Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr

Pilgrims in Pandemonium: Philip K. Dick and the Critics

Philip K. Dick is the single writer most responsible for the acceptance of SF as a dominant genre of literature in the second half of the 20th century. This is a bold claim. I can hardly believe I am making it. But I simply can't avoid it. More than anyone else Dick has beckoned sophisticated readers of literary fiction to SF's wild zone, where, as Lem once put it, ontological dilemmas become burning issues on the street, where mundane little heroes compete against cosmic forces that are themselves riven with existential doubt and grief.

A more literary writer could not have exerted Dick's attraction; literary SF can be quickly assimilated to the "fantastic" or "utopian" traditions, literary-historical genres of good pedigree and subject to long-standing regulations. By the same token, a more urbanely philosophical writer—a Lem or a Borges—could not have carried the whole genre of SF. Dick, on the other hand, wrote completely and unabashedly out of the tradition of US pulp SF. He played his changes on the conventions of SF, not high literature or metaphysical fable. Most of his books were hack work, written quickly, with few revisions, for cash. The big surprise—and Dick is quintessentially a writer of surprises—was that these pulp novels treated ideas about politics, consciousness, reality, ethics and love with an intensity of feeling, with comedy and sorrow, that was completely unprecedented in SF. And indeed, rare in the literature of the "mainstream."

The time was right for this discovery. Before the mid-1960s, SF works were considered, with a few exceptions, diversions, not vehicles for profound visions into the nature of things. Dick demonstrated that SF had become able to express those visions without paying obeisance to philosophy or literature. Somehow, literature and philosophy came to him. In the 60s, the technomanic and delirious conventions of pulp SF were more compatible with the burning questions of culture in the West than with the traditional categories of academic culture.

The culture of the 60s and 70s in Western Europe and the US was obsessed with freedom and its Manichean double, domination. The psychology of consciousness saturated everything. Faced with the "triumph of the therapeutic," psychedelic "consciousness-expanding" drugs, the growing awareness of differing group subjectivities, and the increasingly paranoid awareness of the power of communications and propaganda to condition thought, 60s culture found itself perpetually returning to the same paradoxical impasse: how to conceive of freedom when the conditions of thought may themselves be invisibly and/or unconsciously conditioned, manipulated, programmed. The dilemma was totalizing: it was political, cognitive, biological, anthropological, ethical, religious. It was ultimate. No other question can be answered if one cannot answer this one: how can we recognize authentic freedom when domination may take the appearance of freedom?

Dick spoke to this question and all its domains. He was attractive to every manner of counter-cultural questioner: the utopian socialist as much as the hallucinogenic quester. I think he achieved this precisely because he emerged from a subculture that seemed authentic itself, uncorrupted by the

refined techniques of consciousness-manipulation with which the cultural spheres of late capitalism and communism had become identified. Dick offered something new, without pretense or guile. And because his writing is always on the verge of chaos, with rhythms of thought and prose unpredictable and unschooled, Dick left his readers freer than any aspiring high-modernist could have. One could take or leave Dick. Dick didn't matter to the establishment. Dick's ideas and effects seemed somehow greater than their writer, and this freed readers to treat his delirious satires without worrying about getting it right.

With time, our freedom in reading Dick has been circumscribed. First, reality in the postmodern age has imitated Dick's fiction to an unnerving degree. It's not just a matter of the invention of talking taxicabs, psychiatrists in suitcases, or scramble suits, nor even the ambitions of Virtual Reality technology; it is also a matter of the pervasive radical doubt about whether true origins (and hence true historical identities) can ever be known, and the anxiety that no human action can save the world from an all-devouring evil that penetrates the technology human beings create. Since Dick's forte was depicting what it feels like to be *inside* such a reality, he has offered some models for how people might behave in it—or rather, how they might imagine in it.

For these reasons, Dick has ceased to be a marginal writer. He has become so interesting, so often written about and interpreted, that readers can hardly come to his fiction without going through the thickets—indeed by now, the forests—of criticism, simulation, and cultural propaganda. The margin has moved to the center. And even though that center is the shattered bullet hole of postmodernism, it is, like all centers, under the custodial care of cultural bodyguards.

Dick has also been the most influential catalyst in shifting SF theorists from earlier critical categories derived from traditional modernism to the categories of postmodernism. Dick's themes, it turned out, were not just the wild "what ifs" of SF; they were the guiding ideas of postmodern culture. The alternate history, which in Dick's hands questions the possibility of any authentic history, is cognate with the Foucauldian critique of Grand History. The fascination with disintegrating realities is cognate with the rise of the theory of schizophrenia as a cultural dominant in the late 20th century (developed in the works of R.D. Laing, Joseph Gabel, Deleuze and Guattari, Gregory Bateson, and many other theorists who arrived at the idea independently of one another) and of deconstructions of substantive rationality. The notion of the artificial, technologically induced manipulation of the fundamental experience of reality is cognate with the idea of virtual reality and with simulation theory. The problem of androids and homeostatic mechanisms, which leads to such rich ambivalence in Dick's fiction, has emerged as a full-fledged science-fictional philosophical model in the political theory of cyborgs.

