during the mid-1960s:

> He began, with professional canniness, to conjure up the initial scene. It, of course, would be Ziggy at home, trying peacefully to do some harmless task. Perhaps Ziggy was reading the evening homeopape. And, like some Harpy, his wife would be giving him the business. Yes, Chuck thought, I can supply verisimilitude to this scene; I can draw on years of experience. He began to type.
>
> For several hours he wrote, marvelling at the efficiency of the illegal hexo-amphetamine stimulants; he felt no fatigue—in fact, he worked more swiftly than had been his custom in times past. At seven-thirty, with the street outside touched by the long, golden rays of the morning sun, he rose stiffly, walked into the kitchen and began to prepare himself breakfast. Now for my other job, he said to himself. [*Clans of the Alphane Moon,* chapter 8, p. 96]

The problem of Dick's prose during this period is different from the problem of the "omnipresence of trash" that Lem discusses, but they are related. The very uneven writing we find in the novels of this period presents a similar aesthetic difficulty: can good works of art be created from prose that is mundane, or even sloppy? Examples such as Dickens suggest that it is possible. But there is no question that in some books of this period, Dick has done his concepts a disservice by giving them a sketchy or hasty treatment. "At the beginning of *The Penultimate Truth* we are dismayed by the woeful prose," as Bruce Gillespie puts it.[10] Other critics (all of them writers themselves, it is interesting to note) make a guarded defense of this failing. Lem himself does not fault Dick's prose. Ursula K. Le Guin has said that she finds Dick's writing always adequate to the task, and often poetical in a stripped, skeletal way.[11] And Robert Silverberg, in an introduction to *Clans of the Alphane Moon,* defends Dick's eccentric choices in his prose, declaring that since Dick has proven he *can* write well, when he doesn't it is a matter of choice.[12]

Even if that were true, some of Dick's choices at this level are certainly poor ones. In *The Penultimate Truth* there are the phrases "it preyed vulturely" and "an Ozymandiasian structure," among many other similar awkward phrases, in just the first few pages. It is unlikely that Dick would have allowed these to stand if he had taken the time to revise the text. The truth of the matter is that Dick was working too fast at this time to finish the works properly. The miserable speech-writer Joseph Adams, hating his "rhetorizer" and barely able to write, is a measure of Dick's own awareness of the problem. The economic pressure on him to produce quickly was tremendous; despite the prodigious output in 1964 and 1965, he made only $6,427 in 1966, and he had many financial obligations.[13] In short, some of these are unrevised works, and are full of mistakes and hasty writing.

This explanation does not change the aesthetic worth of the books. Dick himself said in correspondence in 1968 that he had not written an important work in four years, so his own dissatisfaction is evident.[14] More than the books

of any other period in Dick's career, these of 1964 and 1965 lean on each other for support; one must read all of them together, for their importance grows when they are taken collectively rather than individually. In this nearly continuous tumult of novels it would be artificial to make too many divisions, yet *The Penultimate Truth, The Simulacra, Clans of the Alphane Moon,* and *Now Wait For Last Year,* taken together as a tetralogy one might call *The Triumph of Capitalism,* form a large work more impressive than the sum of its parts. And above these four stands their thematic reversal, the defeat of capitalism that is *Dr. Bloodmoney,* a fully worked achievement that reascends to the aesthetic level of the earlier masterpieces *The Man In the High Castle* and *Martian Time-Slip.*

Dr. Bloodmoney is the reversal of the controlling metaphor system that Dick was working with in the novels discussed above. It is the story of a world in which corporation capitalism has been destroyed by nuclear war, and it is the only serious treatment of this element in all of Dick's work. Coming as it does in the midst of a group of novels that are concerned with the reverse of this situation, it deserves our close attention.

One source of material for this novel is Dick's own early unpublished novel, *Voices From the Street.* In that novel, the protagonist Stuart Hadley works for Jim Fergussen, and wishes the bombs would fall; in *Dr. Bloodmoney,* Stuart McConchie works for Jim Fergussen and the bombs do fall. It is as if Dick had decided to explore the alternate track, taking his fictional world away from the real one written about in his early work.

Most postholocaust novels have been Stone Age or feudal sagas disguised as science fiction; the holocaust is imagined to completely rupture history, so that the writer is free to substitute whatever less developed period he wants to. Only the noting of ruins from our time place these narratives in the future, and often their action is concerned with the discovery of the existence of a past civilization that destroyed itself in war. Some of the most famous works in the subgenre are of this type, and almost all of the countless lesser works are. The best of these works, such as Walter Miller's beautiful *A Canticle For Leibowitz* (1959), or Keith Roberts' *The Chalk Giants* (1974), use the element to explore the possibility of a cyclical history, but the majority of them are little more than Stone Age fables claiming to be science fiction.

The other main type of postholocaust novel describes the war itself, and the years immediately following it. Some of these have been published as a sort of political thriller, and have become bestsellers. Nevil Shute's *On the Beach* and Pat Frank's *Alas, Babylon* are two examples of this type.

Dr. Bloodmoney stands in the second group of postholocaust novels, although it does not resemble them in any way. In Dick's view, the triumph of capitalism results in a dystopian state; it follows, then, that the defeat of capitalism opens up utopian possibilities. After the awful period directly

following the war—the "dead rat raw" period, as its survivors refer to it—the very small communities that reform are as close to a utopia as we ever get in Dick's work; it is a Jeffersonian pastoral in marked contrast to the dystopian nightmares that fill most of his novels. Life has returned to a human scale, with a simple economic system composed of direct exchange of goods and services. The preholocaust technology is everywhere apparent, and is salvaged for use when possible. Because of the scarcity of everything, both goods and relationships come to be valued. It is the scale of Greek civilization: little city-states with burgeoning technologies, awesome pasts, and much sensory awareness of the world. Dick never presses the comparison too far, however; because this benign world began in calamity, there are calamitous aspects to it still. The action of the narrative consists of freeing the Bay Area of some of these dangerous aspects. The efforts are successful, which is yet another difference between this novel and the dystopias surrounding it.

Just as *Dr. Bloodmoney* is more fully achieved conceptually than the dystopian works surrounding it, so it is more fully achieved on the sentence-to-sentence level. Only in *The Man In the High Castle* and *Martian Time-Slip* can we find writing in Dick as dense, accurate, and epigrammatic, as full of invention and conceit in its detailing, as what we find here. Because of this, the "reality effect" is maintained, despite the large cast of extremely grotesque and bizarre characters. I think it can be said that Dick saved his fullest writing efforts for the projects that he felt most deserved them, slighting the lesser projects to save needed time.

The postatomic fiction, used seriously, serves to redirect our attention to the society we now live in. In this way its function is similar to that of the alternative history. By and large, then, the more often we are reminded of the fictional world's relationship to our own, the stronger the fiction will be—the more *use* it will have for us. *Dr. Bloodmoney* is at all times concerned with the relationship of its world to our own, and these continuous comparisons form a rich meditation on our culture. The fiction states implicitly that a postatomic world would be in some ways more human and liveable than the present one; in this way it works as a critique of the current culture, as all utopian literature does. The famous lack of a historical mechanism to get from our society to a utopian one is filled here—but by our society's self-destruction. This too is a harsh criticism of the present state of things, for the artist can think of no other history to get us to utopia.

The last novel in this group, *Now Wait For Last Year* (1966), is a return to the theme and methods of the other dystopian works discussed in this chapter. Once again a metaphor is made to express mid-1960s America, with a special emphasis placed on the involvement in the Vietnam War, and once again the text is burdened by irrational elements that are not organically related to the larger system.

The large metaphor of the novel is the war that Terrans have become involved in, between two alien species. One species, the Starmen, seem identical to human beings, and the Terrans have allied themselves with these Starmen in a war against intelligent aliens that resemble giant ants. The plot reveals that the Starmen are by far the greater danger to the Terrans, and the insect aliens only want to end the war. So the danger of conquest comes from the ostensible allies, the "cousin" humans who turn out to be less humane than the giant ants.

This representation of the Vietnam War makes our leaders the danger, and the alien enemy yet another victim of their aggression. With this reading *Now Wait For Last Year* takes its place alongside Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Word For World Is Forest* (1971) as one of the foremost antiwar novels to come from the science fiction community during the Vietnam conflict.

Every aspect of this novel partakes of the harsh and strained nature of the time. All of the personal relationships in the novel are marred by suspicion, distrust and exploitation. The marriage of the little protagonist Dr. Eric Sweetscent and his wife Kathy is the most bitter in all of Dick's work, which is saying a lot; at one point it is called "legalized hate." The war threatens the freedom of everyone on Earth, and everyone's work—even that of the employees of the Tijuana Fur and Dye Company, where most of the characters work—is directed by the necessities of the war. The rich occupy themselves in the construction of regressive recreations of the towns they grew up in as children, little personal Disneylands such as the Wash 35 (Washington D.C., 1935) that the owner of Tijuana Fur and Dye builds on Mars. The drug JJ-180 casts one loose in time, without control, so that those who take it are irretrievably disconnected from history. In this war-poisoned culture the only valorized act is pathetic in its meagerness; a worker at Tijuana Fur and Dye saves defective, organic, battle-spaceship guidance systems from destruction, and wires them into little carts so that they may then live out their damaged lives on the streets of Tijuana. In the year since the writing of *The Simulacra,* the effect of the Vietnam War on Dick, always sensitive to American politics, has grown, and in this book there is no escape to Mars, the humor is black and less frequent than in *Clans,* and the pastoral optimism of *Dr. Bloodmoney* is completely gone. There is left only the grim world of a war economy in service of conquest.

The irrational element in this novel concerns the big protagonist, U.N. Secretary-General Gino Molinari. Molinari has access to parallel histories, and he balks the Starmen in their attempts at a diplomatic takeover of Earth by staying deathly ill, psychosomatically. At the point of death he replaces himself with a Gino Molinari from a parallel universe, and that Molinari takes over where the dying one left off.

The multiple impossibilities here need hardly be pointed out. Combined with the time travel experienced while under the influence of JJ-180—which may be hallucinatory, but seems to have effects in the real world—the

illogicalities caused howls of protest from some early reviewers of the novel. Bruce Gillespie rightly points out that the Molinaris drawn from parallel histories might be very unlike the original.[15] George Turner, who more than once severely criticizes Dick for his lack of adherence to the normal conventions of logic in the genre, makes an indignant demand: "Just try to invent a science that will 'explain' all the single elements in *Now Wait For Last Year*... impossibler and impossibler."[16] The demand here is for a logical rationality that has been conventional in the genre; Dick is being told to toe the line, generically.

Dick once defended himself against criticism made along similar lines by Damon Knight. "Damon feels that it's bad artistry when you build those funky universes where people fall through the floor. It's like he's viewing a story the way a building inspector would when he's building your house. But reality is a mess... Van Vogt influenced me so much because he made me appreciate a mysterious chaotic quality in the universe that is not to be feared."[17] The problem here is one of logic in aesthetics. Is aesthetic order a misrepresentation of the world? Can an aesthetic construction be sound when there are sudden gaps in the floors, rooms with no entrances, staircases that extend out of the walls into space, and end there?

In the case of *Now Wait For Last Year,* we could say that Molinari's impossible defense shows the very desperate tactics that "normal" humans must use to avoid becoming part of the war machine. Ordinary heroism will not do, the conventional logical defenses are useless; one must use up one's resources till death, then pull a fresh source out of a parallel track of history, and start again. The drug-induced time travel with its crippling paradoxes emphasizes both the deranged history of the mid-1960s, and the impossibility of any private escapes. Thus the justification for the irrational elements in this most harsh and desperate novel lies in the elements' metaphorical use, which gives them an emotional force and aptness greater than any logical, conventional use of them could. The irrationality of the book reflects the time and place of its composition, and objections made in the name of logic ignore this, and to an extent attempt to place restrictions on the genre, demanding adherence to conventions that are here broken—broken so that science fiction can make a representation of our culture that it might otherwise be unable to make.

Now Wait For Last Year received very little attention when it appeared. It was harshly criticized by Gillespie and Turner, and remains underrated to this day. The centrifugal forces that threaten to tear the novel apart apparently were indications of similar pressures within Dick himself, for it was the last strong novel to appear for a long while, and it marks an end to Dick's powerful indictment of capitalist America, as well as to the period of intense creativity that began with *The Man In the High Castle.* When Dick received the Hugo

award for that novel, he began writing at a new level of vigor and intensity. The results were the masterpieces of the mid-1960s. But a variety of pressures both public and private exerted themselves on Dick, and his work suffered. In the public world, American culture was sliding into the chaotic years of the late 1960s, and always responsive to the temper of the times, Dick slid toward chaos in his personal life. Personal problems of all kinds beset him. What is remarkable is that, given those problems, the novels should be as varied and accomplished as they are, each offering a different view of a troubled society. *Now Wait For Last Year* forces the many tensions in the society upon us in a most harsh way. Novel and artist both seem about to fly apart, and perhaps in a way they did.

7

Things Fall Apart

The Crack In Space • *The Unteleported Man* • *The Zap Gun* • *Counter-Clock World* • *Ganymede Takeover* • *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* • *Ubik*

> It is hazardous to reach for the deepest level. You are asking questions about the form itself, and when you reach that deeply, the answers may no longer come in aesthetic terms that fit the form. So they rupture it. You may only accept the burden of creating a new form, or cease from questioning before the deepest level is engaged.
>
> Carter Scholz, "Radical Doubt"

In the years 1964 through 1967 Dick published twelve novels. The eventual effect of this quick succession of books, given their very uneven quality, was a deflation of the critical reputation of his work, and a dropoff in the wide readership which Dick had enjoyed in the year or two following the appearance of *The Man In the High Castle.* After *Martian Time-Slip* none of Dick's novels appeared on the ballot for the Hugo award, and the Nebula award, given annually by the new Science Fiction Writers of America to the novel voted best of the year by members, likewise went to others.[1] Quite a few of these other writers were part of the New Wave that was a growing force in the science fiction community. To the extent that the New Wave was an organized movement, it was centered in England around the magazine *New Worlds,* edited by Michael Moorcock, and in America around Judith Merrill's *Best SF of the Year* anthologies. The emergence of the New Wave caused quite a bit of excitement and controversy in the small science fiction community, and an "Old Foundation" of writers formed in reaction to it. Part of the controversy was political, and concerned the Vietnam War. Advertisements were taken out in the science fiction magazines in which groups of writers came out for or against the war.[2]

Given Dick's political convictions, and his repeated reversals of the traditional conventions of science fiction—the same conventions that were now being vigorously defended by the Old Foundation—it would seem natural that Dick would have become a leader of the New Wave. And it is true that one of the first critical appreciations of Dick to recognize his special qualities was

written by John Brunner, and published in *New Worlds* in August of 1966. As Stanislaw Lem writes: "Only a complete lack of theory of SF makes it comprehensible why the New Wave of SF did not pick Dick as their guiding star. The New Wavers knew that they should look for something new but they did not have the slightest idea what it could be."[3] This is too harsh, but as Lem has perceived, the New Wave had no coherent aesthetic program. Their "revolutionary" changes in the generic conventions consisted mainly in a blurring of the distinction between science fiction and fantasy—something that writers such as Fritz Leiber, Ray Bradbury, and Fletcher Pratt had been doing for years—and in the increased use of the "soft sciences" such as psychology and sociology as subject matter, a development already made by the social critics in the science fiction of the 1950s. Compared to these changes, Dick's subversions loom large. His assault on generic conventions was more radical than the New Wave's ever became.

But the real, and very important, contribution made by the New Wave to the development of science fiction was an increased attention given to questions of form and aesthetics, and to the description of the interior lives of their characters. The writers of the New Wave paid more attention to all of the concerns, in fact, that had preoccupied the Modernists of high literature in the first half of the twentieth century. This attention was growing at the same time that Dick's efforts in these areas—which were never the ones that made his work important—were falling off, or going awry.

So at this exciting moment in the history of science fiction, Dick was somewhat isolated and neglected. Politically aligned with the New Wave, he did not share their aesthetics; and he had even less in common with the "Old Foundation."[4]

At least as important as this isolation (which was never, of course, complete, as Dick's contribution to Harlan Ellison's anthology *Dangerous Visions* (1967) will show), were the many dislocations and pressures in Dick's private life. Multiple alimonies and continuous changes in residence made for an economic necessity that forced Dick to write faster than was good for the work.

One of the signs of his haste is the number of novels expanded from short stories published earlier. *The Crack in Space* (1966) is an expansion of "Cantata 140," published in 1964. A short version of *The Unteleported Man* (1966) was published as half of an Ace Double (two short novels in a single paperback), the full version being published in 1983. *Ganymede Takeover* (1967) is a collaboration with Ray Nelson. Essentially it is another version of *Game-Players of Titan,* and is a minor work. *The Zap Gun* (1967) is an expansion of "Project Plowshare," published in 1965. Finally, *Counter-Clock World* (1967) was expanded from the story "Your Appointment Will Be Yesterday," published in 1966.[5]

The expansions work by different principles: *The Crack In Space* continues where the short story left off; *Counter-Clock World* is an extensive rewrite; *The Zap Gun* adds a subplot. But in every case the expansions reveal haste. This method was a good way to make money fast, but a bad way to make books. Dick has not yet overcome the reputation for shoddy workmanship that these five books in particular helped to give him. Nevertheless, each of them does have some points of interest.

The Crack In Space is one of Dick's broken-backed novels, in that the first seven chapters (the original short story) concern the presidential campaign of Jim Briskin and the disposal of the poor, millions of whom lay frozen in government warehouses, waiting for a time when more jobs are available. A teleportation device breaks in a way that makes it a conduit to a parallel Earth, one untouched by man, and this new territory is seen as the solution to the problem of the poor.

