

Liminal Characters in the Science Fiction of Philip K. Dick

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This Master's Thesis is carried out as a part of the education at the University of Agder and is therefore approved as a part of this education. However, this does not imply that the University answers for the methods that are used or the conclusions that are drawn.

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1.0: Introduction

A lot of contemporary popular fiction is preoccupied with mythical, liminal areas. The film series *The Twilight Saga* is today's most popular depiction of vampires. The very name of this saga indicates a liminal state. The word "twilight" describes the transitional period which is both night and day, but at the same time neither. In these films, we can also find werewolves, which are both men and wolves simultaneously, and they are therefore positioned in a limbo between being men and animals (Meyer). In the *Star Wars* films, the evil lord Darth Vader is half machine and half man. Parts of him and his bodily functions are machine-made and machine-driven, while his mind and body core are human. He is thus in a state between man and machine (Lucas). The very structural foundation of the science fiction genre even forms a liminal state. This is reflected by the noted academic writer on science fiction, ¹ Edward James, who claims that "SF is a developed oxymoron, a realistic irreality, with humanized nonhumans, this-worldly Other Worlds, and so forth" (James 11).

Such liminal states can also be found in some of the characters in Philip K. Dick's sf. For instance, the demiurgic character Palmer Eldritch in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* is both part of the normal world and a supernatural universe which he himself controls. He is thus in a liminal state between these worlds, positioned between being a man and a god, devil, alien or machine. He may even be in all of these states at the same time. Dick's liminal characters appear complex and intriguing. Their multiform, ambiguous natures create an uncertainty and suspense which functions as a driving force and thrust in much of his fiction. The complexity of Dick's liminal characters, and the sense of wonder their presence bring about are two of the main reasons why I have chosen to study these fictional individuals.

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¹ I will be using the abbreviation "sf" for "science fiction".

The purpose of this thesis is to present a detailed analysis of certain liminal characters in the sf of Philip K. Dick, in which I shall attempt to discover the significance and effect of the "liminality" of these beings. Their liminality is defined by the fact that they find themselves participating in two realities at the same time; namely the normal, material, real world and an alternative, non-material reality or spiritual reality. By doing such a research, I am going to show how the complexity of liminality furthers the estranging aspect inherent in the poetics of the sf genre.

So, what separates Dick's non-material realities from the normal one? When a Dick character enters a spiritual world, his consciousness leaves the material reality and enters a new dimension. A spiritual reality in a Dick novel is thus an out-of-body experience, which, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is "[c]haracterized by the sensation that one's consciousness is located outside one's body" (Dictionary "out-of-body, adj.".). In these non-material realities, the characters find themselves moving between different locations in past worlds and future worlds. The inhabitants of the spiritual realities are consequently outside the time and space continuum of the material world. As the spiritual realities derange the time sense of the material world, characters in between these realities are unable to function in the normal world. They are at times incapable of separating the normal reality from the spiritual one. These non-material realities are furthermore always controlled by entities with superhuman abilities. Since both superhuman abilities and trans-temporal states cannot be explained scientifically, Dick's spiritual worlds are furthermore incognitive in nature.

Barney Mayerson, Arnie Kott, Heliogabalus and Manfred Steiner in *Martian Time-Slip* (1964), Palmer Eldritch, Barney Mayerson and Leo Bulero in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1965) and Horselover Fat, Valis and Sophia in *Valis* (1981) are all examples of characters who are positioned liminally between a spiritual and a material reality.

Furthermore, the novels these characters can be found in span from the middle of Dick's

career until its very end, and they thus reflect a development in Dick's liminal character portrayals.

Philip K. Dick (1928-1982) was an American science-fiction writer who is best known for his novels *The Man in the High Castle* (1962), which earned Dick a Hugo Award in 1963, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (1968), which was adapted into becoming Ridley Scott's film *Blade Runner* in 1982.

Even though he was a very productive, fast writer, and at times sloppy, Dick produced good satire. By creating fictional, but scientifically and cognitively explained future worlds which are still very similar to contemporary reality, he makes us see today's society in a different light. This concept is what the prominent sf critic Darko Suvin has called "cognitive estrangement", which is a structural quality of good sf. The term corresponds with his definition of sf as "a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative alternative to the author's empirical experience" (James 108). This is the main distinguishing framework of sf; it is the literature of cognitive estrangement.

