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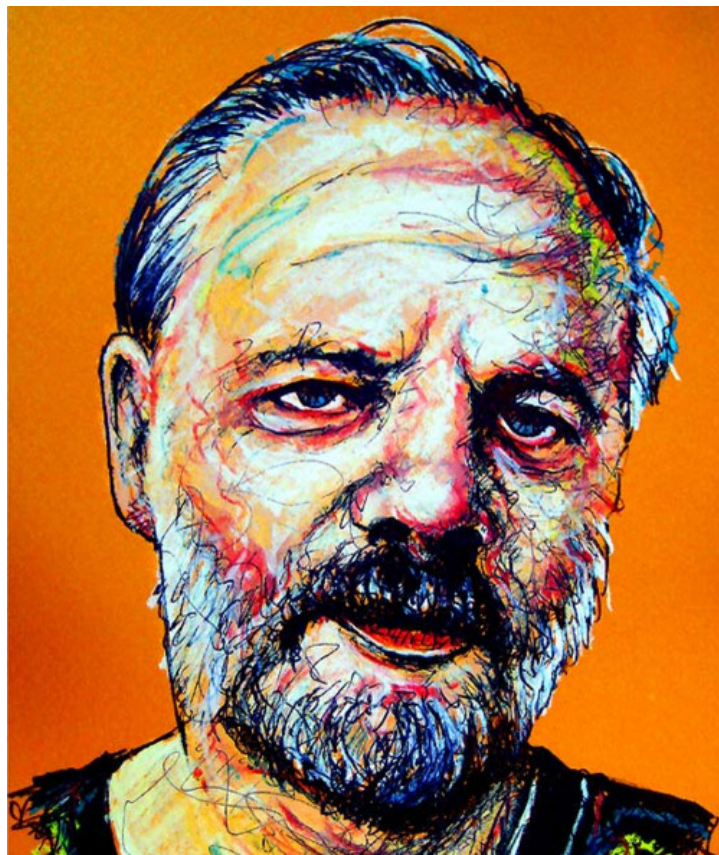
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24th Feb 2012

## THE EXEGETE

ROB LATHAM

**on the career of Philip K. Dick,  
up to and including *The Exegesis*.**



Philip K. Dick © Chuck Hodi <http://etsy.me/w3JoRt>

**Philip K. Dick**

***The Exegesis of Philip K. Dick***

Eds. Pamela Jackson and Jonathan Lethem . Houghton Mifflin Harcourt , November 2011. 944 pp.

\_\_\_\_\_. ***The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch***

1964. Mariner, October 2011. 240 pp.

\_\_\_\_\_. ***Ubik***

1969. Mariner, April 2012. 240 pp.

\_\_\_\_\_. ***VALIS***

1981. Mariner, October 2011. 288 pp.

\_\_\_\_\_. ***The Transmigration of Timothy Archer***

1982. Mariner, October 2011. 256 pp.

When Philip K. Dick died in 1982 of a series of strokes brought on by years of overwork and amphetamine abuse, he was seen within the science fiction genre as a cult author of idiosyncratic works treating themes of synthetic selfhood and near -future dystopia, an intriguing if essentially second-rank talent. At the time, he was more popular in France and Japan, which have always had a taste for America's pop culture detritus , than he was in his native country. Thirty years later, Dick — known to his most avid fans simply by his initials "PKD" — has developed a reputation as , among other things : a baleful chronicler of Bay Area working-class angst, thanks to a series of previously unpublished realist works written during the 1950s and early 1960s, such as *Humpty Dumpty in Oakland*; a postmodernist *avant la lettre* , due to his delirious explorations of deliquescent mindscapes in novels like *Eye in the Sky* and *Martian Time -Slip*, which Vintage began reprinting in imposing trade paperback editions in 1991; a godfather of cyberpunk via Ridley Scott's film *Blade Runner*, adapted from Dick's 1968 novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* ?; and a kind of Gnostic magus gifted with quasi -divine revelations that came to inform his final novels , beginning with *VALIS* in 1981. During the last decade of his life , Dick produced an 8,000-page opus of theological speculation known simply as the *Exegesis*, which struggled to come to grips with what seemed to be mystical experiences , and which editors Pamela Jackson and Jonathan Lethem have now culled into Houghton Mifflin's massive doorstep of a book.