In the new chapters which expand the work to novel length, Dick populates the parallel world with the descendants of Peking Man, and the narravite explores this development, dropping the election plot. By and large this is good, because the second story is more interesting. The parallel world is an alternative history, one that shifted away from our history some fifty thousand years ago. This premise allows Dick to return to a subject which interests him, the nature of the extinct subspecies of early humans that once shared the planet with *Homo sapiens*. This interest parallels Dick's interest in androids and simulacra; both are part of a larger question occupying him at this time, the definition of "human" or "humanness." The contrast in this novel between the pastoral civilization of Peking Man and the frenetic, dysfunctional world we began in gives the novel what importance it does have. The detailing of the alternative history, in particular Peking Man's technology, is well done, especially considering how few pages are devoted to it. Here two human technicians discuss a flying machine they have captured:

> "The artifact, they've been going over it, and it's apparently the damndest junk you ever heard of. It's a vehicle of some kind... It's made out of wood, but it's not primitive...." He laughed. "Excuse me, but it's funny. It runs by expansion of the ice. The water freezes, expands as ice, and drives a piston upward with enormous force, and the gases expand again, which give another thrust to the piston, driving it back down in the cylinder again. Ice! Did you ever hear of such a source of power?"
>
> "It's funnier than steam, isn't it?" Cravelli said. [*The Crack in Space*, chapter 9, p. 96]

Unfortunately, Dick feels an obligation to the story begun in "Cantata 140," and the Peking Men of the alternative history become embroiled in the presidential campaign. This leads to conflict between the two worlds, and the narrative degenerates into a tale of the war and its effect on the election. Thus

the most interesting element in the novel has few pages devoted to it, and we finish the novel frustrated by brief glimpses of a fascinating alternative history, hobbled to a conventional political intrigue.

The Unteleported Man (1966, 1983) was written in 1964. It shares many elements with *The Simulacra:* its secretary-general of the U.N. is named Horst Bertold, echoing the Bertold Goltz of the earlier work; both of them "switch sides" during the course of the story. In both novels the Germans have become the dominant force in American politics. In *The Unteleported Man* German is the official language of the U.N., following a reunification and rise to power of the two Germanies. The rise of Germany in Dick is always closely associated with the resurgence of fascism, and the consistent appearance of Nazis in Dick's work of this period is matched by the appearance of several versions of a "final solution" to the problem of the poor. *The Penultimate Truth* is one version of a final solution, *The Crack In Space* another. In *The Unteleported Man* emigrants are given a one-way trip by teleportation to another solar system's earthlike world. The unteleported man of the title discovers this world is actually a concentration camp, and instigates an assault on the world to liberate it.

This was the point at which the short version of the novel, published as half of an Ace Double in 1966, ended. The editors at Ace had asked Dick to expand the work to the length of a full novel, and he obliged them with a thirty-thousand-word segment tacked on to the end. This wasn't what the Ace editors had had in mind. They rejected the addition and published the shorter version.[6] In July of 1983 Berkley Books published the longer version for the first time ("The World Famous Classic, Now Uncensored!").

Now that the expanded version is available we can see that it was another of Dick's broken-backed novels. This time Dick's method is particularly funny: three paragraphs before the end of the original version, when the assault on the concentration camp world is just beginning, Dick changed the narrative by having his protagonist shot with an LSD-filled dart. Though the rest of the thirty-thousand-word addition does not consist entirely of the description of his hallucinations, a good bit of it does, and the protagonist's "trip" introduces him to a confusing universe of "paraworlds." The battle over the concentration camp continues to be fought by the two sides, but now, rather than using conventional weapons as before, they are using hallucinogens, brainwashings, time-warping devices, psychotic geniuses, aliens disguised as humans, and the like. How much of this is real and how much the protagonist's hallucination is never made clear, but at the end he has returned to a moment about halfway through the first part, and allowed to "revise" it, so presumably some of the time-travel (again a disruptive and unhelpful element) is real. There are elements in this fragment that remind us of Dick's best short story, "Faith of Our Fathers," but I can see why the editors at Ace chose the shorter version in

1965. The truth is, by the time Dick returns to expand a work, he is interested in other things; so, we get these broken-backed novels.

The Ganymede Takeover (1967) was written with Ray Nelson, but all the distinguishing characteristics of a Philip Dick novel are there. It is hard to spot any influence of Nelson's in the text. Certainly it is a novel planned by Dick. The situation echoes that of *Game-Players of Titan,* in that Earth has been conquered by evil aliens, in this case giant worms from Ganymede. There is a reality-destroying final confrontation similar to that in *Game-Players,* as well as several standard Dick characters: the charismatic mystical leader of the opposition; the shallow media figure; the ignorant, provincial local boss. But here Dick's usual elements are being shuffled and recombined to no purpose. We can find no analogy between the situation in the novel and our world, and so it has no significance. Because this novel has many of the elements of the other Dick novels, in its failure it proves that the orchestrating metaphorical system in the others is what makes them successful and important.

In *The Zap Gun* (1967) an orchestrating metaphorical system reappears. The novel depicts a world of perpetual cold war, and the protagonist is a weapons fashion designer. He designs new weapons, but as there is no active war, the weapons are "plowshared" back into the economy as incredibly efficient cars, calculators, toasters and so forth. This is a fictional world with much potential for satire, and it is similar in this respect to the novels described in the previous chapter. Since the original novella was written no later than the middle of 1965, this similarity is not surprising. The novella was 67,500 words long, and the novel cannot be much more than 90,000 words long, so the two versions are not that different. Yet *The Zap Gun* remains no more than a weak cousin of the novels discussed in the previous chapter, recapitulating in a thinner narrative what they have already accomplished.

This thinness of narrative is caused by a reduction in the number of point-of-view characters. This reduction occurs in all of the weaker novels being discussed here. We have seen that this reduction occurs halfway through *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch,* but now whole novels exhibit it. As I said when analyzing *The Three Stigmata*'s failure to live up to its complex beginning, Dick's characters are interesting to us not primarily as individuals, but as members of an extensive network, in constant interaction with each other. When any one character has to carry the narrative alone, our pleasure in it diminishes, because what was most interesting about that character was how his actions would affect his wife, what his boss thought of him, why a stranger's life was changed by him unwittingly, and so on. When these aspects of the narrative disappear it is much more difficult to provide anything more than the conventional problems and responses of the science fiction hero. (Overcoming this difficulty becomes one of Dick's central projects in the years to come.) In

The Zap Gun there is a two-character "network," and a subplot, added to bring the work to novel length. From the five point-of-view characters of *The Man In the High Castle,* or the nine of *The Simulacra,* we are here down to two, and the novel is lessened accordingly. *The Zap Gun* is a clear symptom of the loss of creative energy Dick was experiencing at this time. The basic premise is one that might have supported a strong novel, but the treatment is perfunctory, and the premise is no more than sketched out.

With *Counter-Clock World* (1967) the reverse is true: the treatment of the basic premise is relatively full, for this period, but the basic premise itself is so strange that for most readers the novel collapses because of it. In this fictional world biological time has reversed itself; people wake up in their graves and are excavated, then grow younger and younger. Food is disgorged, cigarettes are taken out of ashtrays and smoked until they grow back to full length, and so on. There is no attempt made to explain how this "Hobart Effect" came to be, and of course characters still talk in sentences that are in the usual order, and the plot proceeds in what we could call "forward time," so that there is no consistency to the effect. The capitalist system attempts to adjust to this grotesque situation and profit from it, which provides a fair bit of comedy, but the main plot, concerned with a preacher risen from the dead and opposing the political powers, embellished by discussions of Platonic form and excerpts from St. Augustine, never escapes from the confounding contradictions of the fictive world in which it is set.

Critical commentary, especially from those critics demanding rational, traditional science fiction, has accordingly been quite harsh. Bruce Gillespie writes, "*Counter-Clock World,* and its gimmicky Hobart Effect, are doomed from the start by sheer laziness, or some other author's disease that has clouded Dick's judgement."[7] George Turner seconds the opinion: "Your comment on the unacceptability of the Hobart Effect . . . is, of course, dead right. One simply rejects it out of hand."[8] Turner goes on to show, quite sensibly, that if time were to reverse itself we would reverse with it, and, having no objective standard to measure by, would never know the difference. Thus the novel is logically inconsistent even on its own terms, and Gillespie and Turner join what reviewers the novel had in America in condemning the book as a complete failure.

It is interesting, however, to contrast the judgment of these critics, concentrating as they do on the *plausibility* of the science fiction elements of the work, with the reading of a European critic, less concerned with the traditionally rational conventions of the genre. Carlo Pagetti notes the logical inconsistencies in the text: "In these last novels the believability of premised scientific data has become nil. . . . In *Counter-Clock World* science is introduced to classify—certainly not to explain—a miraculous event, i.e., the inversion of the biological rhythm that causes the dead to resurrect and the

living to retreat in time toward the womb." For Pagetti, this lack of believability is deliberate: "Dick annihilates the traditional relationship between natural science and SF, that is, the positivistic assumption that science, for better or worse, is the conditioning element of contemporary society." And this lack of believability in no way decreases the interest or aesthetic quality of the texts: "In *Counter-Clock World* we assist at the successive violent deaths of all the principal characters.... Thus at the end another landscape of total and terrifying desolation emerges. Yet from the bottom of the abyss of death can perhaps be seen a possibility of building new values.... Again the final episode is highly significant, and possibly one of the best scenes written by Dick."[9]

For Pagetti, then, the importance of Dick's novels is in no way tied to their believability in scientific terms. This implies a definition of science fiction rather far from the Wellsian paradigm that so influenced Campbell and shaped the texts of the Golden Age, and, indeed, most American science fiction. And it necessarily emphasizes the metaphorical function of the genre. The tremendous amount of science fiction produced over the years in America stiffened by endless repetition the conventions of the genre, at the same time that the aesthetic function of the genre's displacements were forgotten or ignored. Thus American readers, critics, and writers are now more insistent about conforming to conventions that are quite clear and established, while the Europeans do not share such a strict and narrow sense of the genre. This may explain why the French have been Dick's most enthusiastic audience, and why European critics have been first in judging him to be among the most important science fiction writers. Even Lem, whose standards of rationality are at times stricter than Turner's or Gillespie's, notes the irrationality in Dick and, by his somewhat baffled admiration, declares it inessential. There has not been an established science fiction community in Europe, and therefore the science fiction that has been produced has been the result of individual aesthetic decisions. Each text has been idiosyncratic in its use of the genre, and the generic conventions were much less well defined. In this context, *Counter-Clock World* can exist as a metaphor for a world running contrary to its best interest, and though it may not be entirely successful even in these terms, it has been saved from condemnation for not conforming to a convention it was never intended to conform to.

At the end of this discussion of the individual texts of this weak period we can list the attributes that characterize them as a group: (1) these lesser novels tend to be expansions of earlier short work, and so recycle ideas to no real purpose except the generation of another saleable commodity—often the marks of the expansion still show in the text; (2) subplots and main plots tend to have no significant connection, which is unlike most of Dick's work; (3) the number of privileged point-of-view characters is drastically reduced; (4) related to this

reduction, although not identical to it, is the diminishment of the character system, the collection of familial and business relations that surrounds each protagonist in the earlier novels; (5) lastly, the fictional worlds are not elaborated with the profusion of detail that indicates both planning and attention to the process of entailment that generates so many of these details in earlier texts.

Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? (1968) was the first novel to appear in over two years that was neither a collaboration nor an expanded story, and not coincidentally it marked the beginning of a brief resurgence. In *Do Androids Dream* the two protagonists are surrounded by family, friends, and work partners, and their actions tend to impinge on others. This is a structural indication of the resurgence. Another mark of it is the intensity of the emotional lives of the characters, symbolized by their involvement in the Sisyphean TV religion of Wilbur Mercer—the first appearance of the transcendental in Dick's work in a long time.

One aspect of Dick's earlier work that does not return in this novel, and which has not returned in Dick's work to the present day, is that polyphonic narrative structure that employs five to ten privileged point-of-view characters. From this novel on Dick works with a stripped-down cast of viewpoint characters, and uses other methods to engage the readers' interest in his characters. Darko Suvin notes a shift of emphasis, from politics to ontology, beginning in the middle of *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch,* and he laments this shift as a diminishment. The drop in the number of viewpoint characters begins around the same time as the shift in subject matter that Suvin pointed out, and this is no coincidence. In fact, on closer examination we see that the use of several viewpoint characters *is* the political aspect of the work that Suvin values so much. Almost from the beginning Dick's works contained the reality breakdowns I have defined, and so in that sense Dick's subject was always ontological, in that it was concerned with the nature of reality. But when six or eight characters at different levels of the class system of the fictional worlds are portrayed, employing and working for each other, in control or in rebellion, then the narrative is necessarily political, no matter what miraculous reality breakdown is impinging on them all. Suvin is correct: there is a shift from politics to ontology, somewhere in the mid-1960s; yet it is a shift not in *what* Dick wrote about, but in *how* he structured what he wrote about. In these later stripped-down narrative schemes there are not enough private individual concerns clashing to form larger political narratives, and very often the private concerns of the single protagonist have to do with the basic nature of reality.

This last is true only to a limited extent in *Do Androids Dream,* in which the two protagonists are spared some of the world-shattering experiences of Barney Mayerson or Joe Chip. In this world, nearly emptied of life by World War Terminus, the few remaining humans strive to own pets, and if they

cannot afford a real pet they buy a mechanical one. Martian colonies thrive—they are humanity's real home now—and there androids are manufactured, androids so much like real humans that one must give a complex psychological test to differentiate android from human. Androids are banned on Earth, and when they illegally land, bounty hunters may kill them for a substantial reward. The main protagonist (it is no longer appropriate to speak of big and little protagonists, as that terminology referred to political and economic power, and all of the protagonists are now equally powerless), Rick Deckard, can afford to replace his electric sheep with a real one if he can kill five androids. But androids have infiltrated the police department Deckard works for, and he finds that not only is it getting extremely difficult to distinguish human from android, it is hard to continue believing the distinction is important.

Critical opinion of this novel is sharply divided, and the division is over the issue of the androids that are so crucial to it. Suvin leads those who think little of the novel. Among the later novels, Suvin writes, "there are also outright failures such as *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?,* with its underlying confusion between androids as wronged lower class and as inhuman menace."[10] As a Marxist Suvin is not comfortable with this confusion. Neither is Stanislaw Lem, who finds a series of contradictions in Dick's portrayal of the androids, and says: "We see the sad picture of an author who squanders his talent by using brilliant ideas and inspirations to keep up a game of cops and robbers." Because some of the androids have been programmed with the information that they are human, Lem cannot see why they are then persecuted; yet if they are intended "to present a model of discrimination, such as the persecution of the Jews administered under the label of a 'final solution,'" then "the androids are innocent victims and should not be depicted as insidious creatures, something that the novel does in places."[11]

Certainly the novel is contradictory in its depiction of the androids, and just as certainly this is deliberate on Dick's part. In different portions of the text the reader is forced to regard the androids in different ways, as victim or as menace. This change can be effected within the space of a paragraph, but more typically it shifts scene by scene, to allow the reader to develop a set opinion of the androids, which then clashes with the image presented in later scenes. There are countless shifts of this sort in the course of a reading of the novel.

There is a symmetrical contradiction in the novel's portrayal of the human characters. Humans are in turn sympathetic and vicious. John Isidore, the feeble-minded protagonist of the subplot, is tormented first by his human boss, then by androids he has befriended. It makes little difference to him what the biological nature of the tormentors is. Rick Deckard, in his hunt for androids, becomes confused in the same way that readers do:

> So much for the distinction between authentic living humans and humanoid constructs. In that elevator at the museum, he said to himself, I rode down with two creatures, one human,

> the other android... and my feelings were the reverse of those intended. Of those I'm accustomed to feel—am required to feel. [*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, chapter 12, p. 97]

Angus Taylor has pointed out what he thinks is the purpose of this deliberately created confusion: "For Dick the android represents the internally alienated human being... who lives an artificial life because his is withdrawn, unable to establish contact with the 'real' world—the world of human involvement and feeling."[12] But this is still too simple a formula.

The question pondered by the novel is not the one of the title, which asks for a definition of the android, but is rather one concerned with the nature of humanity, of humaneness. The cruel humans in the narrative do not deserve the label any more than the androids, we come to feel. There are four classes of beings in the text: Humane Humans (Isidore, and as the novel progresses, Rick Denard); Cruel Humans (Phil Resch, Isidore's boss); Humane Androids (Luba Luft the singer); and Cruel Androids (the androids who torment Isidore). The function of the TV religion centered around the Christ-figure Wilbur Mercer is to separate out those truly human from those who are not, not by testing their biological origin, but by subjecting them to a test of their emphathic ability. Considered in this way, the androids are not automatically symbols of alienated, mechanical humans, but are presented as another life form, one capable of both good and evil. The more contradictions there are in the androids, the more the novel has succeeded in unravelling our easy biological definition of humanity, and in replacing it with a difficult spiritual or moral definition. Dick has given us two oppositions, Human/Android and Human/Inhuman. As the novel begins we are to assume that the two oppositions are identical, but the action of the narrative first forces the two apart, and then leads us to conclude that the first one is inessential, the second vitally important. As Taylor says in a slightly different context, "considered from this new vantage, the contradictions noted by Lem dissolve away, and it becomes no longer illogical to think that androids can be at once innocent and malicious, on different levels conscious and unconscious of their own natures, and in general beings who are human and yet an insidious threat to human society."[13]

We may conclude, then, that the critical debate over the status of the androids in this novel is an indication of Dick's success, for he clearly means to give us contradictory information regarding them, but for a particular purpose. Another measure of the novel's success, and therefore of the resurgence marked by this work, is its emotional force, which causes Carlo Pagetti to call it "probably the most important, and perhaps overall the most intense among the recent Dick novels."[14] The intensity comes from a combination of factors. All of its events happen in a single day, giving it the accelerated quality of *The Simulacra*. The bitter love-hate relationship between Deckard and his wife

echoes the marriage in *Now Wait For Last Year,* and the positive ending to the relationship echoes the end of *Martian Time-Slip.* The TV deity Wilbur Mercer allows Dick to inject a transcendental despair and hope that are totally absent from the novels immediately preceding this one. And for the first time in a long time we feel that Dick is concerned with the prose on a sentence-to-sentence level. All of these are contributing factors to an artistic recovery comparable to the one in 1962. The reasons for this regrouping are undoubtedly contained in Dick's private life, which is not our province. Artistically, the metaphor of the android proved particularly useful for Dick, and he will return to it again. In writing something new, rather than expanding something old, Dick was declaring another beginning; and for the first time he appears comfortable with the truncated point-of-view scheme.