According to James, Suvin's satirical approach to sf sees the genre "as intended primarily to comment on our own world, 'through metaphor and extrapolation'; estrangement is an important device for concentrating the reader's mind on differences between the fictional and real worlds" (James 111). When our own world is made strange, we are able to view it from a more objective position. In this manner, the flaws of our society become more apparent. Dick uses this device to criticize Western society for being authoritative, materialistic, mechanical and non-spiritual. This way of looking at well-known elements in a different perspective might create new meaning and thus be more than mere escapism. This view is supported in *Reality as Ideological construct: A Reading of Five Novels by Philip K*.

Dick, in which the Dick scholar Peter Fitting claims that "Dick's novels put into question our 'commonsense' acceptance of reality as given' (Fitting 220).

His sf clearly demonstrates that he was very interested in philosophy and religion. In both *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* and in *Valis*, we are for instance presented with several metaphysical theories of how and by whom the world was created. This ambiguity reflects Dick's personal religious beliefs, which were constantly changing and hard to characterize. In *Divine Invasions – A Life of Philip K. Dick*, the biographer Lawrence Sutin claims that Dick "never made up his mind" (Sutin 235) about "what is real". However, the metaphysical theories in his mature works are clearly influenced by Gnosticism, a religion advocating that the material world is created by a demiurgic, intermediary figure instead of God.

1.1: Defining Liminality

According to the Oxford dictionary, the term "liminal" (Latin *limen* = 'threshold') indicates that something or someone occupies "a position at, or on both sides of, a boundary or threshold" (Dictionaries). A character who finds himself in such an ambiguous state can thus be described as a liminal being. But viewed in a certain way, this definition is structurally illogical. For instance, an individual who is both human and inhuman at the same time is not really in either of these states. The word "human" can only be defined as a contrast to what it is not, namely inhuman. When both of these opposing qualities are connected to a character, they cancel each other out. This is in line with Victor W. Turner, the Scottish anthropologist that wrote about liminality in passage rites, who claims that the "coincidence of opposite processes and notions in a single representation characterizes the peculiar unity of the liminal: that which is *neither* this *nor* that, and yet is *both*" (Turner "BaB" 514). The liminal can thus be considered as a mysterious category of uncertainty and tension that falls outside what our

language of polar opposites can describe. This demonstrates that our language is in fact governed by Aristotle's law of the excluded middle: something is either A or not-A, which means that the middle ground betwixt and between is excluded from thought.²

1.2: Theory and Method

In this thesis, I intend to divide the theoretical application on the liminal individuals into two categories; namely beings with a temporal diachronic liminality, and shamanic figures who have synchronic and inherent liminal individualities. As there are important differences between these categories, this division of characterization will lead to a more accurate and helpful description of Dick's liminal beings. Furthermore, as I will demonstrate, the structural connection between these liminal entities forms the very basis of this thesis.

Unlike the characters who have synchronic inherent liminal individualities, the individuals with a diachronic temporal liminality are not in a threshold state between two realities all their lives. They might even just be in this liminal phase for a short period of time. This means that they both enter and possibly leave their position of marginality in the middle of a spiritual reality and a material one. In *Rites of Passage*, the French anthropologist Arnold van Gennep deals with these transitional stages, and he states that whoever passes from one position "to the other finds himself physically and magico-religiously in a special situation for a certain length of time: he wavers between two worlds" (Gennep 18). The fact that he calls this a special situation magico-religiously, indicates that there is something fascinating and different about a transitional stage which is hard to describe.

According to Victor Turner, "Van Gennep himself defined 'rites de passage' as 'rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position and age'. (...) [He] has shown that all rites of transition are marked by three phases: separation, margin (or limen), and

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² Due to language-varying purposes, I will use the term "threshold character" as a synonym for liminal characters. In this context, "threshold" represents a figurative doorstep between two worlds. Like a liminal state, a door is always in between two separate elements.

aggregation" (Turner "BaB" 510). This means that more or less all changes include a separation from a former position, a liminal period between an old and a new state, and an aggregation into a new phase. But not all changes have the same significance. For instance, it would probably be difficult to spot these phases in a man turning 43 years old after having been 42. However, these periods are quite noticeable in more important changes, like the transition from childhood to adulthood. When the person separates from just being a child and enters adolescence, we have the phase of separation. The state of adolescence is the marginal and liminal state when the individual is both a child and an adult, but at the same time neither. Because of this, he naturally becomes an outsider who neither fits into the world of children nor of adults. When the person aggregates into a single state again and becomes an adult, the liminal period and the rites of transition are over. At this stage, he has learnt something and developed into becoming a man.

In the diachronic liminal stage of adolescence, the individual temporarily belongs in two realities at the same time; namely the world of adults and the world of children.