Within the fields of textual and generic criticism, as well, reading Dick has induced critics to think in new terms, and to think about the ideological/historical determinations of old terms that do not seem to apply to Dick's writing. For the questions Dick asks in his fictions radiate out to the questions about their situation—and its fate—in the world. John Fekete, in a review of the work that had been done on Dick by the mid-1980s ("The Transmigration of Philip K. Dick," #32, March 1984), developed a list of questions that Dick forced literary critics to ask: should Dick's work be read as a form of SF or as a form of writing? has Dick had an effect on the genre, or indeed on writing in general? which aesthetic standards are relevant for reading Dick, which are misplaced? These questions in turn imply many others: can Dick ever be treated as a major writer? should he be? should anyone be? can we hold him to the aesthetic norms of established major writers? can fictions proffer drastically different kinds of pleasure and meaning? can established standards of taste stand up against the deviant standards represented by writers like Dick and perhaps by SF as a whole? And to my mind the most interesting question: what exactly is the text that we study when we study Dick? where do we draw the boundaries for critical closure with this writer who is not (to use Suvin's term) "open-ended," but open all around, riven in the middle of his stories and even sentences, and yet bleeding into the world so that now the broader "Dick-text" consists not only of Dick's fictions, but also includes biographies, film-versions of his stories, hagiography, allusions in popular culture, virtual reality and artificial intelligence research, philosophical quandaries, operas, psychopathologies, mystical experiences, religious exegeses, and much more?

This volume collects all the material that SCIENCE-FICTION STUDIES has published on Dick since the first special Dick issue in 1975, including the essays collected in the second special issue in 1988, up to the most recent reviews and remarks concerning Dick in 1992. It is a record of the transfiguration of Dick's image from modernist to postmodernist, from an extraordinarily original genre writer to an icon of postmodern culture.

1. Dick and SFS. From its first issue in 1973, SFS had one goal: to study SF through critical approaches that shared a historical perspective and rejected most idealist and formalist approaches. Together, these different perspectives—international comparisons, studies of the relationships between SF and classical and modern literature, the sociology of SF, generic definitions and histories of utopia and SF, etc.—were intended to establish SF's importance as a critical genre unjustly ignored or opposed by the established academic canon-makers. Quite early, SFS's editors identified three writers who could act as exemplars: Stanislaw Lem, Ursula LeGuin, and Philip K. Dick.

Lem, because he represented both high artistic ambitions for SF and high philosophical ambitions for SF criticism, remained for many years an unassailable figure in SFS. But his major critical writings on SF were unavailable in English and—more importantly—his fiction was considered too high-brow by most SF fans; Lem was too remote a figure to act as a catalyst for SF criticism. LeGuin and Dick, on the other hand, provided what ambitious scholars of SF needed most: contemporary writers who were widely read in *and* out of SF fandom, innovative within the genre, and profoundly critical of contemporary American society.

Darko Suvin explained the editors' motives in the introduction to the first Dick issue:

> I cannot now recall with any precision the reason which prompted SFS to announce a special issue of Philip K. Dick and Ursula LeGuin, except that we had been getting all kinds of signals from our students and colleagues that the proof of SF criticism is in making sense of the major contemporary SF writers in its main domain, the USA, and that two of these are Mr Dick and Mrs LeGuin. (1)

The situation was perfect for SFS's project: the challenge came from the real readers of SF, who dared the scholars to prove their abstractions against

the resistance of living writings. But in the introduction to the special LeGuin issue two numbers later (#7, November 1975), it is clear that, for Suvin at least, the choice of these two writers developed into a delightfully powerful schema:

> Both of these leading American SF writers of the last fifteen years write out of and react against historically the same human—psychological and sociological—situation: the experience of the terrible pressures of alienation, isolation, and fragmentation pervading the neo-capitalist society of the world of the twentieth century. (2:203)

Suvin saw the two writers as opposite poles, representatives of complementary perspectives and artistic methods. Dick is the romantic, "whose energy lashes out in a profusion of incandescent and interfused protuberances," Le Guin is the "classicist," whose energy is "fiercely controlled within a taut and spare architectural system of narrative cells"; Dick is "centrifugal," LeGuin "centripetal"; Dick's strength "lies in the recording of breakdowns of the old individualist system of interhuman relationships"; LeGuin's is the quest for collectivist models. Dick and LeGuin—romantic and classical, male and female, centrifugal and centripetal, pulpy and literary, satirical and utopian —could establish the axes of a system for evaluating and analyzing the SF most relevant to SFS. They formed an almost Lukácsian pair—Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, Balzac and Stendhal—who together represented and criticized the alienated condition of neo-capitalism. Their work embodied a cross-section of contemporary norms against which historical SF could be compared.

SFS has continued to publish many articles on both writers over the years. But from one perspective at least, the pairing was misleadingly overbalanced. For SF has not moved equally along both axes. LeGuin has continued to write interesting, committed fantastic fiction. But over time Dick has become considerably more influential and critically challenging.

With the first special issues on Dick and LeGuin, SFS's editors were busy establishing the field. They had the freedom to choose their privileged objects and methods, and their special books and writers. By the time of the second Dick issue in 1988, a field of SF research had already been defined, elaborated, and then exploded. Cyberpunk, hacker culture, VR and AI research, simulation theory, telepolitics, feminist theory—to mention only a few influences—transformed SF into a form of critical hyperrealism, simultaneously the witness to terrific material and spiritual transformations and a mode of consciousness facilitating them. Within this transformation of the genre as a whole, Dick was transformed from an exemplary satirical visionary into the oracular *schlemihl* of the postmodern condition.