Ubik is Dick's most successful example of the stripped-down narrative structure. The story is almost entirely Joe Chip's; the few sections narrated from Runciter's point of view exist only to complicate Joe Chip's story. Thus the narrative method of the novel is one that we have isolated as the factor weakening *The Three Stigmata,* and it is a constant feature of the weak novels of 1966 and 1967. Yet *Ubik* is without a doubt one of Dick's most important books. Dick has achieved this by shifting the emphasis of the work from the network of human relationships to the nature-of-reality problem that arises in so many of Dick's novels; this is the shift from politics to ontology deplored by Suvin.

In *Ubik* the nature of reality problem, or the reality breakdown, is made the central experience of the narrative, in the form of a puzzle which I will shortly describe. The predominance of the reality breakdown in *Ubik* serves to draw out similar if lesser situations in earlier Dick novels, all the way back to *Eye In the Sky* and *The Man Who Japed.* By foregrounding it so completely, *Ubik* draws attention to the ubiquity of this experience in Dick's work. Because of this *Ubik* has come to be seen as the prototypical Dick novel, its plot the paradigm of all Dick's plots. As Mark Rose puts it, "Dick repeatedly writes what might be called epistemological science fiction, constructing situations in which the point is the impossibility of drawing distinctions between fantasy and reality, as in *Ubik.*"[15] This is not really true of most of Dick's novels, where even though there are many false realities, the distinction between them and the consensus reality is always fairly clear. But statements like Rose's are a commonplace when discussing Dick's work, and this fact deserves explanation, as it may help in explaining *Ubik* as well.

The novel is a puzzle. Joe Chip and the other employees of Runciter are in a business competition with Hollis Enterprises; during the course of the conflict there is an explosion on the moon, in which Runciter is killed. Joe Chip and the other employees on the scene get Runciter to a Moratorium, where people injured or dying are kept in "half-life" until a time when they can be cured; in

half-life people have mental lives, and often think they are still in the real world. After successfully placing Runciter in half-life, the surviving members of the company begin to experience reality breakdowns of many types, principally a sort of time regression in the objects around them, so that, for example, the rocket ship they are travelling in turns into a jet, then a prop-plane, then a 1939 Ford Triplane. Their world, in fact, appears to have a tropism toward the world of Des Moines, Iowa, 1939. Eventually Joe Chip reaches Runciter on the telephone connecting people in half-life with the real world. Runciter tells him that it was Joe Chip and the others who were killed in the explosions and are now living in half-life, while Runciter was the sole survivor. Thus the experiences they have been having are the hallucinatory interactions with other people in the half-life tank with them. This appears to explain the events, but when they finish talking, Runciter finds that all of his coins have the likeness of Joe Chip on them. One might then conclude that all of them were killed in the explosion, but in that case there would have been no one to get them to the Moratorium. The question is, what happened? What explanation adequately accounts for all of the events described in the text?

This, in a simplified form, is the puzzle presented by *Ubik*. The dramatic power of the individual events (and, often, their high comedy) urge one to find an explanation that will reconcile all the facts. A great many pages of criticism have been devoted to the problem; more has been written about *Ubik* than any other Dick novel except *The Man In the High Castle*. After attempting to solve the puzzle, and finding the solutions unsatisfactory, critics either attack or attempt to explain the insolubility. In this sense the response is similar to *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, where the contradictory nature of the androids becomes the issue. In *Ubik*, all critics agree that there is no single, watertight explanation for the events narrated. It is inconsistent, and this fact becomes once again the main aesthetic problem posed by the novel. As Stanislaw Lem puts it, "What is inconsistency in literature? It is a symptom either of incompetence or else of repudiation of some values (such as credibility of incidents, or their logical coherence) for the sake of other values."[16]

Some critics have decided it is a matter of incompetence. George Turner writes, "*Ubik* crystallizes the dissastisfaction; my day as a Dick fan is nearly over... *Ubik*... piles complexity on complexity, until inconsistencies begin to stand out like protest banners. The plotting is neat but cannot override the paradoxes. The metaphor fails because it cannot stand against the weight of reality as we know it."[17] And Darko Suvin, uncomfortable already at *Ubik's* lack of political concerns, goes into quite a bit of detail to reveal these inconsistencies:

> The "psi-powers" signifier has here become not only unnecessary but stultifying—e.g., has anybody in the book ever got back on the original time track after Pat's first try-out? did Pat engineer her own death? etc. Further questions arise later: why isn't Pat wired out of the

> common circuit in the moratorium?; why isn't Jory?; etc.... Jory "eats" Wendy just when Pat was supposed to have done it; etc. The net result seems to me one of great strengths balanced by equally great weaknesses in a narrative irresponsibility reminiscent of the rabbits-from-the-hat carelessness associated with rankest Van Vogt if not "Doc" Smith; the false infinities of explaining one improbability by a succession of ever greater ones... thus not to result in a new form but in a nihilistic collapse into the oldest mystifying forms of SF melodrama.[18]

Other critics, however, have decided that *Ubik* contains the "repudiation of some values for the sake of other values," and is not a simple case of incompetence or laziness. Stanislaw Lem was not willing to grant this in the case of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?,* because he could construct no single explanation that would resolve the inconsistencies in the treatment of the androids. With *Ubik*, however, he is able first to construct an explanation that he finds satisfactory, and then to pass beyond the matter of explanations altogether.[19] "We are not only forced to but we ought to at a certain point leave off defending its 'science-fictional nature'... the impossibility of imposing consistency on the text compels us to seek its global meanings not in the realm of the events themselves, but in that of their constructive principle, the very thing that is responsible for the lack of focus." This shift in attention—apparently a growth in Lem's own capacity as a reader, for in his earlier essay on Dick he refuses to make this shift—leads him and us to considerations of genre and generic conventions. As Lem puts it, "The convention proper to a concrete genre becomes fixed with the passage of time and is familiar to every qualified reader; consequently 'everybody knows' that in a realistic novel the author cannot cause his hero to walk through closed doors, but can on the other hand reveal to the reader the content of a dream which the hero has and forgets before he wakes up (although the one thing is as impossible as the other from a common sense point of view)." And he goes on to say, "the convention of SF requires rational accounting for events that are quite improbable and even seemingly at odds with logic and experience."[20]

Now, the constructive principle in *Ubik* is this: for every explanation one can construct for the events of the novel, there will be at least one event that confounds that explanation, making it impossible and thus inoperative.[21] Dick has made certain that no explanation will cover all of the facts. This deliberate balking of our attempts to explain rationally the events of the text is, as Lem pointed out, breaking one of the central conventions of the genre. And the book is qualitatively different from those science fiction texts where the rational explanation is ignored or bungled, as in Van Vogt and countless others; here the convention is not being ignored, but broken.

That this contravention is deliberate is indicated by the epigraphs to each chapter concerning the commercial product, Ubik. These are parodies of the advertisements of a variety of American products, many of them designed to halt or conceal the effects of entropy on daily life. The epigraphs have nothing

explicit to do with the narrative, and the Ubik they describe is not always the same as the Ubik that eventually appears in the text, in chapter 10, where it is a "reality-fixant" in a spray can, and presumably a hallucination of the people in half-life. As Peter Fitting says when discussing this discrepancy, "Impertinent or facetious epigraphs... are a deliberate mislabelling which violates the commercial contract at the basis of the traditional novel."[22]

The epigraphs, then, reinforce our impression that the balking of a rational explanation is a deliberate strategy on Dick's part. Given that this is so, *Ubik* confirms our suspicion that earlier works by Dick, less clear structurally than *Ubik,* are also deliberate in their withholding of rational explanations. In this sense *Ubik* does indeed lie near the heart of Dick's work, as it is the best example of a general strategy designed to frustrate one of the readers' principal generic expectations. Works such as *Counter-Clock World* and *Do Androids Dream,* and later works such as *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said,* are illuminated by *Ubik* and to a certain extent rely on its clarity. Because of *Ubik* we can see a pattern in much of Dick's work, a pattern of planned contravention of this central generic convention. Objections to Dick's work on the grounds of inconsistency, such as those made by Turner and Gillespie, thus miss the point. As Lem remarks, "In relation to Kafka, analogous objections would consist in demanding that 'The Metamorphosis' should conclude with an explicit 'entomological justification' making plain when and under what circumstances a normal man can turn into a bug, and that *The Trial* should explain just what Mr. K. is accused of."[23]

Given all this, however, the problem of genre placement becomes acute. Since a rational explanation is a central convention of science fiction, we can either say that *Ubik* is not science fiction, or that science fiction must change in order to include *Ubik* in the genre. (A third alternative, that *Ubik* is merely bad science fiction, will not hold if one admits the inconsistencies are deliberate, meaningful, and pervasive, and exert a powerful attraction on the reader as well.) Since *Ubik* uses elements that are clearly science fictional, and since it conforms in many ways to the other conventions of science fiction, and since it is packaged as science fiction (a consideration more important than one might think, given the genre's origin and history as a publisher's category), we must inevitably regard it as science fiction. Yet science fiction must drop one of its central conventions to contain this text; it must become a genre in which inversion of basic conventions is itself an allowable convention. This is part of the "deconstruction of bourgeois SF," as Peter Fitting has put it in his important article on *Ubik;* it bends a convention that had become stiffened by thousands of volumes of American science fiction. This is construction as well destruction, as the process helps to create a more sophisticated genre. Of course it is not *Ubik* alone that accomplishes this change in the genre; it is accomplished by all of Dick's work taken in toto, and by other writers working with a similar plan. But Dick has been in the forefront of this aspect of the

evolution of the genre, and *Ubik* is, formally, the clearest example of Dick's plan of embedding inconsistency in the structure of the text. Every reader of *Ubik* becomes engaged, just like its characters, in the struggle to create a coherent explanation for the events of the narrative, and like the characters every reader is eventually defeated. The persistence with which readers have attempted to succeed in creating such an explanation is a tribute both to the fascination exerted by this particular sequence of events, and to the strength of the generic expectations we bring to our reading. To accept defeat in explaining *Ubik* is to participate in the evolution of science fiction.[24]

8

Lost in Space

Galactic Post-Healer • *Our Friends From Frolix 8* • *A Maze of Death* • *We Can Build You* • *Flow My Tears* • *The Policeman Said* • *Deus Irae* • *A Scanner Darkly*

> . . . the symbols of the divine show up in our world initially at the trash stratum. Or so I told myself.
>
> Philip K. Dick, *VALIS*, p. 212

After 1969 and the appearance of *Ubik,* Dick's personal fortunes again went into decline, and the early 1970s were a difficult period for him, a time that included a stay in a drug rehabilitation center in Vancouver, several shifts of residence, a mysterious ransacking of his house, and a sequence of painful relationships with women, including another marriage. For the first time since the appearance of *Solar Lottery* in 1955, his rate of production dropped. This is only a relative matter; we still have seven novels published in seven years. But from a writer who more than once produced seven novels in two years, this is a significant decline.

Most of these novels show the effects of Dick's personal difficulties, and more than ever we feel that the novels were written to express various aspects of his private life. His strong self-awareness recognized this. At one point in *Our Friends From Frolix 8* he has one character say to another, "*You must untangle your public life from your private life.* You've got them all mixed in together." And he most certainly does. Private matters, ranging from minor things such as complaints about mean ex-wives, or the lack of good Chinese food in Boise, Idaho, or the death of a favorite cat, to more important matters such as the obsessive fascination with intense young women, appear over and over, until in *A Scanner Darkly* the setting becomes Dick's very neighborhood, the characters disguised acquaintances of his. In *VALIS,* culminating this movement to the personal, the character "Phil Dick" appears in the text.

No matter how close to home the subject matter becomes, however, the transforming act of estrangement is performed in every novel. Each one is a

fully wrought work. We may feel that they fail for one reason or another, but we never get the feeling we did with the weak novels of 1966 and 1967, that these are hasty projects, undertaken and completed for money. On the contrary, the amount of time that elapsed between each novel apparently gave Dick the opportunity to consider his methods. While the rapid progression of novels in the 1960s meant that they all had a certain similarity of style and method, so that we notice changes appearing gradually over the course of several books, in the 1970s each novel is in one way or another a formal experiment, unlike the ones directly preceding and following it. Some of these experiments succeed and others fail, but in every case the genre is being challenged or expanded.

Each of these novels could sustain, and in fact deserves, a full analysis of the kind I gave to the Martian novels. But to do so in this study would be to repeat many of the points made in earlier chapters. In tracing Dick's career and the development of his art, what I find most interesting about these seven novels is how they mark the gradual transition from the political novels of the 1960s to the *VALIS* trilogy. The three books of the final trilogy form a different kind of work than the novels of the 1960s, but Dick did not change to this new method abruptly, or without various trials of the components of the method. The novels of the 1970s contain aspects that look back to the earlier novels, and aspects that look forward to the *VALIS* trilogy, in mixtures of different proportions and degrees of coherence. In the following discussion of the novels of the 1970s, then, I will concentrate my attention on sorting out these elements, thus tracing Dick's gradual change, his development as an artist.

Galactic Pot-Healer (1969) is a short meditation on the creative act, and as such it is unique in Dick's work. There are many signs of this individuality in the text; the most prominent is the narrative scheme, which for the first time in Dick's novels reduces the number of point-of-view characters to one.

The narrative concerns the pot-healer's efforts to help a godlike alien battle with its dark underwater doppelgänger, in a struggle to raise a sunken cathedral from the ocean floor of an alien planet. Joe Fernwright is to repair the broken pots in the sunken cathedral, a humble task, but one which the alien considers as important as any other task in the struggle. Here Dick emphasizes again the concern for, and valorization of, the manual workers who have filled his stories. Frequently his protagonists are hand workers, artisans or repairmen; even the fraudulent work of regrooving old tires to make them appear new has value, because it is a manual craft. One of the successful revolutionaries at the end of the wish fulfillment *Vulcan's Hammer* expresses this persistent view of Dick's:

> "You'll put an end to the cult of the technocrat?" Fields said. "For experts only—run by and *for* those oriented around verbal knowledge; I'm so damn sick of that. Mind stuff—as if manual skills like bricklaying and pipe-fitting weren't worth talking about. As if all the

> people who work with their hands, the skill of their fingers—" He broke off. "I'm tired of having those people looked down on." [*Vulcan's Hammer*, chapter 14, p. 151.]

So here, in *Galactic Pot-Healer*, the artist repairs broken pots. The action of the narrative consists of his gaining the courage and knowledge to attempt to make pots of his own. He does this by observing and helping the alien in its titanic struggle to recuperate and build anew a work of art of massive size.

This titanic struggle for creation is inspired, in its modelling and imagery, by Carl Gustav Jung's work on archetypes and the artistic process. Thus the dark ocean represents the unconscious mind from which the work of art is drawn; the cathedral is appropriate to Jung's own religious art; and the Glimmung and its Shadow stand as figures for archetypal characters that Jung described. So we can read the work as a parable or allegory: as Lem puts it, "In *Galactic Pot-Healer* we have to do with a fabulous parable about a sunken cathedral on some planet and about the struggle which takes place between light and darkness over raising it, so that the last semblance of literalness of events vanishes here."[1]

But Lem's last phrase is not exactly right. The text asks us to take all of the events of the narrative as "literal." Because allegorical meanings can be made from the text, Lem calls it nonliteral; but in fact the events, taken in themselves, are no more fabulous than those in Dick's other novels, or in the work of a hundred other science fiction writers. In fact, given Dick's skill with detail and the creation of *l'effet du réel,* this novel is as successful as most science fiction when taken simply as an account of experiences on another planet. Lem concedes this, and modifies the pronouncement made above: "For all that *Galactic Pot-Healer* leans toward allegory, it does not adopt this position either unambiguously or definitely, and a like indeterminacy as to genre is also characteristic for other novels by Dick."[2]

Because the situations and events in the text are generated by a separate system of concepts—Jung's theory of art—it is possible to say that the text is an allegory rather than science fiction, thereby creating a generic difficulty. On the other hand, we have seen this generative process in action before, in Dick's political novels of the 1960s. *Galactic Pot-Healer* is a very clear example of a science fiction text in which the imagery, and in fact *the entire fictional world,* has sprung from an extensive metaphor system. In the political novels of 1964 and 1965, the metaphors were constructed from political phrases of our time; here the metaphor system is Jung's description of the act of creation. ("It is *as if* the artist has this troupe of characters (archetypes) interacting in the hidden depths of his mind.... ") The fact that this system of Jung's (augmented, perhaps, by an image taken from DeBussy's "The Sunken Cathedral") is a famous one, makes the metaphors easy to identify. But the principle of construction is precisely the same as that used by Dick in the mid-1960s, and it is a principle that, partly because of Dick's earlier work, is very definitely

among those used to generate the estranged worlds of science fiction. The young genre of science fiction is a blend of many precursors—satire, romance, the Gothic, utopian literature, travel literature, Victorian fantasy. Now it becomes clear that allegory should be added to the list.