Throughout this dissertation, I will use the transition from boy to man as an allegory for the development the diachronic liminal characters have in their threshold state. Just like boys learn to be men in adolescence, we shall see that Dick's diachronic liminal characters also internalize something in their marginal states. The marginal period of a character with temporal liminality can be considered as a learning process which makes the individual different from what he was before. Because of this perfect correspondence, I will describe all the diachronic liminal phases in this thesis through Van Gennep's passage rites.

While there are many discussions of identity and ideology in the novels of Philip K. Dick, a detailed anthropological study of character development via liminal rites of passage experiences (threshold experiences) is wholly lacking. As I will demonstrate, this type of

analysis will convey a chronological development from Dick's more "cognitive" sf to an almost religious narrative employing sf genre elements.

Both teenagers and Dick's characters with diachronic liminality are not in a marginal state in the middle of these two worlds on their own accord. Adolescents reach their liminal stage because of age and maturation, while a Dick character with diachronic temporal liminality becomes a threshold individual due to a different force, namely a "bewitchment" which is cast by a "shaman" with a synchronic liminal individuality. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, "bewitch" means "[t]o effect (generally injuriously) by witchcraft or magic" (Dictionary "bewitch, v.".).

In contrast to the diachronic liminals whom I discussed in the paragraphs above, the liminality in these characters with synchronic liminal individuality cannot be described through rites of transition. This is due to the fact that these "shamans" are liminal by nature, and that they probably always will be. Today, much of what is written on liminality is based on Van Gennep's three phases of transition and Turner's interpretation of this. But Van Gennep's theories only deal with marginality as a processual, diachronic phase, and not as a synchronic type. According to Barbara Babcock-Abrahams in "'A Tolerated Margin of Mess': The Trickster and His Tales Reconsidered," Turner's take on liminality is, however, more flexible and can be transferred to dealing with synchronic liminal individualities as well. She claims that

[i]n his discussion of Hell's Angels, Beats, and Franciscans among others in the latter part of The Ritual Process, Victor Turner expands his definition and use of the term "liminal" from phase to generic type, that is, to social and personality types other than those initiands in a liminal ritual phase and to situations other than the 'betwixt and between' period in a specific ritual process (Babcock-Abrahams 150).

Like beings with a diachronic temporal liminality, the synchronic ones can also belong in both a material reality and a spiritual reality, and at the same time in none of them.

Consequently, they also fit into Turner's definition of liminality as that which is neither this, nor that, and yet is both. This proves that Babcock-Abrahams is correct in claiming that Turner's definition of liminality also includes liminal synchronic types.

The characters with synchronic liminal individualities play different roles and have other functions than the individuals with temporal liminality. These characters are first and foremost responsible for enchanting the diachronic liminals which ignites the threshold periods of these victims. This can for instance be in the form of a drug, like it is in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* when the precog Barney Mayerson eats Eldritch's drug and enters Eldritch's spiritual reality (Dick *TSPE* 176). These enchantments fuse the diachronic liminal characters together with the synchronic figures in a strong bond. This connection is indicated by Anthony Enns, a scholar of contemporary culture, in "*Media Drugs and Schizophrenia in the Works of Philip K. Dick*, where he states that "[t]he idea that schizophrenia, drugs, and media technologies could reveal or even produce a confluence of minds is a theme that recurs throughout Dick's work" (Enns 80).

In this "partnership", the synchronic liminal characters function as guides and mentors for the individuals with temporal liminality that they have initiated, like Virgil does for Dante on his journey through hell in *Dante's Inferno* (Dante, MacEwan and Gillies). The diachronic liminal characters consequently become the "apprentices" of the synchronic liminal shamans. This is probably due to the fact that the latter types have more experience with and more knowledge about the liminal reality than the diachronic liminals have. Since the characters with synchronic liminality are more powerful than their liminal counterparts, their behaviour and actions also have a greater impact on reality.

In their function and capacity as guides and mentors for characters with temporal liminality, the synchronic liminal characters can be considered as shamans. According to the parapsychologist George P. Hansen in *The Trickster and the Paranormal*, "[e]arlier peoples also understood that there was a middle ground, the betwixt and between, which was dangerous and surrounded by taboos" (Hansen). The threshold between the material world of the living and the spiritual world of the dead was particularly considered so. Shamans were people's guides to the world of the dead, and they were thus, as stated by Lynne Hume In *Popular Spiritualities*, "walkers between the worlds" (Hume and McPhillips xix), just like Dick's synchronic liminal characters are. This connection with pagan religions adds a mysterious aura to the synchronic liminal characters in their symbiosis with the diachronic liminals.