For me, the critical reception of Philip Dick's texts in SFS falls into three broad and fuzzy phases, which together tell a tale about the attempt to understand a strange mutation of literary art by canonizing it. I will refer to them as stages of beatification, disputation, and diffusion.

In the beatification phase, Dick's critics set out to justify why they consider him to be an important writer, and, because Dick is thoroughly embedded in SF culture, why they consider SF to be a significant genre. In beatification, the writers are generous, respectful, and delighted to be able to display the subtleties of their "discovery" to the academic audience. At the same time, it is clear that, like the Church honoring a venerated candidate for sainthood, they honor Dick for what he represents: the criticism of alienation under capitalism, the drive for communal utopia, the power of SF to

turn philosophical speculation into burning issues of everyday life. Beatification is the *auteur* phase, and Dick is analyzed in terms of his world-view—i.e., the critical adequation of his art to political, ethical and psychological reality —and ultimately in terms of the ways in which he generalizes his concrete accomplishments by "transcending" the conventional limits of his genre.

The phase of disputation comprises roughly the fifteen years from 1980 to 1988, the year of the second special Dick issue. In disputation, the critics agree that Dick is an established major writer; their disputes are rather about the relative validity and strength of certain readings over others. The emphasis turns from the privileged relationship between author and interpreter to the vexed one between text and reader.

The diffusion phase refers to the current period of Dick criticism. At present, Dick's reputation and the "Dick text" have extended far beyond the generic boundaries of SF and literature, into many contiguous domains, many of which have very little to do with the institution of literature.

2.1. Phase One: The Beatification of Philip K. Dick. In terms of the critical attention he received, 1975 was Dick's watershed year. In addition to the special issue of SFS, other important commentaries appeared: Bruce Gillespie's *Philip K. Dick: Electric Shepherd* (a collection of essays on Dick from Gillespie's Australian journal, *SF Commentary*), and Angus Taylor's Laingian-existentialist reading of Dick's work, *Philip K. Dick and the Umbrella of Light*. Paul Williams's famous interview in *Rolling Stone* appeared in 1975, as did mentions of Dick in the *New Yorker*'s "Talk of the Town" section. *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said* was nominated for a Hugo, and eventually won the John W. Campbell Award. *Confessions of a Crap Artist* finally saw print. In 1975 Dick was introduced to the "mainstream."

The beatification phase of SFS's Dick criticism consists primarily of the essays in #5. As in any canonization process, this survey of Dick's fiction was ostensibly about evaluating and approving the virtues and powers of a writer who was already widely venerated. Academic SF critics could not, of course, canonize Dick within the genre of SF; that is the prerogative of fandom. The SFS project was more ambitious: in beatifying a writer from a despised literary subculture, SF scholars could demonstrate their power both to contest the standards of the literary establishment and to pose counter-norms.

Although they differ somewhat in their perspectives, the essays in #5 all share the assumption that Dick's importance is a matter of his critical ideas and his gifts as a writer. They emphasize those aspects of Dick's writing that seem conscious and intentional (or even unconscious, but transparently decipherable) formulations of problems, which the fictions are designed to resolve. Thus the central relationship is between the writer and the critical interpreter.

#5 is an anthology of analyses of Dick's special "lessons" and the artistic and conceptual innovations that Dick developed to articulate them. Several of the writers start out from the New Left, or "neo-Marxist," analysis of the ideological contradictions of capitalist culture which are concealed in elaborate ingrained mechanisms of commodification and representation. The theme of the New Left-inspired critics was ideology-critique, which derived from Engels's definition of ideology as ideal resolutions to real contradictions. These New Left critics—Darko Suvin, Fredric Jameson, Peter Fitting—had set out to explain systematically the ways given works of SF represent, embody, and mediate contradictions in the social reality of capitalist America.

Dick, once again, presented a greater challenge than most SF writers, because neither sociological nor ideological analysis ever quite gets to the effective strangeness of Dick's hallucinomania. One task was to turn this visceral strangeness into "cognitive estrangement" (the term Suvin was beginning to make current at the time), and so ground the delirious excess of irrational and nearly non-referential visions in a recognizable social reality from which, putatively, it was displaced.

The other main concern of New Left criticism was the notion that popular cultural arts and practices, although deeply compromised by the culture industries that produce them, nonetheless contain a utopian charge that prefigures the social-ethical standards against which to measure the ideologized present. The discovery of such utopian novums as might counterbalance the demystification of capitalist ideology was a structural imperative for New Left SF criticism, and distinguished it as a vanguard political form of academic scholarship.