Our Friends From Frolix 8 (1970) is similar in structure and situation to the novels of 1964 and 1965. The narrative scheme is once again expanded, to include six point-of-view characters; it follows that the plot structure is therefore returned to the complexity of the earlier political novels. The fictional world is dystopian, a police state run by an elite of artificially evolved "New Men," who are relegating the "Old Men"—normal humans—to concentration camps. The cast of characters includes a tire regroover and his mean wife, an intense and dangerous young woman that this little protagonist becomes involved with, a despotic world leader as big protagonist, a wise alien, a single space traveler returning from deep space, an evolved genius whose intelligence proves worthless—in other words, all of the characters of the middle dystopias whom we have become so familiar with. At first glance every element looks strikingly familiar; if the novel were dated 1964, or even 1957, we would not be too surprised. The overthrow of the world police state at the end harkens back to the wish fulfillments of the 1950s, and the devolution of the New Men, and the ambiguous role of the omnipotent alien, remind us of the more cynical conclusions of the novels of 1964.

But there is something new here as well, an element that looks forward to the later novels, rather than backward, and this is the religious element. Religious speculations, centered around the figure of the nearly omnipotent "Friend" of the title, occur repeatedly in the text, and they take a central place in the book's conclusion. The novel is, in fact, without a doubt most famous for the joke that introduces the religious element (another "found object," taken from a famous *Time* magazine cover):

> "Listen to this, 'God tells us—'"
>
> "God is dead," Nick said. "They found his carcass in 2019. Floating out in space near Alpha."
>
> "They found the remains of an organism advanced several thousand times over what we are," Charley said. "And it evidently could create habitable worlds and populate them with living organisms, derived from itself. But that doesn't prove it was God."
>
> "I think it was God." [*Our Friends From Frolix 8,* chapter 7, p. 65]

Later, the Friend from Frolix tells a parable about God and the creation of free will; and later still one of the New Men outlines a theory of universal history, in which an epoch of entropy is followed by an epoch of antientropy leading to a single complex organism, God. These speculations are the first of the religious discussions that will appear with greater frequency in Dick's work, and already

they show the structure of repeated offerings of alternative explanations, which will be such a marked characteristic of *VALIS.*

At the novel's end the devolved New Men have all "become like a little child," and they express the values of empathy, solidarity, and love which more and more explicitly are espoused by Dick's narratives. This is emphasized by the first of the religious texts tucked into Dick's work: "'The measure of a man is not his intelligence. It is not how high he rises in the freak establishment. The measure of a man is this: how swiftly can he react to another person's need? And how much of himself can he give?'" (*Our Friends,* chapter 7, p. 64). When the little protagonist questions one of the devolved New Men at the end of the narrative, it is as if he is also discussing the subject material and the values that had up to this point occupied Dick's work:

> "Is that important?" Nick asked. "Is that what it's all about, instead of invasions by aliens, the destruction of ten million superlative brains, the transfer of political power—all power—to an elite group—"
>
> "I don't understand those things," Amos Ild said. "I just know how it's wonderful, someone loving you that much. And if someone loved you that much, you must be worth loving, so pretty soon someone else will love you that way too, and you'll love them in the same way. Do you see?"
>
> "I think so," Nick said. [*Our Friends From Frolix 8,* chapter 27, p. 275]

These baldy thematic passages give the novel a tone dissimilar to that found in the earlier political novels. Almost all of the novels to this point are hopeful in some way; either the dystopian state could be overthrown, or held at bay, or resisted in some private way. But here the hopefulness is newly strained and strident, and religious in nature. For the first time since the 1950s a world police state is overthrown, but the revolution is accomplished by an alien with God-like powers, landing in a spaceship: a *deus ex machina,* another metaphor made literal. It looks as though Dick is saying the world can only be saved by the appearance of God; but he doesn't go that far. This god is only another sentience, more powerful than man, but not entirely trustworthy. The same question is being brought up here as it was in the early story "The Golden Man": how will these superior beings view us? Will they treat us well or poorly? In *Our Friends From Frolix 8,* the religious answer to political oppression is an ambiguous one, fraught with dangers. What we will want to look for, in the novels that follow this one, is whether Dick ever accepts this religious solution, or escape, more unconditionally.

A Maze of Death (1970) exhibits to a much more marked degree the strained and strident tone of *Our Friends.* Again the narrative scheme is the standard one, employing several point-of-view characters. And the characters are the ones we have met time and again. In this novel, however, they are brought

together in isolation. There are fourteen of them (you know the cast by now), and they are stranded together on a remote planet, like the characters stranded on an island in Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None.* Just as in the Christie novel, Dick kills off the characters one by one. *A Maze of Death* is a rampage by Dick through his character system, a desperate attempt to kill off a cast that has obsessed him for over twenty years, in over thirty books. It is also a despairing representation, or allegory, of his own creative process; this text is one metaphor for Dick's text-making.

The desperate tone is apparent from the start, in a foreword that reminds us of the pleading foreword to *In Milton Lumpky Territory.* In it Dick claims that the theology in the book is "not an analogy of any known religion," although it does conform to the four-sided pattern that Jung abstracted from his study of the world's religions. In any case, once again Dick, and his characters, are constructing explanations for the world.

Dick also includes a paragraph that describes his narrative method, and naturally this is of interest:

> The approach in this novel is highly subjective; by that I mean that at any given time, reality is seen—not directly—but indirectly, i.e., through the mind of one of the characters. This viewpoint mind differs from section to section, although most of the events are seen through Seth Morley's psyche. [*A Maze of Death,* p. v]

The events chronicle the death of one after another of the characters at the hands of the Form Destroyer, one of the four gods that actively intervene in the fictional world, until Seth Morley himself dies, two chapters from the end. We then learn that this train of awful events was merely a group hallucination; the fourteen characters are trapped in a spaceship (Dick's mind), and they engage in the hallucinations (the novels) to pass the time, and release hostilities. The characters are doomed to repeat hallucinations endlessly, and because of their increasing tension at their hopeless situation, the hallucinated experiences are likely to become even more awful than the sickening one we have just experienced with them.

Reading the spaceship as Dick's mind, and the group hallucinations the sequence of novels that the cast of characters has appeared in over the years, we can see this book is a commentary on Dick's own work, and as such a metafiction it marks one of the blackest and most bitter moments in Dick's career. Even the chapter titles reinforce this already palpable bitterness; they are lighthearted but completely irrelevant to the text, creating a savage disjuncture between Dick and his characters, and between the reader and the text.

Beyond the therapeutic value this destruction may have had for Dick—the destruction of all that lay behind—the principal value in the work lies in the strong indication of things to come. The theological system that is so important to this book is in some ways a precursor to the vastly extended religious

speculation in the *VALIS* trilogy. The theological system is not the same. In *A Maze of Death* it is basically Manichean, in that there are good and evil gods, about equally matched. It looks simple in the light of the later works. But here Dick learns that a full theology can be proposed in the framework of a novel, and he may also have been inspired to begin the *Exegesis* that occupied him privately for many years, and which forms the basis for the theology in *VALIS* and its sequel.

I have described how the hopeful endings in Dick's novels gradually become the buried hopefulness of the 1960s dystopias, and shown how the hopefulness of the *deus ex machina* ending in *Our Friends From Frolix 8* is ambiguous at best. In *A Maze of Death,* the elaborate theology is no more than part of the hallucination shared by the characters; nevertheless, out of desperation Seth Morley prays to one of the three hallucinated good gods anyway, and in the last pages of the book that god, the Intercessor, appears and takes him away from the doomed spaceship, just as he had asked. This is perfectly in keeping with the general desperation exhibited by this work. At this ultimately low point in Dick's work, a miracle is the only hope. If a miracle cannot be summoned up, the alternative is endless horror. This novel is Dick's Slough of Despond; after it a completely original novel does not appear for another four years, an unprecedented gap in the career of this prolific writer.

We Can Build You (1972) is an expansion of the story "A. Lincoln, Simulacra," which was published in 1969/1970. The expansion picks up where the short story left off, and continues it. As in *The Crack In Space* and *The Unteleported Man,* the continuation of the narrative leads in a new direction, but in this case we never return to the original subject matter. Thus *We Can Build You* is the epitome of the broken-backed novel in Dick's work.

The original story is a return to the often used element of the android; here they are called simulacra, and the first two to be built are replicas of Edwin Stanton and Abraham Lincoln. The makers of the simulacra, Louis Rosen and Maury Frauenzimmer (the latter is taken, name, job and all, out of *The Simulacra*), try to get financial help from a big businessman, but the businessman tries to take over their company. Maury's daughter Pris joins the businessman, and to keep from losing the financial battle Maury and Louis have to enlist the help of the two simulacra. (Note, by the way, that Dick's attempt to kill off his character cast in *A Maze of Death* was not successful; here they all are again, as that novel predicted.)

Up to this point the abilities of the simulacra remain the central subject of the narrative, and there is an illuminating argument between Lincoln and the big businessman concerning the differences between man and an intelligent machine. But when Pris joins the businessman, the narrative jumps tracks. Louis is in love with her, obsessively so, and as he is the first-person narrator of the text (this is the first time Dick ever used this point of view in his science

fiction, and it marks another experiment in a method that will be used later), we must follow him in his pursuit of Pris. Eventually the pursuit of a schizoid girl leads Louis himself into madness and an asylum, where he has a series of hallucinations concerning her, and then meets her again in the flesh when she too is placed in the asylum. We never return to the story of the simulacra and the business battle over them.

This retracking of the narrative, made so complete by the use of the first person point of view, leaves the reader very dissatisfied, for we are forced to abandon a fully stated fictional problem for a private obsession that we witness but do not share. Those who have bothered to comment on the novel—it is generally considered a lesser work because of this strange shift—always object to this. Darko Suvin states the objection most clearly: "In *We Can Build You,* the erstwhile characteristic Dickian theme of the simulacrum Lincoln is left to fizzle out in favour of the Jungian theme of Pris—though the conjuring up of the past probity from the heroic age of the U.S. bourgeoisie against its present corruption cries out for more detailed treatment."[3]

It is certainly true that as an expansion of "A. Lincoln, Simulacra," the book is a frustrating failure. The defense of the book must shift with the narrative, and see the division into two parts as a deliberate formal device that reinforces the preemptive strength of the second story-line. Madness preempts any other business at hand, no matter how interesting. Very few other novels about psychotic withdrawal have depicted the force of the schizoid personality as well as this novel does, for here a developing story is entirely derailed while narrator, author, and readers are forced to attend to the fortunes of a mentally troubled young girl, and the equally troubled narrator. In this reading the loss of narrative control exhibited by Dick becomes an effective device. Whether this is deliberate is doubtful—it is more likely that, as with the earlier broken-backed expansions, Dick had moved on to new interests by the time he did the expanding. But it is the best defense one can make for this strange and not inconsiderable volume.

As I said earlier, the novels of the 1970s contain elements that look back to earlier novels, and elements that look forward to the *VALIS* trilogy. Of all these mixed novels, *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said* (1974) most looks back to the novels of the 1960s. There is a little protagonist, a TV star who one day wakes up in a world where no one has heard of him; and there is a big protagonist, the police chief who investigates the nonperson the TV star has become, suspecting him of subversion. The chief's young sister Alys is another in the string of young, intense, and destructive women characters. She is the cause of the TV star's reality breakdown, as under the influence of yet another Dick drug she can draw other people into her hallucinations, so that they are hallucinating too.

This premise, as Damon Knight has remarked, is one that creates situations that cannot be made logical and coherent.[4] The facts of the narrative cannot be reconciled to each other, even using Dick's explanation for them. It is another of the novels in which inconsistency is part of the structural fabric, only in this case it is unclear what purpose the inconsistency has, if any.

The only aspect of *Flow My Tears* that looks forward to later novels is its setting, which is closer to the present than earlier works. The explanation for this "conservatism" may lie in the long gap of time that had passed since Dick last wrote a fully original work. After three unproductive and troubled years, Dick returned to the characters, structure and plotting that he knew best. He took over a hundred pages of notes before starting the novel, spiralling in on his subject matter, and on the explanation for the TV star's experience.[5]

These notes show that two scenes were centrally important to Dick as he conceived the novel: the opening reality breakdown in which the TV star wakes up in a world that has forgotten him, and the final scene, in which the police chief, shattered by the climactic confrontation with his psychotic sister, stops his flying car at a gas station to approach and hug a stranger. The first of these scenes might serve as a metaphor for Dick's experiences in the 1970s; during the first half of the decade he dropped out of the science fiction community to an extent. The second scene represents one more attempt to imagine a way out of a dystopian world state. In this case, the quality of empathy is visited upon the police chief like grace; if it were to so strike all of the elite in authority, the system would presumably be changed from within. This is another version of the miracle in *Our Friends From Frolix 8,* except that in this case the elite is defeated by a god more like the Holy Spirit than the Jehovah alien in *Our Friends.* In any case, it is in its quiet way one of Dick's most moving scenes, making his case for human solidarity without the desperate didacticism of *Our Friends.*

Nineteen seventy-five was a good year for Dick as writer. *Flow My Tears* brought him back into the attention of the reading public, and assured the science fiction community that he was still active. Many of his books were brought back into print, and *Confessions of a Crap Artist* was published at last. *Flow My Tears* was nominated for both the Nebula and Hugo awards, and it won the new John W. Campbell, Jr., Award, given by academic critics of science fiction for best novel of the year. This was only one mark of Dick's growing reputation in the small world of academic criticism: an issue of *Science-Fiction Studies,* the best academic journal of science fiction criticism, was devoted to his work, and many other articles and critical studies appeared, including two short books. A long essay and interview was published in the popular magazine *Rolling Stone.* Nineteen seventy-five must have felt something like the reverse of the TV star's experience in *Flow My Tears:*

forgotten paperback writer instantaneously springs into popular and critical acclaim.

Of course, it was not exactly like that. Nineteen seventy-five marked Dick's twentieth year as a novelist, and to a certain extent what was happening was that readers were finally sorting through the tumult of novels Dick had published in the 1950s and 1960s, weeding out the failures and finding that there were more successes than they had noticed at the time. In any case, two years passed while Dick's reputation continued to grow, and during this time he wrote *A Scanner Darkly,* writing it with his usual haste, but taking the time to consider beforehand in detail what he was going to write.

While Dick was working on *A Scanner Darkly* (or during this same two-year period) a collaboration with Roger Zelazny called *Deus Irae* (1976) was published. In the Dick collection of the California State University at Fullerton library there is the unfinished fragment of a story called "The Kneeling Legless Man"; it is about forty pages long, and is one of the many false starts that Dick wrote and then abandoned. My understanding is that Roger Zelazny read the fragment, asked Dick if he could complete it, got permission from Dick, and then did so, so that the bulk of the novel is the work of Zelazny approved by Dick after it was finished without substantial changes or additions.[6] In various interviews Dick has claimed a larger role in the writing of the novel, and it may well be so. (Although Dick took interviews as a wonderful opportunity to spin more fictions, a fact which some interviewers did not fully understand.) In any case, the bulk of the novel appears to be an affectionate and accurate pastiche of Dick, written by Zelazny.

A Scanner Darkly (1977) moves us even closer to the present, closer, indeed, than any other science fiction novel of Dick's up to that time. Essentially the action takes place in a day-after-tomorrow future in which very little has changed in Orange County, Dick's residence of the 1970s. The huge city/suburbia that is Orange County resembles in many ways the common setting of Dick's future Americas, and here it is faithfully rendered as is, without estrangements—so much so that if the text mentions a restaurant on Katella Avenue in Anaheim, you could walk down Katella (better to drive) and find that very restaurant. The text is filled with these objects from our real landscape.

There are two principal additions to our world that mark this setting as a science fiction future. First, there is a highly degenerative drug called Death, or Substance D, which replaces JJ-180 as the worst drug in Dick's pharmacy. Second, the police now own a device that undercover agents can wear to obscure their appearance. These two changes make it possible for Dick to create this novel's situation. The Protagonist, Bob Arctor, is an undercover narcotics agent, living in a house with drug dealers. He ingests Substance D to

avoid his roomates' suspicion, and the drug begins to destroy his mind. The first of its many bad effects is to give him a truly split personality, so that when he makes his reports at the police station he is Fred the "narc," and does not remember which of the people at the house he is. Bob Arctor is then just another resident to him, and he informs on them all equally.

This premise is a fictional realization of the metaphors we use when describing someone with divided purposes, and as a method for representing the interior life of a narc it is unsurpassed. There exists no finer character study of an undercover agent in contemporary America than this novel. A narc also serves as a strategic central character in a portrayal of the drug culture, for all the culture's concerns are contained in this one character, in one or another of his split personalities. Early comic scenes such as the stoned attempt to extract cocaine from the suntan lotion Solarcaine quickly disappear, replaced by the dreadful joyless search for Substance D, and the physical degeneration of the members of the house. Substance D, of course, stands for the bad effects of every single recreational drug, combined and then multiplied. Bob, our only protagonist, becomes addicted, then begins breaking apart. Despite a stay in a Synanon-style drug rehabilitation center which turns out to be a little dystopia, he "gets worse and worse and never gets better."[7] As a polemic *A Scanner Darkly* is unsurpassed, and Dick's afterword, giving the factual background of the novel, is unnecessary and superfluous.

This strong novel again raises the question of genre, for there is little that separates it from realism, and novels published around the same time as "realist" novels contain, in some cases, many more fantastical elements. But Dick was already placed in the publisher's category of science fiction (which is more rigid and arbitrary than the literary genre), and these late, ambiguous shifts toward a kind of absurdist realism would do nothing to dislodge him from his category.

As an artist, however, Dick could see many things in *A Scanner Darkly* that pointed the way to future progress, that gave him a method for discussing his central concerns. The use of present-day Orange County as a setting, and of himself and his acquaintances as character models, meant that his subject—his situation in contemporary America—was clear, and the metaphorical purpose of his estrangements became obvious because they were so closely tied to their originals in reality. All of Dick's uneven work of the 1970s was moving in this direction. *A Scanner Darkly* showed the value of the method, and in his final trilogy Dick made full use of it.