Furthermore, Dick's synchronic liminal characters are "tricksters", who can be found in most myths and in a lot of popular fiction. According to Hansen, "the trickster is a character type found in mythology, folklore, and literature the world over", which appears as animal, human, and god (Hansen), similar to Dick's synchronic liminal shamans. These characters are always outsiders identified with amorphous structures and chaos. This is in line with Babcock-Abrahams definition of trickery as "negations and violations of custom" (Babcock-Abrahams 159).

But liminal characters are also living contraventions of the differentiated order.

According to Turner, there are two major 'models' for human interrelatedness:

The first is of society as a structured, differentiated, and often hierarchical system of politico-legal-economic positions with many types of evaluation, separating men in terms of 'more' or 'less'. The second, which emerges recognizably in the liminal period, is of society as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively

undifferentiated *comitatus*, community, or even communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders" (Turner *TRP* 96).

Here Turner states that structure is lacking in the undifferentiated, liminal relations, while the differentiated civilization is generally structured. Opposed to the ordered non-liminal world, the nature of liminality is thus characterized by chaos and disorder. The reason for this is that the undifferentiated part of society poses a threat to the differentiated status quo. Liminal characters are thus embodiments of opposition to order. As will be shown, Dick's synchronic liminal characters are negators and violators of custom; they are tricksters in accordance with Babcock-Abrahams definition.

The fact that the beings with liminal individualities are tricksters modifies their relationship with the diachronic liminal characters and puts it in a different light. For instance, the episode in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* when Palmer Eldritch makes Barney Mayerson eat his drug suddenly assumes a mythical intertextual context. It becomes evident that Eldritch actually tricks the drug into Mayerson, just like the trickster-witch in the fairy-tale *Snow White* tricks Snow White into eating the poisonous apple (Grimm, Grimm and Goulden). Another parallel is when the snake tricks Eve into eating the apple in the Garden of Eden in *Genesis* (Crumb and Alter). The trickster-individualities of Dick's synchronic liminal characters consequently point to the fact that their guiding of the diachronic liminal characters is not ideal and unproblematic.

According to Hansen, "[m]any analyses suggest that tricksters are combinations of opposites" (Hansen). Their existence as personified paradoxes is caused by this constant presence between several contrasting states. The characters with synchronic liminal individualities which I will be dealing with are also positioned on the threshold between various positions. Most of the Dick characters in this dissertation also belong in several

liminal categories. They appear to be in or between various contrasting states at the same time. This especially goes for the beings with synchronic liminal individualities. For instance, a synchronic liminal character can be positioned liminally between being good and evil, a man and a machine, a man and an alien, a god and an animal or part of nature and civilization.

Through these liminal categories, Dick makes his synchronic liminal characters into mystical, uncanny and supernatural creatures. This connects his sf with the Gothic novel and the sublime. In this respect, the sf writer and critic Brian W. Aldiss claims that

[w]hat sf shares with Gothic (...) [is] a tone, an atmosphere, an approach to the relationship between mankind and the world. (...) In the Gothic mode, emphasis was placed on the distant and unearthly ... Brooding landscapes, isolated castles, dismal old towns, and mysterious figures ... carry us into an entranced world from which horrid revelations start (James 103, non-parenthetic ellipses in original).

The uncanny magical, inhuman and unearthly qualities of the synchronic liminal "shamans" in Dick's fiction also create such "an entranced world from which horrid revelations start." This is due to the fact that these characteristics bring forth a sublime atmosphere, whose essence James defines as "a feeling of helplessness and terror when humans realize their frailty and small size in the face of the might and magnitude of the universe" (James 104). When the diachronic liminal characters are faced by synchronic liminal characters who are possibly inhuman creators of the world, they are bound to be met by a sublime aura.

According to James, the concept of the sublime, popularly called "sense of wonder", "has a close connection with the pleasures derived from reading sf" (James 105). With their supernatural liminal states between man and god, man and alien, life and death, and man and

machine, the synchronic liminal "shamans" appeal to the sense of wonder. James furthermore claims that through its inherent sense of wonder, sf appeals to the human desire for awe and mystery in a world in which religion has largely been stripped of those qualities (James 105). This means that the supernatural and uncanny liminal categories connected to the synchronic liminal "shamans" also appeal to these desires as an analogy to religion in the secular society of the postmodern world.

Earlier, I argued that some of the liminal categories make the synchronic threshold figures uncanny in their interaction with the diachronic liminals. In *The Uncanny*, Freud distinguishes the nature of the uncanny within the field of the frightening. He concludes by saying that an uncanny feeling "arises either when repressed childhood complexes are revived by some impression, or when primitive beliefs that have been *surmounted* appear to be once again confirmed" (Freud 155). It would be immaterial whether this feeling "was itself originally frightening or arose from another affect" (Freud 148).