A more appropriate metaphor might be "kitchen sink of a book ," since Dick , an omnivorous autodidact , threw all of his intellectual resources at the problem of deciphering the events he referred to simply as " 2-3-74" — because the sequence of hallucinatory revelations commenced in February and March of that fateful year . For those given to psycho-biographical explanations, 1974 was the culmination for Dick of a decade of counterculture paranoia spawned by a hermetic hippie lifestyle and punctuated by occasional flirtations with antiwar protest . Always suspicious of lurking authority, Dick became convinced , during the early 1970s, that he was the focus of a loose-knit, evolving conspiracy linking the IRS , the FBI , Soviet agents , left wing American academics, and the hated Nixon administration. Recovering from oral surgery in February 1974, pumped full of Darvon , lithium, and massive quantities of megavitamins, he began experiencing visual and auditory hallucinations initially sparked by a Christian girl's fish-icon necklace but eventually taking the form of a pink laser shooting highly coded information into his opened mind during a series of hypnogogic visitations . Over time , the intrepid author developed an elaborate vocabulary to describe the transfiguring effects of these extraterrestrial dispatches .

According to this private argot , on 2-3-74 Dick underwent a powerful *anamnesis*, stimulated by mystical contact with “VALIS” (“Vast Active Living Intelligence System,” sometimes also called “Zebra” or , more simply , “God”), that unshackled his genetic memory, permitting him to see through the “Black Iron Prison” of our world into the “macrometasomacocosmos,” the “morphological realm” of the Platonic *Eidos*, in the process revealing himself to be a “homoplasmate ,” an incarnation of the Gnostic *Logos* subsisting in “orthogonal time.”

I won't attempt to translate this complex mash of Greek , Latin, and Phildickian terminology, instead referring curious readers to Jackson and Lethem's helpful glossary at the end of the book and the excellent annotations coordinated by Erik Davis , as well as to the balanced and compassionate discussion in Lawrence Sutin's superb 1989 biography, *Divine Invasions: A Life of Philip K. Dick*. In 1991, Sutin shepherded an earlier version of the *Exegesis* into print as *In Pursuit of VALIS: Selections from the Exegesis*, which sifted Dick's mountain of soul-searching meditations into a modest pile of fragments one quarter the length of the current tome . Published by small -press imprint Underwood Miller , that book's schizophrenic assembly wavered between scholarly precision and New Age special pleading , with Sutin's foreword and Jay Kinney's introduction meticulously tracing connections between the author's life and the history of Gnostic theology , while Terrence McKenna's loopy (and shamelessly self-promoting) afterword hailed the text as an emanation of godhood . This New Age connection was not entirely inappropriate : Dick himself , in his 1982 novel *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer* , flirted with McKenna's theory that psilocybin mushrooms had been seeded on earth to trigger the psychic evolution of mankind ; and one way to view the *Exegesis* is as a painful testament to the transition of the communal counterculture of the 1960s into the solipsistic ethos of grandiose self -invention characteristic of the 1970s, especially in Dick's native California.

There are , in fact , numerous ways to find a trail through this wilderness of crazed speculation. At one and the same time, the *Exegesis* is an expository prop to Dick's later fiction, a kind of creative workshop testing out ideas that would find form in *VALIS* and *The Divine Invasion*; the tortuous searchings of a remarkably resilient spirit mangled by years of drug abuse , failed marriages, and literary neglect ; a palimpsest of learned disquisitions on complex philosophical problems , such as the nature of the relationship between identity and time; a contemporary recasting of Gnostic theology , the Dead Sea scrolls rendered as a kind of space opera ; and much more . The book is alternately fascinating and exhausting to read , recapitulating the manic -depressive nature of its original production — sections were written at white heat in days -long sessions of intense immersion, only to be followed by abrupt hiatuses and lacunae , as what had seemed key ideas were dropped and the focus shifted to fresher intellectual enthusiasms. Despite being a major fan of Dick's work , I have to admit that I question whether this manuscript should have seen print at all , given its often embarrassing rambling and autodidactic fanaticism , with Dick latching onto any stray thread to spin out his cosmogonic web . I certainly find it hard to imagine that there is a widespread audience for this strange assemblage of obiter Dick -ta, even among PKD's more hardcore followers.