9

The Science Fiction End, the Realist End

VALIS • *The Divine Invasion* • *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*

> And what is science fiction at its best but just such a "new tool" as Mrs. Woolf avowedly sought for fifty years ago, a crazy, protean, left-handed monkey-wrench, which can be put to any use the craftsman has in mind—satire, extrapolation, prediction, absurdity, exactitude, exaggeration, warning, message-carrying, tale-telling, whatever you like—an infinitely expandable metaphor exactly suited to our expanding universe, a broken mirror, broken into numberless fragments, any one of which is capable of reflecting, for a moment, the left eye and the nose of the reader, and also the farthest stars shining in the depths of the remotest galaxy?
>
> Ursula K. Le Guin, "Science Fiction and Mrs. Brown"

Dick's final trilogy, in both its form and its content, takes us back to Dick's first novels, and to the creative split in him between the worlds of science fiction and realism. The first book of the trilogy, *VALIS,* is an autobiographical novel about Dick's "two halves," characterized in the book as Horselover Fat and "Phil Dick." Here the science fiction-realist split is given a fictional form, as it was in the "twin novels" of 1959, *Confessions of a Crap Artist* and *Time Out of Joint.* In this novel the science fictional part of Dick is characterized as Horselover Fat, a dreamer on the edge of insanity, obsessed with explaining the universe; Fat is an inventer of cosmogonies, and he offers an unending succession of explanations for the way things are. The realist part of Dick is represented by the character "Phil Dick," a novelist and close observer of daily life in Santa Ana, California; he watches his friend Horselover Fat with great concern, and though he gets caught up in some of Horselover's adventures, his usual judgement is that his friend is (half) crazy.

Following *VALIS,* and the explication of this split personality, we have two more books, a science fiction novel and a realist novel. We could say, then, that *The Divine Invasion,* the science fiction novel, is the book written by Horselover Fat, while *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer,* the realist novel, is the book written by "Phil Dick." The form of the trilogy is therefore a sort of "V," with *VALIS* at the base, and the other two books at the end of each

arm. So we have come full circle; once again, as in the novels of the 1950s, a central subject of the texts is Dick's "generic split." But now Dick is in full control of this artistic divison. He has understood the problem, in *VALIS,* and mastered both of the forms he is drawn toward in the two novels that follow (and this, in the case of the realist novel, is a new development); while the structure of the trilogy shows that he has discovered a way to write about this division and turn it to use. The result is a curiously appropriate capstone to Dick's career—curious, in that he certainly did not intend it as such. But that is what happened.

VALIS by itself also falls into two parts: the first part is basically a realist novel taking place in Orange County, while in chapter 9 the major science fiction element intrudes, and after that the book shifts to science fiction, and much of the action takes place in Sonoma County.

In the first half of the book, the most obvious feature of interest is the point-of-view device by which Dick "splits himself" into two characters. The narrative begins with a description of the start of Horselover Fat's severe psychological problems. In the midst of this description, on page 3, a paragraph begins, "I am Horselover Fat, and I am writing this in the third person to gain much-needed objectivity." The paragraph continues in the first person, then the next paragraph shifts back to the description of Horselover. On the next page the issue is again deliberately confused a couple of times:

> I am, by profession, a science fiction writer. I deal in fantasies. My life is a fantasy. Nonetheless, Gloria Knudson lies in a box in Modesto, California.
>
> ...The night before, Bob and I—I mean, Bob and Horselover Fat....
>
> ...The Knudsons mailed me the photo a month—mailed Horselover Fat the photo a month—after Gloria's funeral....When Fat got me started writing this, he asked me why I thought Bob Langley got so mad at his request. I don't know. [*VALIS,* pp. 4-7]

After this the "confusion" lessens, and the narrative continues for a few pages with an "I" narrator who relates the story of Horselover Fat and his problems. This appears to be a device familiar to us, a convention of American realism; like Hemingway's Nick Adams, or Fitzgerald's Dick Diver, Dick's Horselover Fat is a portrait loosely based on the writer, giving the writer the distance necessary to successfully mold himself into a character in his fiction.

But the matter does not stay so simple for long. In the second chapter Horselover Fat and the "I" telling the story drive around Orange County together; the "I" becomes another character in the narrative. He says, "In my novel *A Scanner Darkly,* published in 1977, I ripped off Fat's account of his eight hours of lurid phosphene activity" (*VALIS,* p. 96). Later Fat and the "I" have a long talk in a bar, and at the end of it Fat calls the "I" "Phil." Other characters subsequently call him "Phil Dick," and he takes a larger and larger part in the action of the novel.

So our initial assumption that Horselover Fat is a simple autobiographical portrait has been quickly subverted, for the usual realist convention is here recomplicated.[1] By placing the character "Phil Dick" in the story, Dick makes us reconsider the relationship between Fat and himself, and we must realize that the representation is not a simple one. Neither is the correspondence between "Phil Dick" and the actual writer a simple one. This character, calm, rational, clear-eyed in his judgments, almost always at a remove from the action, is as much an abstraction away from the writer himself as is the more flamboyant Horselover Fat. Dick has divided his autobiographical character, then, into the two extremes that we have seen in conflict throughout his work.[2] This gives his self-analysis a clarity that it otherwise would have been very difficult to achieve.

Horselover Fat is the main protagonist of the book; it is as if, since he is the stranger of the two halves of Dick, he deserves or needs more explanation. The central event in Horselover's life occured in March of 1974, when he had an unusual experience—a reality breakdown, if you will:

> God, he told us, had fired a beam of pink light directly at him, at his head, his eyes; Fat had been temporarily blinded and his head had ached for days. It was easy, he said, to describe the beam of pink light; it's exactly what you get as a phosphene after-image when a flashbulb has gone off in your face. [*VALIS,* p. 12]

This experience—which occurs to Horselover, remember, not to "Phil Dick"[3]—also gives Horselover some medical knowledge about his son that he is convinced he was incapable of intuiting for himself. This and other odd facts about the experience raise it out of the realm of any normal physical explanation—for Fat—and the great project of his life becomes putting together a cosmogony, or a larger explanation of the universe, that will make sense of this experience. In other words, Fat has a rational, you might even say *scientific,* drive to find, or make, a description of the universe that allows him to recoup this experience from the realm of the miraculous, or the insane. Fat is perfectly willing to rationally consider these last two realms as explanations, but "miracle" only means to him *not yet explained;* while certain features of the experience, especially the diagnosis of his son's illness, seem to him to clearly transcend simple insanity, making it insufficient as an explanation.

So Horselover Fat's salient characteristic becomes a truly obsessive drive to create a coherent metaphysical cosmogony that will explain his experience of March 1974. As the narrator puts it, "No wonder Fat started scratching out page after page of his exegesis. I'd have done the same. He wasn't just theory-mongering for the sake of it; he was trying to figure out what the fuck had happened to him" (*VALIS,* p. 96). The successive theories that Fat proposes sometimes build on his previous work, but sometimes they contradict it; in general, we can say that he offers a new explanation that does not build on the

previous one five or six separate times, or once every few chapters. These explanations get increasingly flamboyant, until one entry in Fat's long exegesis reads:

> The primordial source of all our religions lies with the ancestors of the Dogon tribe, who got their cosmogony and cosmology directly from the three-eyed invaders who visited long ago. The three-eyed invaders are mute and deaf and telepathic, could not breathe our atmosphere, had the elongated misshapen skull of Ikhnaton and emanated from a planet in the star-system Sirius....

And the narrator comments, "By now Fat had totally lost touch with reality" (*VALIS,* p. 90).

But there are some elements to Fat's ever-evolving cosmogony that remain constant, and are important not only when considering the other two books of the trilogy, especially *The Divine Invasion,* but also when looking back at the frequent reality breakdowns that occur in Dick's earlier novels. The first is that reality itself is not the empirical, sensory, everyday world. Dick's narratives insist on this repeatedly, as we have seen, but here in Horselover Fat's speculations we get the fullest theoretical underpinning for this belief:

> In all my reading I have—I mean, Horselover Fat has—never found anything more significant as an insight into the nature of reality. In *Fragment 123,* Heraclitus says, "The nature of things is in the habit of concealing itself." And in *Fragment 54* he says, "Latent structure is master of obvious structure," to which Edward Hussey adds, "Consequently, he (Heraclitus) necessarily agreed . . . that reality was to some extent 'hidden.'" So if reality "(is) to some extent 'hidden,'" then what is meant by "theophany"? Because a theophany is an in-breaking of God, an in-breaking which amounts to an invasion of our world; and yet our world is only seeming; it is only "obvious structure," which is under the mastery of an unseen "latent structure." Horselover Fat would like you to consider this above all other things. Because if Heraclitus is correct, there is in fact no reality but that of theophanies; the rest is illusion.... [*VALIS,* p. 31]

This view of the fundamental nature of reality is supplemented by a second abiding theory of Fat's, one that could serve almost as the epigraph for *The Divine Invasion,* and is certainly the controlling idea for that second book: "The universe might be irrational, but something rational had broken into it, like a thief in the night breaks into a sleeping household, unexpectedly in terms of place, in terms of time." (*VALIS,* p. 60). The second novel is completely taken up by the story of this "break-in," but in *VALIS* this idea is almost overwhelmed by Fat's other speculations, and though he returns to it again and again in different forms—and the appearance of the child "God" near the end of the book may be an alternate version of this "break-in"—the idea is presented here somewhat ambiguously, as one among many.

To sum up: Horselover Fat, in response to a personal reality breakdown in March 1974, attempts to explain the experience by metaphysical theory, and

his whole life is organized around this effort. He offers up a series of theories, and attempts to explain by them not only his extraordinary experience, but also the world's irrationality, the nature of suffering and evil, the fact of death, and the fabric of reality itself. The attempt to make this overarching explanation, or cosmogony, drives him to the brink of madness, where he hovers uncertainly, helped whenever possible by his friends Kevin, David, and "Phil Dick."

The first half of *VALIS* is taken up by this study of Fat, and he dominates the narrative. But just before the introduction of the science fiction element in chapter 9, "Phil Dick" the narrator slips in a small passage about himself, near the end of chapter 7 (pp. 102-6). Horselover's latest theory has him being two people simultaneously, one of them a Roman living soon after the time of Christ; after a double-space in the text, the narrator says, "I have had dreams of another place myself," and goes on to describe a cabin by a lake, its inhabitants and their neighbors. In this poignant description of an alternative life we have one of Dick's most beautiful and moving scenes. At the end of the passage we see the artist, and understand him, in a way that occurs nowhere else in Dick's work:

> An hour after I have woken up from the dream I can still see in my mind's eye—whatever that may be; the third or *ajna* eye?—the garden hose which my wife in her blue jeans is dragging across the cement driveway. Little details, and no plot.... Who am I? How many people am I? Where am I? This plastic little apartment in southern California is not my home, but now I am awake, I guess, and here I live, with my TV (hello, Dick Clark), and my stereo (hello, Olivia Newton-John) and my books (hello nine million stuffy titles). In comparison to my life in the inter-connected dreams, this life is lonely and phony and worthless; unfit for an intelligent and educated person. *Where are the roses? Where is the lake? Where is the slim, smiling, attractive woman coiling and tugging the green garden hose?* The person that I am now, compared with the person in the dream, has been baffled and defeated and only supposes he enjoys a full life. In the dreams, I see what a full life really consists of, and it is not what I really have. [*VALIS*, pp. 105-6]

So this study of Horselover and Phil takes up the first half of the novel, and so far it is a realist work. But in chapter 9, Fat's friend Kevin takes them all to see a movie, and in this movie there is a re-creation of, and an explanation for, Fat's vision. Suddenly it is taken out of the realm of a private experience, where despite all Fat's explaining it can ultimately be chalked up to his madness, and put right into the middle of the objective world, among Fat's astounded friends. They band together around Fat, and use "Phil Dick's" Hollywood contacts to find the makers of the film, up in Sonoma County; they travel up to Sonoma, and from that point are embroiled in a science fiction novel, where futuristic technology, robots, and aliens become characters in the narrative. The book has essentially shifted genres here, at this break point between private psychosis and public experience. To understand it we must shift our generic expectations, and follow Dick back into his more usual mode.

But this shift is difficult to make completely, and the expectations we have of realist works carry on.

The movie that they go to see, called *Valis,* is described and discussed in some detail in chapter 9. The movie's plot is condensed from an earlier draft of the novel *VALIS,* and the movie as a whole bears many resemblances to the 1978 Nicolas Roeg film, *The Man Who Fell To Earth.* (These resemblances include a British rock musician as star, an obscure and elliptical style, a mysterious politician pursuing goals not clear to the audience, a scene in which the hero's eyes "turn into something weird," bed scenes involving aliens and the stripping away of disguises, and turbulent, confusing crowd scenes.)[4] The immediately relevant part of the film, for Fat and his friends, concerns an alien laser machine that fires information into the minds of humans by means of a blinding pink light. This, as I said, takes Horselover Fat's experience out of his subjective world and into the collective, objective world, especially when the group of four friends visit the filmmakers in Sonoma, and find that the laser machine (or something like it) is real. This abrupt interjection of a clearly science fiction element is never completely unequivocal; parts of a rational, realist explanation for the events in Sonoma (insane musician and wife, electronics-mad genius, child as experimental radio receiver/transmitter) are offered to us. Thus the passage is extremely ambiguous, generically. But during the experience itself, when the four friends are listening to a two-year-old give them a sermon, they must suddenly take Fat's religious speculations seriously; perhaps the world *is* just a veil of illusions, punctured periodically by a theophany, a "break-in" by an invading, rational god.

During the visit to Sonoma this radical confrontation with the transcendent takes place; the four friends are introduced to a two-year-old girl who is apparently God Incarnate. Or perhaps she is just a child, being fed messages by a Vast Artificial Living Intelligence System; we can never be sure which. In any case, the first effect of this confrontation is that the four friends become three. The child forces "Phil Dick" to acknowledge that Horselover Fat was a projection of his, and that the two are the same person. "Phil Dick" agrees to this, and for the rest of their stay in Sonoma he remains a single person. He has been made whole by a god—an alien—a machine—a genius child—take your pick; any way you choose, "Phil Dick" has been made whole by something out of science fiction. An element from that genre has enabled him to perceive himself as a single, coherent personality.

The trip to Sonoma and the child-God teaches our split protagonist some other things as well. First, as the narrator says afterwards, "It is amazing that when someone else spouts the nonsense you yourself believe you can readily perceive it as nonsense. In the VW Rabbit as I had listened to Linda and Eric rattle on about being three-eyed people from another planet I had known they were nuts. This made me nuts, too" (*VALIS,* p. 195). Second, what the Child-God teaches "Phil Dick" in replacement for Horselover's theories is very

simple, very humanistic. In a scene clearly based on Christ's Sermon on the Mount, she says to "Phil," "Man is holy, and the true god, the living god, is man himself. You will have no gods but yourselves; the days in which you believed in other gods end now, they end forever" (*VALIS,* p. 184). Later, "Phil" repeats this to himself: "What had the little girl told us? That human beings should now give up the worship of all deities except mankind itself. This did not seem irrational to me. Whether it had been said by a child or whether it came from the *Brittanica,* it would have struck me as sound" (*VALIS,* p. 198).

So the protagonist has been cured of his split, and of his obsessive religious explaining, by one of the basic tenets of humanism. This lesson, however, is given by a very strange personage indeed. As soon as they are back in Orange County and away from her, Horselover Fat reappears, and attempts to explain her, and her mysterious disappearance. After the moment of transcendence comes the long exegesis, although here, once again, the reaction of the protagonist is split. "Phil Dick," trying to understand the experience, finally quits: "The hell with it, I thought wearily. I give up" (*VALIS,* p. 198). Horselover Fat, however, refuses to quit.

> "You won't give up," I said to Fat.
>
> "No," Fat agreed. "I never will. I'm going back—I ran out of money. When I've gotten the funds together, I'm going back. I know where to look, now. The Greek islands. Lemnos, Lesbos, Crete. Especially Crete. . . . [*VALIS,* p. 208]

So the novels end with the two halves of the protagonist still separated, Horselover travelling the world in search of the truth, "Phil Dick" at home in Orange County watching television and wondering about his friend. In the two novels that follow in this trilogy we will see each half at work, making its separate explanation; but the place where they came together was here, in *VALIS,* a curious novel of transcendence where realism and science fiction meld together to make a new humanistic Wise Child.

If we think of *The Divine Invasion* as the novel written by Horselover Fat, then we will not be surprised when we find it a difficult and confusing book, filled with reality breakdowns and a successive stripping away of explanations. Three ideas expressed by Horselover in *VALIS* determine the structure and content of *The Divine Invasion.* The first is based on *Fragment 54* of Heraclitus, "Latent structure is master of obvious structure;" reality is not what we see, and it is possible to break through the illusory level of the senses to more fundamental levels. The second idea is Fat's notion that the universe itself is irrational, and that something rational has *broken into it,* and challenged this irrationality. In *The Divine Invasion* this notion is translated into a situation where Satan, or Belial, is in control of the Earth, and God is returning from exile on another planet to challenge this control. The third idea again originates

in a fragment of Heraclitus; in *VALIS* it is quoted and given a gloss, and in *The Divine Invasion* it is repeated, emphasizing its importance. "Time is a child at play, playing draughts; a child's is the kingdom" (*The Divine Invasion,* chapter 11, p. 140). In this novel (as in *VALIS*), God is a child, a young boy named Emmanuel. Because of an accident suffered by his human body, he does not remember who he is, and the action of the narrative follows his coming to consciousness, which then enables him to act, and to attempt to free the world.