For instance, Freud states that a living person can be uncanny when he is credited with intent to harm people, "realized with the help of special powers" (Freud 149). As the characters with synchronic liminal individualities "enchant" the diachronic individuals into unwillingly becoming part of a supernatural, spiritual world, they can thus be considered "uncanny." The assumption that magic powers exist is a primitive belief that has been surmounted in the modern rational society. However, Dick's synchronic liminal beings confirm this familiar old conviction, which lies latently in the human psyche, and lead it back to the surface once again. With their superhuman powers, the synchronic liminal characters are connected to gods, which puts them in a liminal position between man and god.

There is moreover sometimes an inherent doubt as to whether Dick's synchronic liminal characters are machines or not. According to E. Jentsch, one of the surest devices for producing slightly uncanny effects through story-telling "is to leave the reader wondering

whether a particular figure is a real person or an automaton, and to do so in such a way that his attention is not focused directly on the uncertainty, lest he should be prompted to examine and settle the matter at once" (Freud 135). As stated by Freud, this is due to the fact "that children, in their early games, make no sharp distinction between the animate and the inanimate, and that they are especially fond of treating their dolls as if they were alive" (Freud 141). As this literary device revives repressed childhood complexes, it consequently makes the synchronic liminal shamans into uncanny, man-machines.

Figure 1 illustrates the liminal process and structural connection between Dick's different types of liminal characters:

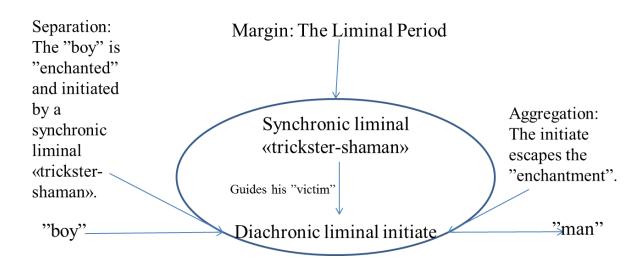


Figure 1. The Liminal Period

So, what are the effects of the symbiosis and structural connection between Dick's synchronic and diachronic liminal characters in this passage rite? I have already established that a character with a temporal liminality knows something new after he has been on a liminal "journey" with a synchronic liminal shaman. In the threshold state of the diachronic liminal characters, the two contrasting variants of realities are constantly put up and measured against each other. Due to this on-going opposition of realities, I would argue that the diachronic liminal characters predominantly learn something about the question which Sutin claims is constantly in focus in Dick's fiction; namely what is real? (Sutin 113). When the diachronic liminals are re-aggregated into the material single-reality state, they have consequently picked up knowledge regarding what constitutes reality. Admittedly, "What is real?" is a very broad and unspecific question which can be answered with any statement whatsoever regarding the reality of our existence. However, "What is real?" has specific corollaries in Dick's fiction which I will be focusing on in this thesis; namely "What is human?", "What is divine?" and "What is civilized?" These themes are raised through the various liminal states which the synchronic liminal characters find themselves in. Through Dick's estranged universes, the answers to these questions offer redefinitions of our reality, telling us something about where humanity is supposed to go from here and how we are supposed to handle the scientific and technological changes to come.

Hence, Dick uses the symbiosis between the two types of liminal characters as a tool to introduce different questions and themes. By doing this in estranged settings, he also puts these issues in a new light. The very purpose of the estrangement in Dick's sf universes is to create an arena where we can see things anew. Because of this device, the themes introduced by the liminal characters come out differently than they would have done in realistic literature. Dick's use of liminal characters as an introductory tool might therefore generate new meaning.

I have now provided a theoretical background which I will use to describe and analyse the interaction between Dick's uncanny synchronic liminal shaman tricksters and their diachronic liminal counterparts in the target literature. I will do this by discussing the effects of the diachronic liminal characters' threshold states in the three Dick novels I am focusing on. Such a method will uncover both what these figures learn from their liminal interaction with the synchronic liminal characters and what themes, questions and messages Dick manages to introduce with them. In order to present readers to the works, book summaries shall precede the discussions of each novel. I will start out by analysing *Martian Time-Slip* as a proto-example. Thereafter, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* will be in focus. I shall end my discussion of the target literature with a discussion of the liminal processes in *Valis*. With regard to my own working procedure, I believe that comparisons of the novels may uncover valuable information that I will not find otherwise. I will consequently try to compare the different connections between liminal characters when this is possible. To back up my arguments, I shall, on some occasions, also refer to other Dick novels that will elucidate his use of liminal characters.