What redeems the work for me , finally, is Dick's abiding skepticism about his own

revelations. Seemingly endless passages of portentous nonsense — such as a lengthy attempt to conscript Julian Jaynes’s crackpot bestseller *The Origins of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* into the warp and woof of his own fixations — suddenly give way to agonizing reappraisals and poignant spasms of self-doubt, as when Dick admits that “I was taken over by my own S-F universe”:

The AI voice [i.e., VALIS] is a special kind of hallucination : one of wish - fulfillment and need, due to loneliness: emotional starvation and grief and ill - use. I just can’t endure life without that lonely voice guiding me , so I regress.... The AI voice is my imaginary playmate , my sister, evolved out of childhood.... I was so unhappy and afraid; like R. Crumb, so behind the 8 ball, so filled with anticipatory dread.

Well, damn it — I don’t regret it . It made a barren , fearful life meaningful and bearable....

Crazy people generally don’t know they’re crazy , and Dick’s abiding awareness of the dubious nature of his visions makes him at worst a pathetic figure , struggling heroically in these pages through madness towards sense, like the sadsack, put-upon protagonists of so many of his novels.

Scruples aside , the editors deserve praise for the great care that has gone into the production of this volume . Jackson, who in the late 1990s wrote a dissertation on the *Exegesis* at UC Berkeley , did yeoman work puzzling through a jumbled mass of file folders to impose a clear chronological sequence on the material ; and associate editor Davis, author of *Techgnosis: Myth, Magic, and Mysticism in the Age of Information* , assembled a diverse array of talents — including novelist Steve Erickson , critic N. Katherine Hayles, and blogger David Gill , whose website “Total Dick -head” is the best online compendium of Dickiana — to generate the shrewd , erudite, sometimes quite witty annotations. Lethem probably deserves the most credit (or blame) for persuading Houghton Mifflin to publish it in the first place , just as he deserves credit for recently getting a baker’s dozen of Dick’s best novels enshrined in Library of America editions . Indeed, Lethem would seem to have replaced Sutin — who , following *Divine Invasions*, *In Pursuit of VALIS*, and *The Shifting Realities of Philip K. Dick: Selected Literary and Philosophical Writings* , moved on to a biography of Aleister Crowley and a history of Buddhism in the West — as the main superintendent of Dick’s literary legacy , not to mention the person most likely to prove the deep debt contemporary postmodern writers owe to the cult SF of the 1960s and 1970s. Lethem’s funny and moving homage to Dick, “Crazy Friend,” recently gathered in *The Ecstasy of Influence* , acknowledges just how deeply the author marked him, revealing the existence of a spray-can tattoo on his left upper arm that commemorates the aerosol deity in Dick’s 1969 novel *Ubik*.

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Dick himself understood how central *Ubik*, along with another 1960s novel, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* , was to his later mystical experiences : As he says in the *Exegesis*, those texts represented the “archaic contents of my mind overpowering me ,” an incipient psychotic break that would become total in 1974. Rereading Dick’s early novels through the lens of the events recounted in the *Exegesis*, just as Dick himself

eventually did, shows how consistently the themes of thought-control and ambiguous revelation informed his fiction, well before the advent of the so-called “VALIS Trilogy” (*VALIS*, *The Divine Invasion*, and *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer* — though this late cluster also includes *Radio Free Albemuth*, an abandoned draft of *VALIS* published posthumously in 1985, and the unfinished *Owl in Daylight*, discussed at length in the closing pages of the *Exegesis*). Since Houghton Mifflin Harcourt recently acquired the rights to a number of Dick’s novels and has begun releasing them in uniform editions under their Mariner imprint, this sort of early-to-late-career comparison is easy enough to undertake, and the average reader is likely to find Dick’s characteristic obsessions more palatable when accessed in fictional form.