The general thesis of the articles by Suvin, Jameson, Pagetti, and Fitting is that Dick is a heroic subversive of SF conventions, of the conventions of realism in literature and in scientific ideology, and ultimately of a normative conception of the Real based on the world-view of scientific capitalist domination. (Later essays translated from the French show that this is exactly how the post-'68 generation of readers was interpreting, and apotheosizing, Dick in France at this same moment). The emphases are different with each writer, of course. Suvin ("The Opus: Artifice as Refuge and World View") offers a kind of Lukácsian approach to Dick and SF, grounded in realism and the political conflicts that are displaced in the artistic representation of society. For Suvin, the Dick of the mid-60s is an exemplary dystopian satirist guided by a petit-bourgeois idealization of artisanship and simple community. In "After Armageddon: Character Systems in *Dr. Bloodmoney*," Jameson analyzes *DB* as a "textbook illustration" (34) of structuralist mechanism, the parallelism of different narrative systems based on the principle of exchange. Through an application of structuralist method—A.J. Greimas's "semantic rectangle" in particular—Jameson demonstrates that even one of Dick's ostensibly wildest novels can be understood to be systematic and rational at its heart. For Pagetti ("Dick and Meta-SF"), Dick is primarily a representative of the subversive American technocultural tradition that depicts "the dissolution of the technological into the apocalyptic" (20). Pagetti's Dick is the fantastic critic of an American society in which scientific-technological progress produces the disintegration of psychic-emotional life in particular and human values in general. Dick's SF is a critical inquiry into the genre's function as the ideological legitimator of scientific culture; by stretching SF genre elements to their limits, Dick writes a "meta-SF." In a similar vein, Fitting ("*Ubik*: The Deconstruction of Bourgeois SF") reads *Ubik* as a model of the critique of the ideologically corrupt system of American SF writing and capitalist reification, a piece of guerilla SF. Critics' claims about their subjects are often quiet claims about their own work: we can read Fitting's essay, and its important elaboration eight years later ("Reality as Ideological Construct: A Reading of Five Novels by Philip K. Dick," #30, July 1983), as attempts to write guerilla criticism within both SF and literary criticism at large.

Of the other essays in #5, Aldiss' ("Dick's Maledictory Web: About and Around *Martian Time-Slip*") is a thematic reading of *MTS*, an oft-reprinted introduction to the British edition of that book. Ian Watson's "LeGuin's *Lathe of Heaven* and the Role of Dick: The False Reality as Mediator," a comparative analysis of Dick's fiction and LeGuin's Dickian experiment, *Lathe of Heaven*, treats the incorporation of anthropological conceptions about different cultures' differing experiences of reality. Rather than capturing ideological contradictions, for Watson Dick and Le Guin capture the problem of the ontological contradictions that produce cultural systems.

Lem's "Philip K. Dick: A Visionary Among the Charlatans" is anomalous among the other articles in #5; it stands out, like all of Lem's critical essays, for its dual effect of uncategorizable personal persnickityness and profound insight. It is a more judicious and generous assessment of Dick's work than its companion-piece, "SF—A Hopeless Case, With Exceptions," which appeared in Gillespie's *Electric Shepherd* anthology in the same year. (It originally appeared in 1972.) Despite appearances, Lem treats Dick with deep respect, and even with open admiration for his method of depicting "a world of pre-established disharmony" (54) in which monstrous ontological dilemmas "go out into the street and become for every ordinary mortal no less of a burning question than is for us the threatened destruction of the biosphere" (55). Lem approaches Dick as an artist, not as an exemplar of historical-ideological tenets or as "a textbook illustration" of certain cultural mechanisms. Lem argues exclusively from the position of his own personal taste, which is that of a European writer allied with elite art; in the process he gives Dick an *imprimatur* and *nihil obstat* into literature that no systematic critical apparatus could. Lem is willing to grant Dick his own premises. Thus Lem is the first critic to treat Dick seriously as a religious writer, and to consider his metaphysical fantasies as legitimate and original exploitations of the possibilities inherent in SF as a philosophical genre.

In this first group of essays, none is as reverential as Patricia Warrick's "The Encounter of Taoism and Fascism in *The Man in the High Castle*" (#21, July 1980). Focusing on the novel's formal unity and the intentions of its author, Warrick treats *MHC* with a respect that approaches idealization. She eschews "extrinsic" critical theory, and relies instead on the assumption that *MHC* is structurally and thematically the unified whole that Dick intended it to be; a good deal of her reading is guided by Dick's own statements in his correspondence with her. Fekete later indirectly criticizes Warrick for her reliance on Dick's own words—words that have proven to have been less than trustworthy on many occasions. Even so, Warrick's piece is a model traditional reading of Dick. It is also one of the first to treat the Taoism of *MHC* seriously (although here, too, the desire to praise Dick may have seduced Warrick away from a more skeptical investigation of the relationship between Dick and the *I Ching*).

Carl Freedman's "Towards a Theory of Paranoia: The Science Fiction of Philip K. Dick" (#32, 1984) is the last essay I would include in this phase of beatification. Freedman still reads Dick as an exemplar and special mythographer, in this case, of the Age of Conspiracy. Freedman's theoretical apparatus, however, goes beyond ideology-critique as the symptomatology of a political unconscious—to use Jameson's influential terms—to a quite specific identification of that symptomatology with paranoia. Thus, he finds in Dick the critical mythology of paranoia, the most adequate representation of the age.

2.2. Phase Two: Disputation. Canonizations entail disputations. Indeed, in modern literature, canonization consists precisely in being the subject of recurrent extensive disputation. In the process of literary canonization espe-

cially, such disputes do not test the validity of the saint-candidate so much as they question the validity of the testimony.