2.0: Main Part

2.1: Martian Time-Slip

2.1.1: Introducing the novel

When Dick wrote *Martian Time-Slip*, he was at the peak of his writing productivity. This was the decade when Dick published most of his highly acknowledged works, *The Man in the High Castle* (1962), *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (1968) and *Ubik* (1969). At this stage, his portrayal of liminal characters had become more complex and developed than it is in *The World Jones Made*, the novel made 8 years earlier in which Dick became a depictor of supernatural liminal characters in the novel form.

Martian Time-Slip is set on Mars in 1994, thirty years into the future at the time of publication, where there are native Mars men, called Bleekmen, living among human beings and teaching machines that have replaced human teachers. Mars is an earth colony, and the human beings who live there are in the process of "civilizing" the planet and making it into an effective colony.

We see this world in the point of view of Jack Bohlen, a repairman with a schizophrenic past who has moved with his wife and child to Mars. After a while, Jack is employed by Arnie Kott, the influential leader of the Water Worker's Union, to build a device that will enable the anomalous institutionalized child Manfred Steiner to perceive time at a slower, conventional speed. The child's psychotherapist believes that this will enable Manfred to communicate his precognitive visions of the future to other people, something which would be an invaluable asset to Arnie's business. In his interaction with Manfred, Jack notices that the boy has a mental residence in an all-dark, non-material reality, controlled by Manfred,

which is characterized by the repetition of the incomprehensible utterance "gubble".

Manfred's presence affects Jack into becoming part of this "World of Gubble", which makes his schizophrenia re-emerge and almost results in him losing contact with the normal world altogether. Arnie Kott uses a lot of time and resources to make Manfred read the future for him. But paradoxically, he already possesses the best tool for understanding Manfred; namely his native servant, the Bleekman Heliogabalus (Helio). The reason why Helio manages to communicate with Manfred is that his slowness suits Manfred's perception of the normal reality. Through Heliogabalus, Arnie learns how he can go back and change the past with Manfred's help. In his visit to the past, Arnie intends to kill Jack Bohlen and to steal some land. But as his intentions are cruel, Arnie ends up getting killed on this journey. After this, Manfred decides to join some Bleekmen on an indefinite journey into the wilderness of Mars. At the end of the novel, Manfred comes back from the future as an old man to say goodbye to his mother and to thank Jack for trying to communicate with him when he was a child.

2.1.2: Analysis

In the analysis of *Martian Time-Slip*, I shall start by giving a short account of Manfred's World of Gubble, which plays an important part in all the liminal states in this novel. Thereafter, I will describe the diachronic liminal "adolescence" of the protagonist Jack Bohlen using Van Gennep's theory on transitional phases. This will enable me to show how Jack's learning period parallels the development from boy to man. My discussion of Jack's liminal state shall furthermore include a description of Jack's relationship with Manfred, the synchronic liminal character who enchants him into the threshold state. I shall thereafter describe the diachronic liminal phase of Manfred Steiner. This will furthermore include a description of his guides and how Manfred changes in this period. In this respect, I shall also consider the role of Manfred, his synchronic liminal guide, Helio, and schizophrenics in

relation to the hierarchical and structured differentiated society. At the end of my analysis, the diachronic liminal phase of Arnie Kott will be in focus.

Jack Bohlen says that Manfred's World of Gubble replaces the normal world with an alternative reality where events get different outcomes than what people are used to. He declares that Manfred not only predicts the future through this reality; he also controls it (Dick *MT-S* 153). Jack Bohlen believes that Manfred has only experienced time as "gubble", the "force that to the boy means decay, deterioration, and (…) death" (Dick *MT-S* 138).

This is demonstrated in Manfred's liminal state between the womb and the tomb, the symbolic extremities of cultural transitions. Schizophrenia, Jack Bohlen says, is "a narrowing, a contracting of life into, at last, a mouldering, dank tomb, a place where nothing came or went; a place of total death" (Dick MT-S 138). Manfred's life and World of Gubble is in any case very much like such a tomb world. Heliogabalus says that Manfred constantly experiences "his own old age, his lying in a dilapidated state, decades from now, in an old persons' home which is yet to be built here on Mars, a place of decay which he loathes beyond expression" (Dick MT-S 197). As Manfred even experiences his own death through this vision (Dick MT-S 139), he is practically a living dead who experiences the tomb state and is buried alive. Heliogabalus declares that to escape from this dread vision, Manfred "retreats back to happier days, days inside his mother's body where there is no one else, no change, no time, no suffering" (Dick MT-S 198). This regression is first of all very Freudian. But it is also linked to the fear of being buried alive, which is not merely a fear in Manfred's case; it is his reality. As stated by Freud, the terrifying fantasy of being buried alive "is merely a variant of another, which was originally not at all frightening, but relied on a certain lasciviousness; this was the fantasy of living in the womb" (Freud 150). As the fear of being buried alive is a recurring element from intra-uterine existence, the Gubble Reality becomes uncanny and malicious, reminding us of the atmosphere in gothic literature. His liminal