*Three Stigmata* was the key achievement of an amphetamine-fueled outburst that saw Dick produce 11 novels in just over two years, including such near-masterpieces as *The Simulacra* and *Dr. Bloodmoney* and utter crap like *The Crack in Space*. Not surprisingly, this punishing regimen took its toll, and in late 1963 Dick was assailed by the terrifying vision of a face in the sky; as he describes the experience in a passage quoted in Sutin’s biography, it was “not a human face... [but] a vast visage of perfect evil.... [I]t was metal and cruel and, worst of all, it was God.” This was Dick’s first encounter with the brutal devourer of souls that appears in so many of his novels and stories, a cynical demigod who reigns over a blighted technocratic landscape — and who would become, by the time of the *Exegesis*, the tyrannical shadow of Richard M. Nixon (a.k.a. President Ferris Freemont in *Radio Free Albemuth* and *VALIS*) looming over the ugly sprawl of Orange County in the 1970s (a.k.a. the “Black Iron Prison”).

In *Three Stigmata*, this cyborg Antichrist — half-demonic, half-technological — takes the form of the eponymous Palmer Eldritch, a vastly wealthy, prosthetically augmented capitalist who returns from a mysterious expedition to Proxima Centauri transfigured to superhuman proportions, armed by the alien “Proxers” with a drug that can literally reduce every user to a psychic colony — a “proxy” — of his imperial will. Leo Bulero, a business rival, suffers the effects of this drug as he is isolated in a virtual-reality mindscape presided over by the shapeshifting Eldritch. Even after he has apparently escaped this domain, Bulero can’t shake the feeling that the everyday world around him is insubstantial, a hallucinated web in which he finds himself ensnared — just as Dick was beginning, through his dabblings in Gnosticism, to see the phenomenal realm as an illusion sustained by a sinister puppetmaster. The narrative itself drops with breathtaking, vertiginous aplomb through disappearing trapdoors in this soul asylum, never quite landing back on solid ground. Once the possibility of perpetual hallucination is entertained, it subverts the stability of conventional narration entirely, and *Three Stigmata* reads at times like a comic-book version of classic 1960s postmodernism.

Dick’s choice of the name Eldritch to (anti)christen his villainous cyborg signals, I think, a purposeful wedding of the textures and tones of SF with those of Gothic horror. A term redolent of Lovecraftian slime, “eldritch” designates the uncanny quality of even the most advanced technologies, their apocalyptic infestation of the soul. Yet for Dick the decay of human identity under the lurid gaze of dark gods is not a primordial regression, as Lovecraft would have depicted it, but rather the outcome of technological progress itself; the notion of the perceptual world as a manipulable construct, amenable to technoscientific control, unites Gnostic theology with psychedelic experience in a

particularly science-fictional way. And this, I think, is the genius of Dick's best novels of the 1960s: They deploy the classic tropes of SF in a manner that is psychologically resonant, allowing the author to work through his gnawing obsessions (which were often the obsessions of the 1960s counterculture as well), while also being deeply subversive of the genre's technophilic optimism. That these books are sometimes sloppily written is actually part of their charm, as if powerful forms of revelation had decided to disguise themselves as dreck.

This premise, in fact, forms the basic plot of *Ubik*, Dick's finest novel of the period and, for all the bitterness of its themes, one of the funniest works of SF ever written. Among its rampant hilarities is the bizarre fashion sense of the odd folks populating this near-future world, who wander around in hellish enormities like "a varicolored Dacron wash-and-wear suit, knit cumberbund and dip-dyed cheesecloth cravat" or "mohair poncho, apricot-colored felt hat, argyle ski socks and carpet slippers." Their weird attire is the physical expression of their freakish personalities: Most of the major characters are paranormal mutants whose psychic talents are deployed in schemes of industrial espionage, parapsychology having become a branch of corporate R & D. Once again, Dick's set-up effects a collapse of inner and outer realities that generates a shifty, disjunctive narrative: Events in the "real" world are subject to predictive control — even retroactive cancellation — by the intricate mind-games played out among these psychic agents.