In the years between 1975 and (roughly) 1988, Dick's reputation grew steadily. Although his books kept flickering in and out of print, he was widely read in the by now mainstreamed counterculture, often through an entirely informal system of avid lending, the result of an urge to "turn others on" to Dick. He was discussed regularly in SF scholarship and academic conferences. Books (by Warrick, Hazel Barnes, and Kim Stanley Robinson) devoted to literary analysis of his works saw publication. After the production of *Blade Runner* in 1980, both the film and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* were often taught in universities. *Valis* was performed as an opera at the Beaubourg in Paris. In France Dick was treated as one of the greatest living American writers, a latter-day Poe. And so on.

For many reasons, the beatification period of Dick's career in SFS had reached an end by 1983: Dick died in 1982, which removed any incentive to actually influence his writing; the Divine Trilogy came into print and introduced a new generation of readers to Dick's work from a perspective very different from that of the "heroic" 60s; the sheer volume of writing on Dick was surpassing that on any other SF writer. But perhaps the most important single reason in the context of SFS was the slowly dawning recognition that Dick was far more problematic than he had been presented to be. Reality itself was moving along Dickian lines—the Reagan presidency and the ascendancy of television-as-civil-society meant a serious moral defeat for critical humanists, who had argued their belief in the utopian content of popular culture and the utopian possibilities of a critical counterculture. Feminist criticism had nothing good to say about Dick (what *could* it say, when Dick seemed incapable of depicting women as other than terminally weird vamps and bitchy wives?); it preferred to say nothing. What's more, SF critics began to be troubled by all the things that had *not* been said about Dick, but which nonetheless had intimately marked their experiences of reading him. One of deconstruction's simplest and most irresistible lessons was that nothing should be left out of a reading simply because it appears to be irrelevant to the main point. If Dick is not only exhilarating and full of intellectual beauties, but also obscure, bathetic, and compromised, that too must be taken into account.

As Dick's reputation was assured, the critical task changed. Now came the question: how to read Dick well, what to accept as a valid and interesting reading, which qualities to celebrate and which to deplore or dispute? Dick became a contested area instead of a monument. The image of Dick as a dependable terrain dissolved; the conflict of interpretations ensued. In fact, the disputations were arguments for and against the different structures and institutions within which the Dick-text could be embedded. The disputational contest is a contest of cultural institutions. We read arguments for Dick from the perspective of academic American studies (Slusser), the pulp SF tradition (Huntington), schizophrenia (Durham), metafiction and ethics (Rieder), the Paris May Days (Bozzetto, Fondanèche and Jouanne), religious psychology (Dumont).

A spirited exchange around Kim Stanley Robinson's study of Dick's novels articulated some of the issues that nagged at academic Dick criticism. Merrit Abrash, in a review entitled "A Failure of Scholarship" (#37, November 1985)—the title was not Abrash's—praised Robinson's book for its originality, but took exception to several weaknesses that he considered signs

of Robinson's inadequate research. Robinson's dignified and cogent defense returned fire. More interesting in this context is George Slusser's amicus brief for Robinson ("Scholars and Pedants," #42, July 1987) in which Slusser accused Abrash of concocting a "canonical fantasy" of critical texts and biographies that were either not decisive or not available (because as yet unwritten). Abrash, in Slusser's view, wished to exclude the non-academic Robinson (an accomplished and now influential SF writer) in order to appropriate Dick as the exclusive property of the academy.

Underlying the immediate occasion of this disagreement is a dispute about how intellectuals should talk about Dick and SF: should academic standards of scholarly rigor and authority be required so that SF can become part of the historical project of literary study, thereby influencing and being influenced by scholarship? Or should it be allowed to develop *en sauvage*, free from the pedantic restrictions that would inevitably vitiate it? (The debate is an increasingly significant one, as more and more educated but non-academic readers come to Dick's work. However, Robinson's book is not a good vehicle for it. It remains the best study to date of Dick's novels.)

By the second special issue on Dick (#45 July 1988), Dick's reputation was firmly entrenched not only in SF criticism, but also in the newly evolved scene of popular culture that had dramatically infiltrated the academy. By #45 the question became: within which cultural-historical contexts and with what standards of aesthetic judgment is it valid to talk about Dick? It is clear from the accounts of the French response that in France there was a generational split between those who, nostalgic for May '68, read Dick as the sage of the political counterculture, and a younger group of readers for whom Dick represents the anti-political, esoterically metaphysical rejection of the May Days. That split appears in Dick criticism as well, albeit not often in the pages of SFS. (It is an important side-effect of SFS's scrupulous academic identity that problems of Dick's personality and biography have been treated as off-limits. It has been a double-edged rule. It has encouraged strong textual analysis, but at the cost of a refusal to allow the rapidly expanding "life-text" to be treated critically. The closest SFS has come is in Eric Rabkin's "Irrational Expectations: or, How Economics and the Post-Industrial World Failed Philip K. Dick." Readers familiar only with SFS will not be aware of the great veneration in some circles for the "post-Pink Light" Dick as a postmodern mystic.)