position between the womb and the tomb also demonstrates why Manfred should want to avoid his institutionalized fate on Mars. As the child has not also seen time as "the process of maturation and growth" (Dick *MT-S* 138), it is only natural that he paints the future dark and has an all-negative view of reality.

While Jack takes Manfred on a helicopter trip to do some errands, Manfred on three different occasions drags Jack into the spiritual Gubble Reality and shows him how he and Arnie become enemies later in the evening. In these experiences, Arnie is angry with Jack because he has failed to tell him that his father, Leo Bohlen, who is on a business travel to Mars, has already bought a piece of land on this planet that Arnie thinks his own business cannot do without. Even though Jack could not have known that Arnie was after this piece of land, Arnie gives him the blame.

But when Jack actually meets Arnie the same evening, Manfred brings Jack into the Gubble Reality. This makes his psyche take an abrupt leap ahead in time (Dick *MT-S* 191). Consequently, Jack never actually gets to experience what happens in his encounter with Arnie in the normal reality. But as Arnie suddenly treats him as an enemy, Jack realizes that Manfred was correct in his supposition.

Jack's three Gubble Reality experiences all appear to be from the normal reality until their culmination, when suddenly the incomprehensible utterance "gubble" is the only form of communication that can be heard. Here is an example of this from one of Jack's experiences with the Gubble Reality:

A voice in his mind said, Gubble gubble gubble. I am gubble gubble gubble gubble. Stop, he said to it. Gubble, gubble, gubble, gubble, it answered (...) The Gubbler is here to gubble gubble you and make you into gubbish (...) I have to get out of here,

Jack Bohlen said to himself. Or fight it off; I have to break this, throw it away from me or be eaten (Dick *MT-S* 152).

The World of Gubble appears to be controlled by this "Gubbler", who makes sure that everything decays and gets destroyed. The Gubbler is Manfred's servant, who makes the child's horrible view of the world come true in the World of Gubble. Jack's goal is to drag Manfred into the normal reality. However, Manfred's presence instead draws Jack into his spiritual World of Gubble (Dick *MT-S* 153).

But what makes this world into a separate, non-material reality? In the introduction, I defined existence in a spiritual world as an out-of-body experience. When Jack enters Manfred's dark, alternative reality, his consciousness leaves the normal, material reality as if he is having a bad dream. For instance, the first time Manfred decides to show Jack his future meeting with Arnie through the Gubble Reality, Jack is in the process of flying his father home from an expedition. When they are about to land, Manfred lets Jack's mental presence returns to the normal reality (Dick *MT-S* 141). While Jack's material self has been in a helicopter, his consciousness has been in Arnie Kott's house later the same day. In the introduction, I also defined the spiritual reality as a trans-temporal world where a character finds himself outside the time and space continuum of the material world. Seeing that Jack finds himself in the future in a different location than his material self through the World of Gubble, Manfred's reality is such a trans-temporal existence. Since the mechanics of time and space in the material world are not valid in the Gubble Reality, this is additionally an incognitive world.

Both Jack Bohlen and Manfred exist in the spiritual World of Gubble in addition to the normal, material reality. This simultaneous position on the two sides of the reality threshold makes them liminal characters. But these threshold individuals neither belong in the normal

world nor in the superreal world. By being in the Gubble Reality, Jack loses contact with the normal world. This is demonstrated with Jack's sudden move to the World of Gubble while flying his helicopter. Although it went well on this occasion, such a complete shift of focus will eventually make Jack unable to function in the normal reality. In between his first and second experience of the Gubble Reality, Jack Bohlen believes, quite understandably, that he has already been at Arnie Kott's place that evening: "Haven't I already been to his place tonight? What time is it? He thought in fright, I've lost all sense of time" (Dick *MT-S* 156). At this stage, Jack is unable to function in the normal reality. His sudden disability to sense time due to the trans-temporal World of Gubble reflects the "time-slip" in the novel's title.