Given these three ideas as generating principles, it follows naturally that this novel should be dominated by what we have been calling reality breakdowns. In this respect, and in fact in several other ways, *The Divine Invasion* resembles the earlier Dick novels dominated by the reality breakdown element, *Ubik* and *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch.* As in *Ubik,* there is a little protagonist lost in a suspended "half-life;" and the raging metaphysical conflict, on various levels of reality, between forces of good and evil, is reminiscent of *The Three Stigmata.*[5] Indeed, for some commentators the close similarities in the *effects* of these reality breakdowns is more significant than their differing *causes.* Fredric Jameson has suggested that Dick, having grown tired or displeased with using future drugs as the device to create his reality breakdowns, turned to theology to still have a device by which he could generate his central situation.[6] Something said in *VALIS* supports this notion: "By now the epoch of drug-taking had ended, and everyone had begun casting about for a new obsession. For us the new obsession, thanks to Fat, was theology" (*VALIS,* p. 21).

So here the playful struggle between the child-God Emmanuel and his female half Zina, and the serious struggle between these two and the evil god Belial, results in an infinite regress of reality breakdowns for the book's little protagonist, the human Herb Asher. The successive breakdowns become so complicated, in fact, that a short description of the novel's structure may help to clarify the ultimate significance of all these breakdowns. Through the first nine chapters, a double track of narrative is followed. One track is the story of the boy Emmanuel, getting to know the girl Zina in a school outside Washington, D.C. Emmanuel's mother Rybys was killed in a plane accident, and his legal father Herb Asher was injured so badly that he was placed in cryonic suspension. We quickly learn that Emmanuel is God, come back to challenge Belial's dominance of this world, and the action of this track consists of Emmanuel's struggle to understand both himself and the real nature of Zina, who is obviously another other-worldly power. The second track of the narrative is concerned with Herb Asher. We know that he is in cryonic suspension, but while there he re-experiences his first meeting with Rybys, on the planet CY30-CY30B, their encounter with God and the prophet Elijah, Rybys's pregnancy, and the trip to Earth that resulted in Rybys's death, and Herb's placement in cryonic suspension. So even in this first part of the book, Herb lives permanently in an illusory reality, and we know what will eventually

become of him in his hallucinated, re-experienced life, because the first track of the narrative is set after the end of this period in his life.

In chapter 10 Herb is given a new spleen and taken out of cryonic suspension, and he rejoins his ten-year-old son and the incarnation of Elijah who has been his guardian. For three chapters (about thirty-five pages of the text) Herb exists in the real world of the narrative. But, as he observes, the contest between Emmanuel and the mysterious, unidentified goddess Zina is heating up, and it finally results in a bet similar to the one made in the Book of Job by God and Satan; here, Emmanuel and Zina disagree over what they think Herb Asher's response would be to meeting his favorite singer (and sexual fantasy) Linda Fox, and to finding her an ordinary, flawed, human. So in chapter 13 Herb finds himself in a world where he runs a stereo shop with a partner named Elias, and is married to Rybys again. Here he meets Linda Fox, and visits her to equip her apartment with stereo equipment; he also meets a young boy named Manny, and a young woman named Zina. From time to time he falls through this reality; he recalls his life on CY30-CY30B, and his accident. But even after Emmanuel and Zina have resolved their bet, Herb's lived reality refuses to change. From chapter 13 until the end of the book—and this is an important point when we attempt to understand *The Divine Invasion*—he never leaves the "ersatz universe" created for him by Emmanuel and Zina.

This situation results in the great set-piece of the novel, the conversation that occurs when Herb is pulled over by a policeman for speeding on his way to Linda Fox. The cop's radio relay provides a third voice to this conversation, and Herb becomes more and more tangled as he tries to explain himself to the two authorities. After giving them a detailed description of the orchestration in Mahler's Second Symphony, Herb is asked how he knows so much about music. He replies:

> "There are two reasons.... One is due to my living on a planet in the star system CY30-CY30B; I operate a sophisticated bank of electronic equipment, both video and audio... and I handle traffic from Fomalhaut, as well as domestic emergency traffic. And the other reason is that the prophet Elijah and I own a retail audio components store in Washington, D.C."
>
> "Plus the fact," the cop beside Herb Asher said, "that you're in cryonic suspension."
>
> "All three," Herb Asher said, "Yes."
>
> "And God tells you things," the cop said.
>
> "Not about music...." [*The Divine Invasion,* chapter 18, p. 217-18]

The important point is that when the novel ends, Herb Asher is still living in an illusory world, one created for the sake of a bet by Emmanuel and Zina. Throughout this trilogy, as I have said, Dick presents an opposition between the religious visions of the sort put forth by Horselover Fat and Timothy Archer, and the *strict adherence to the real* practiced by "Phil Dick" (for the most part) and Angel Archer, the narrator of the third book. But in *The Divine*

Invasion, the balance is all tilted toward the side of the visionary: the big protagonist is a god, the little protagonist is inextricably caught in the shifting realities created by the god, and so there is no strong advocate of the real. This debate, the visionary versus the realist, must take place on a theoretical plane only, between Emmanuel and his female half, Zina. At one point Zina creates a reality in which the evil god Belial is a goat caged in a zoo, and the world is therefore good. But this solution (which is similar in general shape to the political solutions offered by Dick in his revolutionary novels of the 1950s) is objected to by Emmanuel:

> "Lies," he said. "It is wish fulfillment. You cannot build a world on wishes. The basis of reality is bleak because you cannot serve up obliging mock vistas; you must adhere to what is possible: *the law of necessity.* Whatever is, is because it must be; because it can be no other way. It is not what it is because someone wishes it but because it has to be—that and specifically that, down to the most meager detail." [*The Divine Invasion,* chapter 13, p. 165]

Theoretically, then, Emmanuel is the advocate of the reality principle in this novel. But he creates the mock reality that Herb exists in at the end of the book; and this reality corresponds very closely to a fantasy that Herb entertained about Linda Fox, long before he began his adventures on CY30-CY30B. In this final world Belial has been killed by a touch of Linda Fox's hand, and Herb and Linda are to live together in happiness forever, with Rybys and all the rest of that world forgotten. Emmanuel's momentary advocacy of the real, quoted above, apparently does not guide his actions throughout the rest of the narrative; and so *The Divine Invasion,* containing only a token opposition of the Real, and ending in an illusory world, would seem to be the story of a defeat, a failure. This is especially true when the book is placed in the context of the other books of the trilogy, where the issues are presented more clearly, and the conflict between Visionary and Realist is more balanced. In comparison to those outside books, *The Divine Invasion* is confused and murky, passing through plane after plane of reality until its characters are lost entirely. And this, I take it, is deliberate on Dick's part. It constitutes one aspect of his condemnation of the visionary in the longer argument which the whole trilogy makes.

If *The Divine Invasion* is considered as the work of Horselover Fat, then *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer* is "Phil Dick" at work, and the narrator of the latter novel, Angel Archer, shares many qualities exhibited by the narrator of *VALIS:* a lucid, straightforward style, using the colloquial language of 1970s California; and a fascination with their visionary friends and their ideas that is more than matched by a firm grounding in the real world. In *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer,* the title character is the visionary, and he fills the same role in the narrative that Horselover Fat does in *VALIS:* he is the

visionary, lost in his thoughts, continuously revising his theological ideas. As the narrator, Angel, says of him, "Tim differed from everyone else I knew in these respects: he could believe in anything and he would immediately act on the basis of his new belief; that is, until he ran into another belief and then he acted on that" (*The Transmigration,* chapter 2, p. 17). The incident that Angel refers to frequently, as the perfect illustration of Timothy Archer's relation to the real world, concerns a visit to a gas station; Archer runs over a gas pump when leaving the station, but lost in thought he does not notice, and an attendant has to chase him down. But Archer is not a comic figure, as Horselover Fat is. Based on Bishop James Pike, whom Dick was acquainted with, Timothy Archer is also a bishop of the Episcopal church, and his opinions have importance in the world. While Horselover Fat's wild theorizing only gets him tagged as crazy by his friends, Archer's speculations—made as obsessively as Fat's, although they are not quite as wild—gain him worldly respect, fame, and a position of importance. Much in the narrative forces us to take Timothy Archer more seriously than Horselover Fat; still, he runs over gas pumps without knowing it, he reaches for a book to read from in every personal crisis, and he lives almost entirely in a world of ideas, "ideas about other ideas, an infinite regress of them, spiraling off forever" (*Transmigration,* chapter 13, p. 209). Archer is, like Fat, a visionary, but he is also a whole character, rather than a "projection" of another character, and he is based on an actual, historical, figure. The effect on the reader is as if Dick has said, "All right, Horselover Fat was funny, a Falstaffian comic figure based on some of my own tendencies; but these tendencies also exist even more markedly in respected people in the real world, and the consequences of such behavior—such madness—are very serious indeed: they can kill you." Thus this realist portrait of a man obsessed with metaphysics is the final and complete repudiation of these interests *when they are taken to an extreme,* as they are by Timothy Archer, and by Horselover Fat, and, by direct implication, by an important part of Philip K. Dick himself.

As Dick is presenting us an opposition in this trilogy between the visionary and the realist, we should expect to find characters in this novel that illustrate and advocate the realist position, and indeed we do: there are two of them. But one of them, the character Bill (Tim Archer's mistress's son) is meant to represent the opposite extreme of the position taken by Tim. Bill is mentally ill—as, we are to understand, Tim Archer is; but Bill's illness gets him committed—Bill is schizophrenic, and he apparently *cannot* understand most abstract ideas. He is "grounded" in the real like a plane stuck on a runway; he fails the Benjamin Proverb Test administered to him informally by Angel Archer, spends his time in and out of institutions, and is obsessively interested in auto mechanics. Bill and Tim are apparently polar opposites, but in the sometimes comic scenes where they attempt to interact, Dick makes it clear

that for him sanity lies somewhere in the middle ground between the two, or, to put it better, it lies in the ability to encompass both poles of the opposition, and not become obsessed by either side.

Angel Archer, daughter-in-law of Timothy Archer and narrator of the novel, is the character that can balance these extremes, and so it is she who represents the true opposition to Tim Archer, and not Bill. Angel is a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley's English department and is intensely interested in literature and music, and less so in history and theology; but at the same time she is a very pragmatic character. Able to argue theology with Tim, Angel can also press him about his personal life; when she objects to him taking a mistress, she writes, "Not getting caught is the point. Bolting your feet down to the floor is the point, the floor we call reality" (*Transmigration,* chapter 3, p. 51). When Tim and his mistress become convinced that Angel's dead husband is communicating to them from beyond the grave, Angel cannot condemn the idea without losing their friendship, and valuing the relationship more than her intellectual beliefs, she withholds her scathing opinions and does what she can to help. One of the clearest expressions of Angel's nature is remembered by her after she has observed Tim's idealist behavior. One night, when afflicted by a terrible toothache, she read Dante.

> So for me in a certain unusual way... books and reality are fused; they join through one incident, one night of my life: my intellectual life and my practical life came together—nothing is more real than a badly infected tooth—and having done so they never completely came apart again. If I believed in God, I would say that he showed me something that night; he showed me the totality: pain, physical pain, drop by drop, and then... understanding... and what did I understand? That is is *all* real; the absessed tooth and... no less and no more:
>
> *"Three circles from its substance now appeared,*
> *Of three colors and each an equal whole."*
>
> ...That was the time of my birth into the real world; and the real world, for me, is a mixture of pain and beauty, and this is the correct view of it because these are the components that make up reality. [*The Transmigration of Timothy Archer,* chapter 9, pp. 148-49]

Angel Archer, then, is presented to us as the character embodying the balance of values between the extremes of Tim and Bill; she is the model of human sanity. Therefore when she is tested at the end of the narrative with this book's very modest version of a reality breakdown, we are more than usually interested in her response.

The single break away from strict realism in the novel occurs near the end. Timothy Archer has gone to Israel in search of Dick's equivalent of the Dead Sea Scrolls. He has hiked out into the desert armed with a six-pack of soda and a gas station map of the area, and died there. Subsequently Angel sees Bill again, and Bill shocks her by informing her that Timothy Archer's mind now

inhabits his, and that he now knows everything that Archer did, and hears him talking.

How will Angel respond to this? The two polar extremities are now merged into a single personality, in a development very like those we have so often seen in Dick's previous science fiction novels. Suddenly Bill speaks Latin and Italian, he is versed in theology; has Tim come back from beyond the grave, as he once claimed Angel's husband had?

> When my original anger at Bill Lundborg's psychosis had subsided—it did subside—I began to view it as funny. The utility of Bill Lundborg... consisted in his grounding in the concrete. This, precisely, he had lost. Bill had gone the way of the rest of us... into nonsense and the foolish....
>
> That the bishop had returned from the next world and now inhabited Bill Lundborg's mind or brain—that couldn't be, for obvious reasons. One knows this instinctively; one does not debate this; one perceives this as absolute fact: it cannot happen. I could quiz Bill forever, trying to establish the presence in him of facts known only to me and to Tim, but this would lead nowhere.... all data became suspect because there are multiple ways that data can arise within the human mind, ways more readily acceptable and explained than to assume that one man died in Israel and his psyche floated halfway across the world until it discriminated Bill Lundborg from all the other people in the United States and then dove into that person.... This does not lie within the domain of the real... it is the invention of derangement, of a young man who... grieved and tried to understand, and one day into Bill's mind came—not Bishop Timothy Archer—but the *concept* of Timothy Archer. [*The Transmigration of Timothy Archer,* chapter 15, pp. 236-38]

So Angel withstands the onslaught of this bizarre, mystical-seeming turn of events; she rejects all metaphysical explanations, and opts for the rational, the common-sensical. When she catches herself accepting the idea of the presence of Tim, in conversation with Bill, she merely remarks, "When you're high on good grass, you can believe anything, which is why it sells for as much as it does, now" (*Transmigration,* chapter 15, p. 241). Angel is the compassionate survivor, a thinker and actor of rare skill and balance, a character both analytical and emotional, able to both feel pain and deal with it constructively. The final scene, in which she juggles concern for Bill, a contest of ideas with a guru/therapist, and her practical record store manager's desire for a rare record, shows that she has emerged from all the difficulties of the narrative as a healthy whole. Angel Archer is the best of Dick's protagonists, the strongest and most lucid.

It is worth noting, by the way, that this strongest of all Dick's protagonists is a woman. *The Transmigration* is only the second of Dick's novels to be written from the first-person point of view, but it is the very first in which a woman is the protagonist. Angel is far and away the most complete characterization of a woman in all of Dick's work and, given that this was Dick's last novel, she appeared just in time. For in *VALIS* and *The Divine Invasion,* the women characters are almost uniformly destructive personalities,

and in the rest of his work the balance is not much better.[7] For every complete, sympathetic woman character—Donna in *A Scanner Darkly,* Bonnie in *Dr. Bloodmoney,* Juliana in *Man In the High Castle*—there must be five or ten of the vicious, deadly Bitch Wives that appear so often in Dick's work. The impression made is one of a misogyny that I do not believe Dick truly felt, and the portrait of Angel Archer—one of the most important characters in all of Dick's work, and the central figure in the final phase of his thinking—does something toward righting that impression, and giving Dick's work a wholeness that it otherwise would have lacked.

So the last novel of Dick's trilogy, and of his career, plumps down solidly on the side of the real, of realism in its largest sense. I think that Dick might have been pleased with this in a way. It does something to recuperate the immense effort he made in the realist novel in the 1950s, which up until this point never saw any fruit; and at last he was able to fully express a vital part of his artistic method, which was subdued and ignored for most of his life.

With this expression Dick was able, in his final trilogy, to give us his complete range as an artist. *The Divine Invasion* and *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer* might as well be by two different writers, they are so different; but the issues being discussed are the same, and they intersect in—or the connection between them is made clear by—*VALIS.* The issues that are being contested in *VALIS* are also clarified, and highlighted, by the material in the following two novels, and we can see much more clearly than before that the dense passage at the end of *VALIS,* in which the heretofore realist characters visit the child-God, is a complete interpenetration of realism and science fiction: conventions of both genres could conceivably explain the text, but the text will not justify making a definitive statement one way or the other; so here, and in the trilogy as a whole, the two genres are tangled together inextricably.

The beginning of 1982 was an exciting time for Dick. He had sold *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer,* and though he was rather tentative and shy about its appearance, clearly he was also very pleased with the book, and with the fact that he had sold it.[8] And the movie *Bladerunner,* based on *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?,* was almost ready for release. Dick had been overjoyed to see a final revision of the screenplay that saved it from a simple cops-and-robbers format, and was looking forward to seeing the final version. But in February he suffered a massive stroke, and on March 2, 1982 he died.

Dick was ill fairly often in his last years, and in what turned out to be his final novel, he has the character Timothy Archer quote from Schiller (chapter 5, p. 74):

> "'Now that I have begun to know and to employ my spiritual powers properly, an illness unfortunately threatens to undermine my physical ones. However, I shall do what I can, and when in the end the edifice comes crashing down, I shall have salvaged what was worth preserving.'"