Carl Freedman, the editor of #45, expressed the double-bind of Dick criticism in 1988, at once declaring Dick to be "the most accomplished, interesting, and significant American novelist to have emerged since the Second World War" (145), appreciatively quoting Jameson's throwaway characterization of Dick as "the Shakespeare of SF," but also noting with sadness the emergence of a "Dick industry": Dick's "heroic" phase was over and the period of "routinization" beginning. This routinization is quite subtle in SFS's approaches to Dick in #45, and it has produced some of the most refined and interesting studies of Dick's work. The "routine" here is mostly a matter of abandoning the search for utopian affirmation and enfolding Dick within constraining contexts: theory (Durham), literary history (Slusser), technique (Huntington), economics (Rabkin), religious psychology (Dumont) —all discourses that clearly determine their object more than they themselves are changed by the utterances of an exceptional and eccentric artist.

2.3. Diffusion into The Real. The beatification and disputation phases of what I have construed as Dick's canonization are analogous to the treatment

of any highly innovative writer. Indeed, one could argue that until 1988 all the essays in SFS dealing with Dick were concerned with a straightforward modernist canonization, a *pluralist* canonization verifying that Dick can speak deep truths to all kinds of humanist readers.

After the moment of the second special issue, however, this mystique could no longer be maintained, for the simple reason that the Dick-text had overflowed the boundaries that had been set by its books, its critical glosses, and its biographical narratives. It had diffused into the extramural, "real world" in ways that few of Dick's original readers and the critical community could have foreseen and accommodated. Three developments stand out for me in this transition from traditional to diffused text: the appearance of the theological novels associated with *Valis*; the absorption of Dick into the entertainment industry with the making of *Blade Runner*; and the steady stream of biographical information about, and subsequent interpretation of, the "Pink Beam" experience of 1974 that Dick took to be a theophany. None of these developments proved friendly to critical reflection, because each one was explosive, ceaselessly acquiring new contexts and meanings. They not only bled out into the world, influencing and intersecting with many interests for whom literature and philosophical reflection are irrelevant, but also transformed Dick into a cultural force, a wavefront, whose reverberations are impossible to predict or even to map.

This is true even of *Valis*, even though it is quite explicitly a novel. *Valis*, which was the entry for thousands of readers into Dick's corpus, tests readers' attention and belief in ways very few novels have ever done. It passes beyond questions about the quality of storytelling, literary or cultural tradition, or the allegorical significance of ontological fantasy to questions about the lines between fiction and vision, between fantasy and dementia, between irony and schizophrenia, between art and "raw material"—and inevitably raises doubts about whether such lines exist at all any more.

The filming of *Androids* as *Blade Runner* absorbed Dick into the Big Business of entertainment and image production. The book now appears under the covers of the film, so to speak (a compromise reached between the studio and Dick when Dick refused to have his own novel "removed" in favor of a novelization of the film)—which itself produces a very Dickian fissure between the film and the book that bears its name. The film is generally more accessible than the novel, and the film version is widely taught in several university contexts. Further, Riddley Scott's film was very influential in transforming the culture of SF-film. The film has a vigorous life of its own in popular culture and in film studies, and in the inspiration for newer SF styles like cyberpunk, and thus this part of the Dick-text is increasingly discussed in terms of a discourse alien to writing and its ancillary institutions. As one result of the drastic difference between the film and the novel, the Dick question is no longer shaped within the configurational space of historical SF, nor even with the context of Dick's relationship to other important 20th century writers of the fantastic like Kafka, Borges, Pynchon, etc.; rather, this question is now posed in terms of the interactions between Dick the writer and the manifestation of Dickian ideas in visual, cinematic, hyperreal, sensory overload, that is, within the hyperactive context of postmodern film. The *Blade Runner*-effect has, among other things, made of Dick a simulated scene of certain subversive special effects, reversing the trend in which Dick's ideas as a writer evolved. Dick is not the great outsider anymore; he is inside the entertainment establishment, a mine of potential options.

Thirdly, Dick has been transformed, more quickly than most other writers in similar situations, into an oracle, and his SF texts into delphic stories—characteristically deadpan and noise-damaged, as postmodern culture tends to conceive of its divine revelations. The so-called "Dick cult," which grew up around Paul Williams's Philip K. Dick Society, has produced a body of fascinating informal commentary about Dick's personal life and about the ambiguous intersections of mystical revelation, drugs, mental illnesses, SF, and hermetic religion. The central text for this version of the Dick-myth is the massive *Exegesis*, over which Dick pored for the last twelve years of his life in an effort to explain the "Pink Beam." The Philip K. Dick Society is a group of intelligent and articulate people, a sort of anti-academy, many of them gifted writers. Their overall influence remains to be seen, but they evidently express a desire to read Dick's schizo-ironic texts as manifestations of a(n) (un-)certain kind of gnosis, and their image of Dick as the postmodern seer—conflicted, self-annihilating, hermeneutically obsessed—is already influencing some New Age thinking. Another canonization is going on at the same time as the academy's. (Witness the choice of contemporary psychopomp Terence McKenna to write the afterword to *In Pursuit of Valis*, Lawrence Sutin's edition of selections from the *Exegesis*.)