This collusion of subjective and objective worlds is further cemented by the cryogenic technology that makes life after death a viable option: Frozen corpses sustain a shadowy mental half-life the living characters can interactively access. As in *Three Stigmata*, the result is a manic competition among disembodied egos to impose their versions of reality on everybody else (Dick's view of the social world in a nutshell). Halfway through the book, a literally explosive event propels the narrative permanently into this liminal terrain, and the characters find themselves wandering through an erratic dreamscape that is apparently temporally regressing to the 1930s. In fact, they have become trapped in the fantasies of an "infantile, retarded entity" whose mental atavism is reflected in the literal replacement of contemporary objects with archaic ones. Only the intermittent advent of "Ubik," a spray-can cure-all, serves to point a way out of the maze, redeeming the fallen world like the annunciation of a junk-culture deity: God in a can.

All this probably sounds hopelessly incoherent, but the story is much easier to follow than it is to describe. Dick's convoluted sci-fi plots are best read allegorically in any case, and I think *Three Stigmata* and *Ubik* deserve to be seen as two of the starkest parables of the Marxian concept of reification ever written. The entropic settings of both novels are indistinguishable from our mundane world of consumer capitalism, where meaningful distinctions between people and objects have collapsed: Humans have become mere things to be drugged and manipulated, while artifacts have become efficacious, quasi-spiritual agents. The characters in both books routinely emit a debased jargon full of advertising slogans and empty journalese, all the while moving through an object-world that seems vitalized by the very powers they have lost. Yet there remains the possibility, however absurd, of a kind of salvation, of some transcendent message that can break through the reified crust and put the characters in

touch with their essential selves . This invasive signal , emanating from a higher dimension, is usually cryptic and distorted by noise , and can often be confused with the welter of garbage surrounding it . As Dick would put it in *VALIS*, “the symbols of the divine show up in our world initially at the trash stratum” — and this is how the first inklings of Dick’s later oracles vouchsafe themselves in his early work.

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For those tired of beating their heads against the immense wall of noise that is the *Exegesis*, *VALIS* can come across as a veritable beacon of clarity. This quality derives in large part from its unapologetic confessional animus : The novel narrates the events of 2-3-74 with a kind of bemused wonder, Dick appearing in the story as both himself and a hallucinated doppelgänger named Horselover Fat (a bilingual pun on “Philip Dick”). On the one hand, this overt implication of the author gives the text a metafictional aspect that aligns it with the work of postmodernists like Barthelme and Pynchon , who have always been Dick’s true peers ; on the other hand , its bifurcated structure permits the narrator to comment sarcastically on his alter ego’s apparent megalomania , sometimes by gently mocking the *Exegesis* itself:

During the years — outright years ! — that he labored on his exegesis , Fat must have come up with more theories than there are stars in the universe . Every day he developed a new one , more cunning, more exciting and more fucked.

*VALIS* is populated by a motley assortment of slackers and freaks , the wasted remnants of a disintegrated counterculture, quietly cultivating their neuroses in cookie-cutter apartments spread across Orange County — that is , until their addictions or psychopathic delusions or suicidal depression propel them , willy-nilly, into the embrace of the state psychiatric services or Synanon . Dick probably understood mental illness , and the various regimes designed to treat it , better than any other late -twentieth-century novelist; and the early pages of the book, as our doubled protagonist makes his way through the institutional maze , gaming the battery of tests thrown at him and disputing theological niceties with complaisant psychotherapists , are painfully funny to read. Dick’s most cutting satire is directed at the afflicted themselves , whose cherished fixations are dissected with a knowing eye: “It is characteristic of the mentally ill to hate those who help them and love those who connive against them” ; “Gloria unfolded a panorama of total and relentless madness , lapidary in construction. She had filled in all the details with tools as precise as dental tools” ; “Fat later developed a theory that the universe is made out of information . He started keeping a journal — had been , in fact, secretly doing so for some time: the furtive act of a deranged person.”