Throughout this study we have been speaking of literary genres as if they were containers holding texts, or labelled bookcases on which certain texts were to be shelved. But genres are not containers of this sort; they are what Samuel R. Delany has called "reading protocols," and they consist of clusters of conventions that have appeared together in texts frequently. A better image for a genre might be, therefore, a bundle of stalks. To think of a literary convention as a stalk is to do some disservice to its flexibility (to the possibility of inverting it, for instance), but if we think of a genre as a bundle of stalks, then we can better imagine the way a certain number of stalks are used in a particular text: some displayed for consideration, others hidden unexamined, still others broken, so that they stick out from the bundle and draw attention to themselves. Best of all, we can see better how any individual text will draw a certain number of stalks from the larger bundle that is the genre, while ignoring others, and how it would be very easy to draw some stalks from the bundles of entirely different genres, creating new hybrids, individual texts that are *sui generis.*

Now science fiction, which has borrowed some of its conventions from the older genres of romance, satire, allegory, utopia, and the marvelous voyage, is a hybrid genre generated by a technological culture in a pattern of accelerated historical development. For most of its history in America it has been relegated to the periphery of our culture, both by realism's central position and by the somewhat enclosed nature of the science fiction community. During this time the reading protocols of the majority of the reading public did not encompass the conventions of the new genre. But the history of the last few decades has taken the culture into the middle of the bundle of elements and conventions which constitute science fiction, so that it has become apparent to more and more writers and readers that many of the literary methods that most powerfully represent our culture are to be found in this heretofore shunned and self-concerned "paraliterature." The result has been that individual writers have created texts that draw stalks from both the realist and science fiction bundles, and the interested public's reading protocols have thus gotten more flexible.[9] One of the most important novels of recent years, Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), incorporates several conventions of the science fiction novel—the speculation based on technological progress, the radical breaks into fantasy sequences, and the conspiracy theory of history, which

makes it an alternative history (in which a manned V2 rocket was launched) and which is remarkably similar in its historiography to *VALIS*—and an extremely impressive achievement like this will certainly influence writers and readers.

This is not to say that realism will disappear, but that science fiction will become an increasingly important genre, more central to our culture. The proof of this lies not in a manifesto, nor in any critical pronouncement of any kind, but where it always lies, in the texts being produced even now, and in the writers producing those texts. The strength of a genre lies in the individual strengths of the writers attracted to it; by this criterion science fiction is without a doubt increasing in importance. This growth began in the 1940s and 1950s, with the work of Isaac Asimov, Alfred Bester, Ray Bradbury, Arthur C. Clarke, Robert Heinlein, Frank Herbert, Damon Knight, Fritz Leiber, Walter Miller, Frederick Pohl, Clifford Simak, Theodore Sturgeon, and Jack Vance. The work of these writers attracted an even stronger second wave of writers, including Brian Aldiss, J.G. Ballard, D.G. Compton, Samuel R. Delany, Thomas M. Disch, Harlan Ellison, Langdon Jones, Ursula K. Le Guin, Stanislaw Lem, Larry Niven, Keith Roberts, Joanna Russ, Robert Silverberg, Kate Wilhelm, Gene Wolfe, and Roger Zelazny.[10] Each of these writers has adapted the genre to his or her own purposes, and with the inclusion of the texts they have added to it, the genre has become very sophisticated, flexible, expansive. It follows that the genre might in the future attract an even greater proportion of the important writers, the "strong poets," to use Harold Bloom's term. And if the culture remains a predominantly technological one, as it seems it will have to to survive, then the genre best suited to representing a technological culture will necessarily become a central one.

And here we return to Philip K. Dick, for while his influence in America has so far been confined to the small community of science fiction, his influence there has been profound. He was in the forefront of the artists using science fiction to represent the culture in a significant way, in a way that suggests that the culture can be changed for the better. The tendentious use of science fiction—its inherent utopianism in the guise of social criticism—was just beginning to appear in the early 1950s when Dick began writing, and his body of work stands as one of the best examples of science fiction as social criticism. Despite the continuously dystopian cast of his work, he never capitulates to the easy pessimism fashionable in certain literary circles that proclaim both the exhaustion of literature and the incipient death of our civilization. From the successful revolutions of the early novels, to the holding actions of the middle novels, to the private alternatives of the later novels, Dick searched for solutions; like his last obsessive characters, he repeatedly proposed new ways for the individual to oppose the dystopian aspects of our society. While doing this his texts very frequently challenge and subvert the traditions of the science fiction genre, and the traditional values given to its elements. In this, and in his

orchestration of the elements of science fiction into metaphor systems, Dick was a pioneer in American literature. His body of work has had a wide-ranging influence on his peers, by giving them a sense of the boundaries of the genre. The accomplishments of Dick and his generation of writers have attracted to science fiction new writers who are not much like him in their concerns, but who see in the genre boundless possibilities.

And finally, aside from his historical importance, aside from the changes he wrought in the genre, there remain the individual books Dick wrote. These books—with their wacky humor and their black comedy; their persistently struggling little protagonists determined never to give up, determined to help each other; their convoluted plots and strangely packed settings, reflecting in an extremely discomforting way the very world we live in—will endure as valuable works of art, works to be treasured despite their flaws, works that affirm over and over that human love and nobility will prevail in even the harshest societies the imagination can devise.

Appendix A

Chronological Listing of Dick's Novels

The chronological ordering of books published in the same year is taken from *PKD: A Philip K. Dick Bibliography,* edited by Daniel J.H. Levack, which should become the standard Dick bibliography. Less complete but still useful bibliographies can be found in *Science-Fiction Studies* 5 (1975), and in *Philip K. Dick: Electric Shepherd,* edited by Bruce Gillespie. The order the books were published in does not necessarily match the order they were written in.

Because there is no standard edition of Dick's works, I have cited both chapter and page numbers when quoting from him. The chapter numbers will remain the same for all editions. The page numbers, on the other hand, refer only to the editions listed below, which were the editions available to me.

1955 *Solar Lottery.* New York: Ace Books, 1955.

1956 *The World Jones Made.* New York: Ace Books, 1975.
The Man Who Japed. New York: Ace Books, 1975.

1957 *Eye In the Sky.* New York: Ace Books, 1957.
The Cosmic Puppets. New York: Ace Books, 1957.

1959 *Time Out of Joint.* New York: Belmont Tower Books, 1977.

1960 *Dr. Futurity.* New York: Ace Books, 1972.
Vulcan's Hammer. New York: Ace Books, 1972.

1962 *The Man In the High Castle.* New York: Berkeley, 1974.

1963 *Game-Players of Titan.* New York: Ace Books, 1963.

1964 *The Penultimate Truth.* New York: Leisure Books, 1975.
Martian Time-Slip. New York: Ballantine, 1964.
The Simulacra. New York: Ace Books, 1976.
Clans of the Alphane Moon. New York: Ace Books, 1964.

1965 *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch.* Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1965.
Dr. Bloodmoney, or How We Got Along After the Bomb. New York: Ace Books, 1965.

1966 *Now Wait For Last Year.* New York: McFadden-Bartell, 1968.
The Crack In Space. London: Methuen, 1977.

1967 *The Zap Gun.* Bungay, Suffolk: Panther Books, 1975.
The Unteleported Man. New York: Ace Books, 1972.
Counter-Clock World. New York: Berkeley, 1967.
The Ganymede Takeover. New York: Ace Books, 1967.

1968 *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* New York: Signet, 1969.

1969 *Galactic Pot-Healer.* New York: Berkeley, 1969.
Ubik. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1969.

1970 *A Maze of Death.* New York: Bantam, 1977.
Our Friends From Frolix 8. New York: Ace Books, 1977.

1972 *We Can Build You.* New York: DAW Books, 1972.

1974 *Flow My Tears, the Policemen Said.* New York: DAW Books, 1975.

1976 *Deus Irae.* New York: DAW Books, 1976.

1977 *A Scanner Darkly.* Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1977.

1981 *VALIS.* New York: Bantam, 1981.
The Divine Invasion. London: Corgi, 1982.
The Transmigration of Timothy Archer. New York: Timescape Books, 1981.

Appendix B

Short History of Scholarship on Philip K. Dick

Science fiction criticism scarcely existed when Philip Dick began writing, and the growth in the number of studies on his work is a measure of the growth of this new field of literary criticism. The first serious study was contained in Damon Knight's *In Search of Wonder* (1956), which analyzed Dick's first four novels. After that there was a long silence.

The publication of *The Man In the High Castle* in 1962 brought Dick a good deal of attention from the small world of science fiction criticism. Early introductory works that discussed the entire genre often mentioned *High Castle* as the best example of an alternative history. David Ketterer's *New Worlds For Old* (1974) may stand for several treatments of this sort; in it *High Castle* is given an overly clever explication which concludes that the pin Juliana Frink uses to hold together her dress is the pin holding together the novel itself. Dick himself has scoffed at this conclusion. In any case, for a time it was fashionable to mention Dick only in connection with his most famous book. This was one aspect of the quick canon building that was taking place in academic criticism of science fiction. As new critics unfamiliar with the field appeared, they needed help in finding the books that were worth writing about, and a canon of science fiction classics was established fairly rapidly. *The Man In the High Castle* became part of this canon early on, and it alone among Dick's novels received critical attention.

The first appreciations of Dick's entire work came not from America but from England and Australia, and later France. John Brunner's article "The Worlds of Philip K. Dick," was published in the influential New Wave magazine *New Worlds* in August of 1966. This article gained attention for Dick in Europe. Meanwhile, Bruce Gillespie was writing a series of long reviews of Dick's novels of the mid-1960s, and publishing them in *Science Fiction Commentary*. These articles came at a time when very few people were paying any attention at all to Dick's most current work, and from Dick's letters to Gillespie (published in *The Electric Shepherd*) we can see that he was thankful for the articles out of all proportion to their real value as criticism. Gillespie

also published a long article by Stanislaw Lem, the first of two essays in which Lem laid the groundwork for a fuller understanding of Dick's challenge to generic conventions.

Once again there was a slack period, although Dick had an enthusiastic audience in France and England. Articles about *The Man In the High Castle* appeared from time to time in the new journals of academic science fiction criticism, *Extrapolation* and *Science Fiction Studies.*

Nineteen seventy-five was a good year for Dick criticism. In that year Gillespie collected all of his reviews and several other articles on Dick that had appeared in *Science Fiction Commentary,* and made it a book called *Philip K. Dick: Electric Shepherd.* Its introduction was by Roger Zelazny. (This is one of many appreciations of Dick written by science fiction writers; others include the ones mentioned earlier by Lem and Brunner, and articles by Ursula K. Le Guin, Thomas Disch, Brian Aldiss, and Ian Watson.) Then R.D. Mullen and Darko Suvin, editors of *Science Fiction Studies,* organized an issue of that journal devoted entirely to Dick's work. This issue contains a good proportion of the best criticism of Dick written to this day. Included in it is an overview of Dick's career by Suvin, which is perhaps the standard, most influential reading of his career, an evaluation of his opus that all subsequent writers concerned with all of Dick's work must take into account; bibliographical information by Willis McNelly, who was of great help to Dick and who obtained from him his private papers for the library at California State University, Fullerton; important generic analyses by Carlo Pagetti and Stanislaw Lem, and penetrating explications of *Dr. Bloodmoney* by Fredric Jameson, and *Ubik* by Peter Fitting. If one could own only one volume of Dick criticism, this would be the one.

Nineteen seventy-five also saw the publication of *Philip K. Dick and the Umbrella of Light,* by Angus Taylor. This thematic study is insightful, and it is the perfect complement to the more structural analyses in the special isse of *Science Fiction Studies.* Finally, a long appreciation and interview appeared in the popular magazine *Rolling Stone.* This article by Paul Williams included the description "The Greatest Sci-Fi Mind On Any Planet," which has graced the covers of many of Dick's subsequent publications.

After 1975, Dick was placed firmly in the canon of major science fiction writers. Articles about his most famous novels proliferated in the journals, and in anthologies of science fiction criticism that were now being published. The Gregg Press initiated the publication of many of Dick's novels in hardcover editions, each with a critical introduction. No American science fiction writer other than Ursula K. Le Guin has received more critical attention in recent years, and general studies of the genre such as Brian Aldiss's *Billion Year Spree* (1973), Scholes' and Rabkin's *Science Fiction: History, Science, Vision* (1977), and Mark Rose's *Alien Encounters* (1981), all give Dick a prominent place in the history of modern American science fiction.

In 1981 an extensive illustrated bibliography of Dick's works was published by Underwood/Miller; *PKD A Philip K. Dick Bibliography,* by Daniel J.H. Levack, is a valuable aid to students of Dick's work. An anthology of articles on Dick—*Philip K. Dick* (Writers of the 21st Century Series), edited by Joseph D. Olander and Martin Harry Greenberg—was published by Taplinger Press in 1983; seven of the ten essays are reprinted. The contributors' notes for this anthology indicate that both Patricia S. Warrick and Peter Fitting are writing book-length studies of Dick.

After Dick's death his literary executor, Paul Williams, began The PKD Society; members share an interest in Dick's work and his life. The address of the Society is PKDS, Box 611, Glen Ellen, CA 95442 USA. Amongst much other fascinating information published in the Society's first two newsletters is the announcement that two biographies of Dick are now in progress, one by Maxim Jakubowski, and another by Anne R. Dick, Philip Dick's third wife. A good biography of Dick would be a great help to his students, in establishing the actual writing sequence of the novels, etc.; but I do not envy the biographers, who have a complicated task on their hands.

To date, it seems to me that the seminal thinking about Dick has been done by Fredric Jameson, Darko Suvin, Peter Fitting, and Carlo Pagetti (all writers whose criticism is associated with the journal *Science-Fiction Studies*), and by Stanislaw Lem. Subsequent general studies tend to reiterate the insights of these critics, and individual articles sometimes expand on points first made in their work. The need still exists for close readings of many of Dick's novels; several of his important books have not a single article devoted to them, and have had very little attention in more general studies. Unfortunately, published articles on Dick are much more likely to be yet another study of some aspect of *The Man In the High Castle.* (Many critics seemed convinced that Taoism is the key to this book; see the last footnote to chapter 4.) This is an indication of the power of the canon, which was established so swiftly in the 1960s, but it speaks poorly of the boldness and curiosity of the new group of science fiction critics.

There also exists a need for a full-length survey of Dick's novels, and to write such a survey has been my goal here. As I finish this first description of Dick's entire career as a novelist, I feel sharply its many inadequacies. I wish in particular that I could have made it clearer how funny Dick's novels are, and how important comedy is to his work. But I comfort myself with the certainty that better critics than I will take it from here, so that my mistakes will be corrected, and our understanding of this great artist furthered. And first explorers are often excused their errors, their omissions, their tall tales.

Notes

Chapter 1

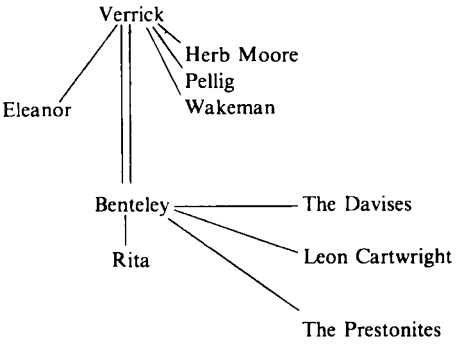
1. Charles Platt, "Reality in Drag," *Science Fiction Review* 36 (1980): 6.
2. Paul Williams, ed., "PKDS Newsletter no. 1, pp. 3-4.
3. Dick's tendency to drop one plot in favor of another will crop up again in his later science fiction novels, creating several "broken-backed" works. This structure becomes one of the signs of Dick's occasional failures of control (see the discussion of *We Can Build You* in chapter 8).
4. Platt, "Reality In Drag," p. 7.
5. These novels—and women—are few and far between; included among them would be Juliana in *The Man In the High Castle,* Doreen in *Martian Time-Slip,* Bonnie in *Dr. Bloodmoney,* and Donna in *A Scanner Darkly.*
6. See in particular Richard Chase, *The American Novel and Its Tradition* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1957), for a description of the role of romance in American literature that helps to explain the origins of American science fiction.
7. Algis Budrys, "Paradise Charted," *Triquarterly* 49 (1980): 24.
8. Ibid., pp. 33-34.
9. Stanislaw Lem, "Philip K. Dick: A Visionary Among the Charlatans," *Science-Fiction Studies,* 5 (1975): 62.
10. Ibid., "Paradise Charted," p. 25.
11. Philip K. Dick, *The Golden Man* (New York: Berkeley Books, 1980), p. xxv.
12. Daniel J.H. Levack, *PKD: A Philip K. Dick Bibliography* (San Francisco: Underwood/Miller, 1981), p. 142.
13. Ibid., p. 97.

Chapter 2

1. Damon Knight, *In Search of Wonder,* 2nd Ed. (Chicago: Advent Publishers, 1967), p. 231.
2. Darko Suvin, "P.K. Dick's Opus," *Science-Fiction Studies* 5 (1975): p. 9.
3. Ibid., p. 9.

4. Philip K. Dick, "Letter of Comment," *Philip K. Dick: Electric Shepherd* (Melbourne: Norstrilia Press, 1975), p. 32.

5. In *Solar Lottery,* for instance, this diagram would be filled in with the following characters:



6. Knight, *In Search of Wonder,* pp. 232-233.

7. Other examples are *Game-Players of Titan* and *The Ganymede Takeover;* see chapter 3, the section on the alien element, for an explanation of why Dick's evil-alien novels are among his worst.

8. Unless the Dick estate's date for the manuscript novel *Humpty Dumpty In Oakland* ("circa 1963") is correct.

9. Daniel J.H. Levack, *PKD: A Philip K. Dick Bibliography* (San Francisco: Underwood/Miller, 1981), pp. 142-143.

Chapter 3

1. We should note, however, that in 1982 the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* had the hands of its "doomsday clock" set less than five minutes before midnight; while on the other hand the CETI investigations, an organized international search for signs of extraterrestrial intelligence (principally by means of sensitive radio receivers), have found nothing in over a decade, causing some scientists to drastically reduce their estimates of the number of technological civilizations in our galaxy. These increasing and decreasing probabilities have little immediate effect on the science fiction written, although perhaps they should.

2. Fredric Jameson, "Generic Discontinuities in SF: Aldiss' *Starship,*" in *Science-Fiction Studies,* ed. R.D. Mullen and Darko Suvin (Boston: Gregg Press, 1976).