These developments have together transformed Dick into a *hyper-Dick*, changing him from a writer and visionary storyteller into a phenomenon: Philip Dick, the movie; Philip Dick, the oracle; Philip Dick, the avatar of indeterminacy. The difficulties posed for critics by the diffusion for critics comes down to one basic problem: the line between the Dick-text and the context in which it is read can no longer be easily distinguished. It is rarely clear where the line itself is drawn, nor in which way the influence between text and context works. It is clear that readings differ depending on when in the sequence of historical events and Dick's publications the reader has encountered Dick's work. It matters whether *Valis* was read before *Ubik*; it matters whether *Blade Runner* was seen before *Androids* was read; it matters whether one reads about the Pink Beam before reading about Watergate. These may seem obvious problems for criticism—with Dick, however, they take on added weight, for Dick's whole corpus returns again and again to the question of false memory, of the derangeability of time and space, of the arbitrariness of experience. A Dick fan who began with a love of *Valis* may belong to an entirely different subculture than one who began with the "heroic" extravaganzas of the mid-60s.

Intimations of this diffusion, which amounts to the removal of Dick's reputation from the custodial care of critics and SF fans, appear relatively early in SFS. Fitting ("Futurecop: The Neutralization of Revolt in *Blade Runner*," #43, November 1987) took up the question of Riddley Scott's transformation of *Androids*—for Fitting the "conversion of a moral dilemma into a cynical legitimation of the status quo" (134). On the whole, however, the question of *Blade Runner*'s relationship to *Androids* has not occupied much of the disputation in SFS. Jake Jakaitis's review of Judith Kerman's *Retrofitting Blade Runner* ("Ridley Scott and Philip K. Dick," #57, July 1992) informs us, however, that it is occupying SF critics elsewhere. The major work on the subject is yet to be done, and it is not a small task. The comparison involves not only the SF literary tradition on the one hand, and the tradition of studio film-production on the other; it also involves an obscure and structurally disorienting novel, and a movie damaged by industrial noise.

The critical boundary between the imaginary and the real begins to

collapse in SFS with the publication Robert Philmus's account of Dick's denunciation of Fitting, Jameson, Lem and others to the FBI as agents of a KGB conspiracy to abduct him to the USSR ("The Two Faces of Philip K. Dick," #53, March 1991). It is clear from Philmus's tone that he treats it as a matter of raw betrayal. Apart from the grave injury the denunciation might easily have done to the lives of some of Dick's own admirers, the treachery strikes at the heart of SFS itself. Considered from the perspective of the whole beatification process, which was going on at the very moment Dick was "informing" for the FBI, Dick's paranoid fantasy seems to retroactively undermine the whole point of the effort to apotheosize him as an icon of critical, anti-establishment SF. The historical situation is profoundly, unnervingly Dickian. Even as the earnest critics are trying to establish models of resistance and redemption, their hero is secretly undermining them. The idealism of the beatification essays is now riven with our knowledge that their object was a traitor.

For those who followed the unfolding of Dick's biography, especially via the publication of his letters and personal notes by his executor, Paul Williams, the KGB-plot letters are not as shocking as they are for Philmus. This is no de Man affair of the SF community. Dick often admitted to shameful cravenness; he suspected even his best friends of being hostile police agents. Further, it is difficult to read *Scanner*, to my mind one of Dick's two or three best works, without being aware that Dick is the model for Bob/Fred, just as he is for *Valis*'s Phil Dick/Horselover Fat. *Scanner*'s power, as Fitting implies in his analysis of the novel (in "Reality as Ideological Construct"), is in its depiction of a world in which soaring idealism/hope and craven obeisance become almost indistinguishable.

The question remains, *why* did Dick write the denunciations. Gregg Rickman, one of Dick's recent biographers, offers the theory that Dick suffered from Multiple Personality Disorder, and that it was one of the personalities that sent the letters ("Dick, Deception, and Denunciation: A Comment of 'The Two Faces of Philip K. Dick'," #54, July 1991). (A more generous, and interesting perspective from a literary point of view, opens up with Anne Dick's comment, cited by Rickman, that Dick would throw such letters in the trash, with the logic that if the FBI were spying on him, they would get the letters. That scene can be read as a piece of paranoid irony (an oxymoron?), or just pure comedy. How is anyone to know how far Dick had his tongue in his cheek when he sent those letters through the trash?) I cannot judge the validity of Rickman's claim, which is the central thesis of his biography and has been roundly attacked for its lack of empirical foundation. Philmus complains that psychological explanations of political denunciations like Dick's make issues of civic morality into issues of private psychology. Rickman's response is to claim that MPD and the child abuse it is engendered by are burning social issues. Although that may be true, Rickman seems to miss Philmus's point: child-abuse itself is only a part of a larger social condition, materially linked to other forms of violence and oppression. Further, Rickman's theory of MPD is singularly unsatisfying when dealing with a writer like Dick. Not only does it reduce, like all psychologistic explanations, the complexity of an extremely complex and resonant fiction to a set of symptoms, it also implicitly foregrounds the pathology while deëmphasizing the work. More strikingly, Rickman's solution to the collapse of identity in Dick is to posit its fragmentation into several identities, which displaces the question of what exactly it means to have an identity at all into the construction of a microsociety of personalities, each of which seems to have evaded the problem by breaking into a smaller monad. As far as Dick criticism is concerned, without a more sophisticated theory of MPD, Rickman's thesis— both as explanation of Dick's whole corpus and as explanation of Dick's KGB-scenario—is a retreat from the philosophical and psychological questions posed so radically by Dick himself. It is merely a retreat into another dimension. MPD is a perfect Dickian device. We never do get closer to the answer to, what is a self?