This final passage refers , of course , to the *Exegesis*, and since *VALIS* is essentially a reworking of that document , it would seem to offer a scathing verdict on the very text we are reading. Certainly, coming on the heels of 1977’s *A Scanner Darkly*, a novel that chronicled Dick’s erstwhile drug -addled lifestyle, *VALIS* convinced a sizeable portion of the science fiction community that the author had quite simply lost his mind . But nothing is simple in Dick’s universe , and *VALIS* has a cunning deeper than madness , with one hand spinning out Horselover Fat’s wild vision , in which an extraterrestrial communication system initiates a ragtag band of oddballs into the Gnostic mysteries ,

while persistently undercutting this bombastic fantasy with the other . The split between Fat and the narrator is the most pointed indication of the book's divided purpose; and even though this psychic breach is seemingly healed , late in the story , by the intervention of an alien messiah taking the form of an infant polymath , it is never clear whether this should be seen as an act of divine redemption or a further delusion fostered by the creepy cult that controls the child . By the end , Dick's alter ego has reappeared, touring Micronesia at the behest of the "AI voice ," while the narrator lounges in front of his television set awaiting an oracular message that may never come . In the final analysis , *VALIS* is not a crazy book : it is a book about lost , crazy people struggling to find cosmic meaning amid the detritus of a barren secular world that is itself largely insane.

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*The Transmigration of Timothy Archer* , Dick's last novel , is an even more distanced and clear-eyed reworking of the substance of Dick's mystical experiences into viable novelistic form . If *VALIS* comes to resemble the *Exegesis* a bit too closely at times , vanishing down rabbit holes of bloated exposition , *Transmigration* by contrast dramatizes its metaphysical ideas , makes them the substance of a credible plot . As in most of Dick's works, this plot borrows substantially from figures and events in his own life. The titular character , for instance , is based on James Pike , Episcopal Bishop of California during the 1960s, a brilliant theologian and champion of progressive causes , with whom Dick had been well acquainted (Pike having officiated at Dick's fourth marriage). Pike carried on a secret affair with a friend of Dick's, furtively meeting her in a San Francisco apartment , and also confided to the author his conviction that his son , who committed suicide in 1966, was attempting to reach out to him from *The Other Side* ( the title of a 1968 book Pike wrote about the experience , to the great consternation of the church hierarchy ). Pike died in 1969 during an excursion into the Dead Sea region, where he was seeking evidence of the historical reality of Christ.

All of these incidents feature in the novel : Bishop Tim Archer has a clandestine affair with his "secretary ," Kirsten Lundborg ; his son Jeff , partly out of jealousy over this liaison, shoots himself ; Tim and Kirsten undertake to contact Jeff via occult means , leading the Bishop to publish an embarrassing book ; and finally , in a quest for the *anokhi* mushroom, ritual consumption of which purportedly confers eternal life and puts the communicant in direct contact with the deity , Tim Archer perishes alone in the Judean Desert . Unlike the relentlessly autobiographical *VALIS*, however, *Transmigration* is narrated by a character entirely of Dick's invention : Angel Archer, Jeff's widow and Tim's daughter -in-law, a resolutely skeptical Berkeley pothead who watches with numb horror as her husband and friends become enmeshed in personal intrigues and spiritual manias that lead inexorably to their destruction . Easily the most complex and satisfying female character in all of Dick's corpus, Angel is a shrewd, deeply literate, yet totally fallible person, unable to intervene when those she cares about most are devoured by their own compulsions.

Angel's perspective provides Dick with much -needed detachment to explore the psycho-dynamics of his own obsessions . It's fairly clear that Tim Archer , with his egoistic self-assurance, massive erudition, and missionary zeal to uncover divine truth ,



is a stand-in for the author himself. Like Dick trying to puzzle out the events of 2-3-74, the Bishop struggles to interpret the “Zadokite Documents,” newly-discovered Gnostic scrolls that seem to promise an ultimate revelation. As he babbles on the brink of his disastrous trip to the Holy Land: “The *anokhi* is the pure consciousness of God. It is, therefore, Hagia Sophia, God’s Wisdom.... I need that wisdom, Angel. Nothing else will do.” For her part, Angel muses on the power of Tim’s *idée fixe* in terms that could readily apply to Dick’s own preoccupations: “it not only never goes away, it also consumes everything else in the mind so that, finally, the person is gone, the mind as such is gone, and only the over-valent idea remains.” One can even view the manuscript Tim produces to rationalize his faith in his son’s postmortem communiques, which leads to a public humiliation when finally published, as a biting commentary on Dick’s own *Exegesis*. When Angel gets a chance to peruse the text, she observes sadly that

the prose was turgid, vague and disastrously pompous. Obviously, Tim had dictated it at his rush-rush, speeded-up, let’s-get-it-over-with velocity. Equally obviously, he had never once looked back. I thought to myself, the title should be *Look Backward, Idiot*.