3. Carlo Pagetti, "Dick and Meta-SF," *Science-Fiction Studies* 5 (1975): 24.

4. This reversal of Dick's, relatively new to American science fiction, is very similar to a much older tradition of satire, in which the alien or Other (cannibals, Tahitians, American Indians), at first thought to be primitive or degraded cultures, are then shown by the satirist or moralist to be more humane than the so-called civilized cultures judging them.

5. Pagetti, "Dick and Meta-SF," p. 26.

6. Stanislaw Lem, "Cosmology and Science Fiction," *Science-Fiction Studies* 12 (1977): 107-8.
7. Ibid., p. 109.
8. Lem himself admits this point and elaborates the varying uses of the time travel element in "The Time Travel Story and Related Matters of SF Structuring," *Science-Fiction Studies,* ed. R.D. Mullen and Darko Suvin (Boston: Gregg Press, 1976), pp. 16-27.
9. Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses In Science Fiction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).
10. Gary K. Wolf, "The Known and the Unknown," in *Many Future, Many Worlds: Theme and Form in Science Fiction,* ed. Thomas Clareson (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1977).
11. Stanislaw Lem, "Philip K. Dick: A Visionary Among the Charlatans," *Science-Fiction Studies* 5 (1975): 62.
12. Ibid., p. 62.
13. Peter Fitting, "The Deconstruction of Bourgeois SF," *Science-Fiction Studies* 5 (1975): 47-53.

Chapter 4

1. Dick's unpublished papers at California State University, Fullerton's special collections library, included early scenes from this novel that were discarded as the writing of the novel progressed; some of these scenes are described later in this chapter.
2. The only other candidate, in my judgement, would be Walter Miller's *A Canticle For Leibowitz* (1959).
3. Darko Suvin, "P.K. Dick's Opus," *Science-Fiction Studies* 5 (1975): 10.
4. Alternative histories, like any other form, can be used for trivial purposes: Len Deighton's recent *SS-GB* (1979), which postulates the same change in history as *High Castle* does, is a good example of this waste of the element, using it merely as the background for another violent spy intrigue.
5. By making *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* such an important work in the culture of his fictional world, Dick makes more strongly than ever before, even in the wishful *Time Out of Joint,* a claim for the power and significance of science fiction as a tool of human thought.
6. Carlo Pagetti, "Dick and Meta-SF," *Science-Fiction Studies* 5 (1975): 26. "The victory of the Axis during the Second World War is symbolical of a historical reality in which American society no longer possesses values to oppose to an apparently defeated adversary."
7. This moment, a fantastic break in the realistic texture of the novel, may be thought of as an image for the experience of the reader. That is to say, the same thing happens to us that happens to Tagomi: if we contemplate this little work of art long enough, we plunge into a nonexistent San Francisco, in which pedcabs slowly cart us down streets lined with two-story buildings.
8. Robert Elliott made this point in lecture (January, 1976), and in *The Shape of Utopia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).
9. The fact that Abendsen does not come anywhere close to correctly describing what our real postwar history has been, may be an indirect admission by Dick that his alternative history is not necessarily the one that would have been most likely to follow an Axis victory given that

the two novels are symmetrical in so many other ways. Of course it should be clear by now that describing the "most likely" history following an Axis victory is not Dick's purpose.

10. Mark Rose, *Alien Encounters* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 125.

11. Ibid., p. 122.

12. Since Dick often claimed that he consulted the *I Ching* for every turn of the plot in *High Castle,* perhaps we should say that it was the *I Ching* that made the mistake. Dick once put it this way: "The *I Ching* failed me at the end of that book, and didn't help me resolve the ending. I did throw the coins... and I was faithful to what the *I Ching* actually showed, but when it came time to wind up the book, the *I Ching* copped out completely, and left me stranded. And since I had no notes, no plot, no structure in mind, I was in a terrible spot, and I began to notice... that the *I Ching* will lead you along the garden path, giving you information that you want to hear... and then... just about the time you've given it your faith and trust, it will zap you with the most malevolent, wrong information. In other words, it sets you up. It really does, it really sets you up. I regard the *I Ching* as a malicious spirit.... It is a liar. It speaks with forked tongue" (Interview conducted by Daniel DePrez, September 10, 1976, published in *Science Fiction Review*).

Chapter 5

1. It should be noted that it was also written in the same manner that *High Castle* was written, that is, there is evidence in both cases of extensive rewriting. *Martian Time-Slip* first appeared as a shorter, serialized work in the magazine *Worlds of Tomorrow,* where it was called "All We Marsmen." Examination of this earlier version shows that some chapters, including the crucial middle ones concerned with the "time-slip," were extensively revised.

2. *Bleak House* and *Great Expectations* provide the best examples of this Small World Principle in action, but nearly every Dickens novel contains it.

3. Fredric Jameson, "World Reduction in Le Guin: The Emergence of Utopian Narrative," in *Science-Fiction Studies,* ed. R.D. Mullen and Darko Suvin (Boston: Gregg Press, 1976).

4. Carlo Pagetti, "Dick and Meta-SF," *Science-Fiction Studies* 5 (1975): 27.

5. Brian Aldiss, "Dick's Maledictory Web: *Martian Time-Slip," Science-Fiction Studies* 5 (1975): 45.

6. Darko Suvin, "P.K. Dick's Opus," *Science-Fiction Studies* 5 (1975): 15.

7. The epigraph to *The Three Stigmata* is a short speech made by Leo Bulero in his characteristic, unmistakeable idiom, made "immediately on his return from Mars." By specifying this time, Dick says in the correspondence at California State University, Fullerton (Box 24 of the Dick Special Collection), he meant to convey the fact that Leo had remained himself, and thus must have eventually succeeded in killing Eldritch. But it is a subtle point, and easy to overlook.

8. Aldiss, "Dick's Meledictory Web," p. 46.

Chapter 6

1. Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1975), p. 192.

2. This convention was never strong in European science fiction, as Orwell's *1984* (1948) will show. Isaac Asimov has attempted to apply this restrictive convention to Orwell's work, and in *Asimov On Science Fiction* (1982) he argues that *1984* is very poor science fiction because

its political repressions are not technically *plausible.* Clearly this critique misses the point, and it is doubly ironic coming from a writer whose work contains many flat-out *impossibilities*—impossibilities that are, however, blessed by convention.

3. The use of Neanderthals here marks the first of many recoveries Dick makes from his early unpublished realist novels. In this case the material is from *The Man Whose Teeth Were All Exactly Alike.* In *Dr. Bloodmoney,* the protagonist Stuart McConchie recalls the Stuart Hadley of *Voices From the Street;* both of them work for a Jim Fergussen in a TV repair shop. Thisbe Olt from *The Crack In Space* originated in the unpublished novel *The Broken Bubble of Thisbe Holt.* Lastly, Jack Isidore from *Confessions of a Crap Artist* becomes, with very few changes, John Isidore in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* By making all these recoveries Dick could feel that all the work poured into the early realist novels was not entirely lost.

4. Dick himself admits the problematic nature of the time travel element, in chapter 11 of *The Simulacra,* where in effect he throws up his hands in defeat, saying "There was always room for the unexpected, the improbable... time travel was still merely an art, not an exact science."

5. Darko Suvin, "P.K. Dick's Opus," *Science-Fiction Studies* 5 (1975): 17.

6. Stanislaw Lem, "Science Fiction: A Hopeless Case—With Exceptions," in *Philip K. Dick: Electric Shepherd,* ed. Bruce Gillespie (Melbourne: Norstrilia Press, 1975), p. 80.

7. Ibid., p. 84.

8. Ibid., p. 80.

9. Ibid. Lem's own science fiction necessarily uses these elements, although he avoids those he considers least significant. Books like *Solaris* take a single element at a time (the Alien in this case), and contain the most serious philosophical examination that Lem can make in the context of a fiction. In this way the novels function as a critique of the less serious treatment of these elements. Lem was impressed enough by Dick's work to write a pastiche of it, *The Futurological Congress* (1971); as a pastiche of Dick it is equalled only by Le Guin's *The Lathe of Heaven,* but as a satire of capitalist existence it lacks the bite of Dick's work.

10. Bruce Gillespie, "Mad, Mad Worlds: Seven Novels of Philip K. Dick," in *Philip K. Dick: Electric Shepherd,* p. 20.

11. In conversation, University of California, San Diego, June 1977. Other writers have given me their opinion of Dick's prose: Samuel R. Delany found it unreadable (in conversation, July 1975), while Gene Wolfe found it inconsistent, but very powerful in his best work (in conversation, July 1981).

12. Robert Silverberg, "Introduction," *Clans of the Alphane Moon* (Boston: Gregg Press, 1979).

13. From private correspondence in Box 24, California State University, Fullerton, Special Collections Library.

14. Box 24, California State University, Fullerton library.

15. Bruce Gillespie, "Contradictions," in *Philip K. Dick: Electric Shepherd,* p. 35.

16. Ibid.

17. From an interview with Charles Platt, "Reality In Drag," *Science Fiction Review* 36 (1980): 8.

Chapter 7

1. The Hugo Award is voted on by readers attending the World Science Fiction Convention each September. This means there are approximately five thousand votes cast. The Nebula Award is voted on by three or four hundred professionals. Both *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* and *Dr. Bloodmoney* were nominated for the 1965 Nebula Award for best novel.

2. See, for example, *If* magazine, June 1968, pages 4 and 5, on which 154 writers and other members of the science fiction community stated their position for or against the Vietnam War. Politics and aesthetics were not in every case aligned; Isaac Asimov, a very traditional writer, opposed the war, while R.A. Lafferty, a very experimental writer, supported it; there are other cases such as these, but not many.

3. Stanislaw Lem, "Science Fiction: A Hopeless Case—With Exceptions," in *Philip K. Dick: Electric Shepherd,* ed. Bruce Gillespie (Melbourne: Norstrilia Press, 1975), p. 90.

4. This conflict can be, and often has been exaggerated into more than it really was; the "New Wave" is in some senses a critical fiction, while the "Old Foundation" was little more than a statement of resistance, made angrily or jokingly, by a small group. Essentially the science fiction community remained a single big "family," their arguments self-contained. In one of Dick's worst moments of personal difficulty, near the height of this "conflict," he received financial aid out of the blue from Robert Heinlein, whom we think of as being at the opposite pole, politically and aesthetically; Dick very much admired Heinlein for this giving of help, and so do I.

5. Daniel J.H. Levack, *PKD: A Philip K. Dick Bibliography* (San Francisco: Underwood/Miller, 1981).

6. Terry Carr, editor at Ace Books through the mid-1960s, related these facts to me in conversation, in 1983. He also told me another story that made me revise this text: I had listed the title *Dr. Bloodmoney* as another of Dick's "found objects," like the representations of the game of Life, the Barbie dolls, and the Disney Lincoln; the title obviously comes from the name of Stanley Kubrick's film *Dr. Strangelove.* But Dick's titles for the work were "In Earth's Diurnal Course" or "A Terran Odyssey"; the title *Dr. Bloodmoney* was the idea of Ace editor Donald A. Wolheim. How many other gems of critical insight have a similar relation to reality?

7. Bruce Gillespie, "Contradictions," in *Philip K. Dick: Electric Shepherd,* p. 23.

8. George Turner, "Letter of Comment," *Philip K. Dick: Electric Shepherd,* p. 31.

9. Carlo Pagetti, "Dick and Meta-SF," *Science-Fiction Studies* 5 (1975): 29-31.

10. Darko Suvin, "P.K. Dick's Opus," *Science-Fiction Studies* 5 (1975): 20.

11. Lem, "Science Fiction: A Hopeless Case," pp. 85-86.

12. Angus Taylor, *Philip K. Dick and the Umbrella of Light* (Baltimore: T-K Graphics, 1975), part 3.

13. Ibid.

14. Pagetti, "Dick and Meta-SF," p. 29.

15. Mark Rose, *Alien Encounters* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 16.

16. Stanislaw Lem, "Philip K. Dick: A Visionary Among the Charlatans," *Science-Fiction Studies* 5 (1975): 60-61.

17. Turner, "Letter of Comment," pp. 47-48.

18. Suvin, "P.K. Dick's Opus," p. 19.

19. Lem explains *Ubik* in both of his articles on Dick, and the two explanations are not precisely the same. The second essay, in *Science-Fiction Studies,* is apparently the later one, for it both softens its judgment of Dick's faults, and revises some earlier stands on the importance of rationality. Differences in tone may be caused by different translators, but it appears that reading Dick's work has effected a change in Lem's theory of science fiction.

20. Lem, "Visionary," pp. 60-61.

21. This, we should note, is in part the triumphant transformation of the pulp literature device of the "one final twist" which we found marring such books as *The Simulacra;* for in *Ubik* the final twist, i.e., the discovery by Runciter that his coins all bear the likeness of Joe Chip on them, is not placed in the narrative merely as a final gratuitous surprise, but is the final and most crushing contradiction of the best explanation of the facts of the narrative, and the completion of a highly sophisticated structure. Thus Dick succeeds in putting the old trick to serious use.

22. Peter Fitting, "*Ubik* and the Deconstruction of Bourgeois SF," *Science-Fiction Studies* 5 (1975): 50.

23. Lem, "Visionary," p. 62.

24. "I've read a lot of... criticism of my writing in which they see a lot of... ideas which aren't there at all. 'The Decomposition of the Bourgeois Structure of Society' I think was the name of one article about my writing, and how I had subverted the bourgeois society by destroying its fundamental concepts in a most subversive way. A way so deviously clever that I never mention politics. And this was so fundamental that the whole thing would collapse—the bourgeois society would collapse like a house of cards if I would just write two more books like *Ubik*.... "(*Science-Fiction Studies,* interview with Daniel DePrez, September 10, 1976).

Chapter 8

1. Stanislaw Lem, "Philip K. Dick: A Visionary Among the Charlatans," *Science-Fiction Studies* 5 (1975): 61.

2. Ibid.

3. Darko Suvin, "P.K. Dick's Opus," *Science-Fiction Studies* 5 (1975): 20.

4. In conversation, Eugene, Oregon, October 1981.

5. Box 24 of the private papers at California State University, Fullerton library.

6. From conversations with Roger Zelazny, East Lansing, Michigan, July 1975.

7. Lowry Pei, in correspondence, 1977.

Chapter 9

1. Readers who have missed this, and made the easy assumption that Horselover Fat is a direct portrait of Dick, thus concluding that Dick went crazy in his last years—and there are too

many of this kind of reader—should reread *VALIS* more closely, and reconsider the final trilogy as a whole.

2. Other artists have used this device before; Dick was probably familiar with Robert Schumann's use of it, in Schumann's articles on music. And Joyce Cary used the same device in *A House of Children,* although Dick was probably unaware of it.

3. Apparently Dick did have some sort of mental experience in 1974, and in the years following he attempted many times to make an explanation for it. (This was confirmed in conversation by the writer Tim Powers, a good friend of Dick's in his last years.) In *VALIS* it says, "At the time of these experiences Fat's blood pressure had gone up to stroke level; his doctor had briefly hospitalized him.... His blood pressure had registered 280 over 178" (p. 93-94). Dick's subsequent lethal stroke in February of 1982 makes me wonder if his experience of March 1974 was an earlier, lesser stroke, left undiagnosed.

4. We know that Dick saw and admired *The Man Who Fell To Earth,* because in his last interview (*The Twilight Zone Magazine,* June 1982, conducted by John Boostra) he said, "As my agent Russell Galen put it, 'Whenever a Hollywood film adaptation of a book works, it is always a miracle.' Because it just cannot really happen. It did happen with *The Man Who Fell To Earth*...."

5. There are also striking similarities to Dick's early minor novel *The Cosmic Puppets,* indicating that these metaphysical interests of Dick's had existed for most of his career.

6. In conversation, June 1982. One element of Bishop Timothy Archer's investigation into the origins of Christianity also supports this notion of drugs and religion as roughly equal reality-bending devices: Archer discovers in the "Zadokite documents" that the original Host of the Communion was a hallucinogenic mushroom, that enabled those who took it to see visions. "'So Jesus was in effect a dope dealer,' I said" (*The Transmigration of Timothy Archer,* chapter 6, p. 90).

7. In fact, the portrayal of women in *VALIS,* and some tattling by a member of the science fiction community concerning Ursula K. Le Guin's remarks on this portrayal, caused Le Guin to finally write an open letter to *Science Fiction Review,* addressing Dick and clarifying what she had said. She objected to Dick's uniformly negative depiction of women in *VALIS,* "because it seems like you hate women now, and the part of you that is woman is denied and despised. It's all yang and no yin, all heaven and no earth, all Word and no matter. And... I can no longer follow your art, which has been such a joy and solace to me" (Letter from Ursula Le Guin to *Science Fiction Review,* February 26, 1981). Considering the character of Angel Archer, and how closely Le Guin's list of imbalances fits the character of Timothy Archer, it may be that her objection influenced Dick when he was writing the final book of the trilogy.

8. See Dick's remarks on *The Transmigration* in the interview published in *The Twilight Zone Magazine,* June 1982, which include: "...in the mainstream field I am essentially a novice writer.... It may be that I've lost the ability to write a literary novel, if indeed I ever had the ability to do so."

9. Many "generic hybrids" exist, but theoretically interesting ones include Asimov's novels *The Caves of Steel* (1953) and *The Naked Sun* (1956), in which some of the conventions of the classical detective story genre are incorporated into a science fiction narrative; and Lem's novels *The Investigation* (1959) and *The Chain of Chance* (1975), which reverse this procedure, and incorporate some conventions of science fiction into the detective story genre.

10. This list is *by no means* inclusive; it deals with writers working in English (except in the case of Lem), and it omits many very good science fiction writers, particularly newer ones or those whose major contribution consisted of only one or two books; and no doubt there are more I have hardly read, or never read, or never heard of, or forgotten. Also, I have not mentioned writers who usually work in other genres, but who have written excellent science fiction; some of these are Anthony Burgess, Russell Hoban, Doris Lessing, and Cecelia Holland.

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