3. Futures. It may be foolish to speculate on the future of Dick criticism in an introduction to a volume of past criticism. The future will handle itself, surely. Yet I think that the intimate link between Dick's work and the critical study of SF makes it important to speculate on the directions the two might well take together. A diffusion phase is not necessarily a dissolution phase.

The distinctly literary-critical/text-critical aspects of Dick criticism will surely continue, doubtless even in the pages of SFS. Beatification and disputation will continue from new points of view. But the time of concentrated contemplation of Dick's explicit fiction is probably over.

In the future, critics and scholars will probably have to treat several dimensions of Dick's fiction and of the Dick-text that have been held at arm's length so far: religious dimensions, feminist concerns, the relationship of Dick to virtual reality and analogous simulation systems, the assimilation of Dick into a widespread 'onto-hallucinatory' style, and the extensive cultural collapse of religion into SF.

There are ample signs that a good deal of the art of the 90s will be concerned with apocalyptic and visionary religious drama. This concern, moreover, will be less critically distanced than it has been, and will be viewed more sympathetically, from the inside. Criticism will have to find categories appropriate for discussing religious vision, with its problems of reference (what does reference to a vision refer *to*? how does it do the referring?) and its problems of reading (how does one situate or translate a description of a vision?). *Valis* has already set the pace for this development, and studies like those of Durham, Palmer, and Rieder are, I think, indicative that critics are approaching the task. The enlightenment materialism that has characterized SFS from ideology-critique through psychoanalysis may not be adequate for fully understanding this moment.

Feminist criticism has had nothing to say about Dick, for reasons I mentioned earlier: Dick's representation of women is notoriously crude and ungenerous. Angel Archer, the solitary exception, who appeared in his last book, may have been pointing to a new direction in Dick's work; but the ledger of his lifetime still shows only one strong central woman character in over 50 novels and dozens of stories. This tendency is no more a "weakness" than Dick's prose is; it is part of the total vision, and will eventually be treated as explicitly as paranoia, dystopian satire, and the little man have been so far. Feminist criticism cannot conceivably be kind to Dick, but its discoveries cannot help but situate him more honestly.

The developments of virtual reality are inextricably bound up with Dick, who might well be considered the prophet (or is it the Ancient Mariner?) of the technology. As VR produces a greater and greater variety of artificial experiences of reality (EOR), Dick's imaginary VRs will become at once more historically grounded and more philosophically useful for contemplating the effect of artificial EORs on human societies. This criticism will require literary sensitivity, philosophical imagination, and considerable familiarity with the technologies of simulation.

The onto-hallucinatory style is related to the religious concerns and the evolution of artificial realities mentioned above. It has been emerging in many forms of art, such as magical realism and the films of directors like David Cronenberg, Eliseo Subiela, and the like. In the past, critics have tended to analyze these hallucinatory elements in Dick's work in psychoanalytic or neo-Marxian terms, or at the opposite end of the spectrum, as visions of a noumenal reality. Clinical psychologists, however, are less sure about the way hallucinations relate to their references; like dreams, hallucinations represent an experience of reality that we would like to be able to reduce through some sort of dream-book. As yet, however, they represent a semi-autonomous experience of reality. Dick pioneered a tendency, which is now a widespread artistic trend, to represent hallucinations as ontological phenomena equal to the empirical. The contemplation of this zone of experience will require its own critical categories.

Finally, there remains the question of the status of SF in the future. SF's relationship to religion has always been close. At one end, there were imaginary religious visions kept at the proper arm's length of cognitive estrangement, as in Clarke's techno-mystical tales. At the other end, many millenarian cults over the past sixty-odd years have expected the rapture to come via flying saucers. *Valis* and the *Exegesis* are symptoms of a new development, the frequent collapse of the distance between SF and religion. Lawrence Sutin makes the canny observation that Dick's massive compendium of inconclusive speculations about his mystical vision was completely true to his "tradition." "Mystical experiences are almost always in keeping with the tradition of the mystic," Sutin writes. Dick "adhered to no single faith. The one tradition indubitably his was SF—which exalts 'What IF?' above all" (Sutin, 233). It is not extravagant to assume that in the postmodern age, when there is an enormous profusion of fundamentalisms encountering each other within the information grid, the boundary line between "What IF?" and "THIS IS IT!" will collapse as so many other basic dualities have. In the age of the noise-damaged Absolute, Philip Dick will have a special place.

EDITORIAL NOTE. The bibliographical articles that follow, all edited by R.D. Mullen (who is responsibel for any errors therein) have benefitted from reference to Daniel J.H. Levack's PKD: A Philip K. Dick Bibliography, *rev. ed. (1988) and from information provided by Lloyd W. Currey, Paul Williams, and Jake Jakaitis. Sharon K. Perry's updating of Professor McNelly's 1983 listing has nearly tripled its length.*

Willis E. McNelly and Sharon K. Perry. The Manuscripts and Papers at Fullerton

In 1972 Philip K. Dick donated his manuscripts and papers to the Special Collections Library, California State University, Fullerton. These include completed manuscripts, carbon copies, setting copies, first drafts, and so on for both published and unpublished novels and stories, together with an extensive correspondence, commonplace books, copies of critical articles on his work, and copies of various ephemera relating to his career as one the world's foremost science-fiction writers.