By mocking Bishop Archer’s otherworldly fantasies and embracing Angel’s compassionate level-headedness, Dick is essentially “rejecting the abstractions of his own *Exegesis* in favor of the simple, day-to-day virtues of human warmth and kindness” (as Sutin puts it in *Divine Invasions*).

Just as *VALIS*, for all its earnestness, can be read as a sharp satire of SoCal’s mystic fringe, so *Transmigration* is an achingly funny exploration of the milieu of their NorCal cousins. Since it’s in large part a historical novel — a lengthy flashback to the mid-1960s triggered by the 1980 assassination of John Lennon, which leads Angel to meditate on the fate of her dead comrades — we get to see the Bay Area in its mythic period. Yet far from being nostalgic, Dick’s portrait of 1960s bohemia is tart if not caustic. In particular, Angel’s inability to leave the orbit of the Berkeley campus, where she got an English degree and now manages a record store frequented by hipsters, is depicted as a pathetic dependency akin to the joints she smokes in such profusion. Painfully over-educated, her head filled with “recycled words ... fragments from my days at Cal which I had memorized but not understood,” Angel thinks of herself as having “a sickness, a word-sickness. I was taught it by professionals.” The place is so charged with an atmosphere of aimless questing — “the noise of the Bay Area, the racket and din of meaning” — that even a sober figure like the Episcopal Bishop can be overcome by a taste for the outré and the pop-miraculous. The omnipresence of guru hustlers and would-be bodhisattvas — such as Edgar Barefoot, who has a regular program on KPFA and conducts Zen seminars on his houseboat in Sausalito — leads Angel to conclude that “in California, you buy enlightenment the way you buy peas at the supermarket, by size and by weight. I’d like four pounds of enlightenment, I said to myself.”

While at times Angel’s intellectual jousting with Bishop Archer threatens to turn the book into a kind of New Age *Magic Mountain*, the overall effect is quite believable: These are smart, spiritually hungry people, and one is perfectly willing to believe they spend long hours debating the doctrine of predestination or the ideology underlying Beethoven’s late quartets. While the story flirts with the possibility of supernatural agency, its reality is never proven, and in fact this is Dick’s most doggedly realistic novel

since he abandoned his efforts to break into the literary mainstream in the early 1960s. As Dick himself avowed (in words quoted in Sutin's biography), his failure to reach an audience outside the SF genre "had been the tragedy — and a very long — term tragedy — of my creative life." With *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*, he seemed on the brink of realizing that youthful ambition, but then he died, his abused heart and overworked brain succumbing at last to the rigors of a decade-long chase after an elusive and probably spurious illumination.

Read *The Exegesis* if you must: it will certainly give you a full-body immersion in the author's complex, sometimes fascinating, often maddeningly obtuse obsessions. But definitely do pick up a few of Dick's novels in the new Mariner editions: Whether written before or after the epochal advent of 2-3-74, they are where his true soul resides.

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**Rob Latham** is Professor of English at UC Riverside, author of *Consuming Youth: Vampires, Cyborgs, and the Culture of Consumption* (Chicago, 2002), coeditor of the *Wesleyan Anthology of Science Fiction* (2010), and a senior editor of the journal *Science Fiction Studies*. He is currently completing a book on New Wave science fiction of the 1960s and 1970s.

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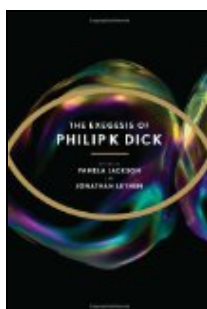
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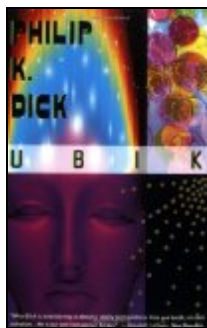


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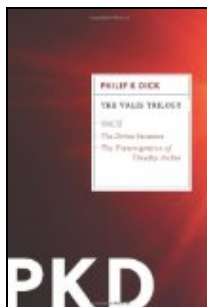
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