In his interaction with the normal, material reality, ten-year-old Manfred has never spoken a word and runs about on tiptoe, avoiding people as if they are dangerous things. Even the instructor at Camp B-G offers little hope for him (Dick *MT-S* 43). As neither Manfred nor Jack function well in either of the realities, their dual position makes them rootless outsiders in a nowhere land in between. In accordance with Turner's definition of liminality, Jack and Manfred are thus neither in contact with the normal world nor completely in the World of Gubble, and yet, they are in both conditions at the same time.

However, Manfred and Jack function quite differently in Jack's liminal state. Manfred can in fact be considered as Jack's shamanic guide in his journey between the two worlds. Manfred has been in this state all his life, and it seems that he controls the Gubble Reality in some ways. With his presence, the anomalous child is the one who enchants Jack into becoming an initiate in the liminal world. When Jack is in the Gubble reality, Manfred is, in fact, the only being he communicates with. The child does not seem to be a very good guide, though. Still, he is the only one Jack has got at the moment, and Manfred in any case manages to show him how his reality works.

But what is Manfred's motive for dragging Jack into his world? Whereas most children have playmates and adults to communicate with, Manfred is all alone in his isolated Gubble World. In order to learn the ways of life and to defeat his loneliness, Manfred needs company. He consequently drags people into his reality because he is lonely.

Because Manfred is inherently in this liminal state, he is a synchronic liminal character. Jack, on the other hand, has just been initiated in this liminal learning process, and he is thus a diachronic liminal individual. However, as Jack is a schizophrenic, being in two realities simultaneously is a condition which lies latently in his psyche.

As Jack Bohlen becomes a temporal liminal character at a given stage and even leaves his liminal state in the end, he becomes interesting in the light of Arnold Van Gennep's transitional theories on liminality. When Jack is dragged into Manfred's World of Gubble, he is separated from his differentiated and structured single-reality state as a "child" and enters the undifferentiated and chaotic liminal "adolescent" phase between the two worlds.

Jack only gets dragged into the Gubble Reality when Manfred is present. So, at the end, when Manfred leaves with some Bleekmen on an indefinite journey into the wilderness of Mars, the diachronic liminal state of Jack Bohlen comes to an end, and his double reality existence is re-aggregated into the single-reality state of "adulthood". Consequently, Jack manages to avoid giving himself completely over to the World of Gubble, and the normal reality "wins" his total presence in the end. On the other hand, had the Gubble Reality won, Jack would have been lost in a dark world of decay. In this aftermath period, Jack is a lot more positive than he was before his liminal state. Jack does not worry about the prospect of finding a new job after the death of his employer, Arnie Kott, and he is not restless due to his latent schizophrenia. Jack also stops his affair with Doreen Anderton, originally Arnie Kott's mistress, and is happy to be back with his family, which he realizes is very important to him.

understands that his own schizophrenic condition is quite insignificant compared to Manfred's mental world. All these realizations have the effect of making Jack happy.

At the same time as Jack is Manfred's initiate, he is also in a parallel, related transitional learning period. Jack's father has, quite naturally, a parental role for him in his allegorical transition from boy to man. Leo Bohlen tries to lead his son into becoming a businessman, like himself. He also advises Jack to stop his affair with Arnie's mistress. However, like any disobedient adolescent, Jack does not listen to what his father has to say. At one stage, Jack observes the following about his father's attitude to him: "To Leo, Jack was not a grown man with a wife and a child; he was simply his son Jack" (Dick *MT-S* 121). As Jack has not yet become his father's equal, he and Leo do not communicate as if they are on the same level.

At the end of the novel, Manfred comes back from the future as an old man together with some Bleekmen to say good bye to his mother, Erna Steiner, and to thank Jack Bohlen for saving him from his horrid, institutionalized fate by trying to communicate with him. At the sight of her son as an old man, Erna Steiner, who is Jack's neighbour, becomes so afraid that she runs out of her house and into the dark night. The novel ends as Jack and his father go out together with flashlights trying to find her. The observation of Jack's wife at the end of the novel indicates that Jack's "adolescence" has ended and that he has become his father's match as an "adult": "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, businesslike and competent and patient" (Dick *MT-S* 240). At this stage, Jack has listened to Leo's advice of settling down with his wife for good, and father and son go together as equals into the night with flashlights, searching for Manfred's mother. They both sound businesslike, indicating that Leo's subtle trade advises has finally started to be taken in by Jack. This indicates that even though Jack has been helped by the liminal awareness, he does not

embrace its associated undifferentiated lifestyle, without focus on material wealth. Figure 2 illustrates Jack's transitional liminal state:

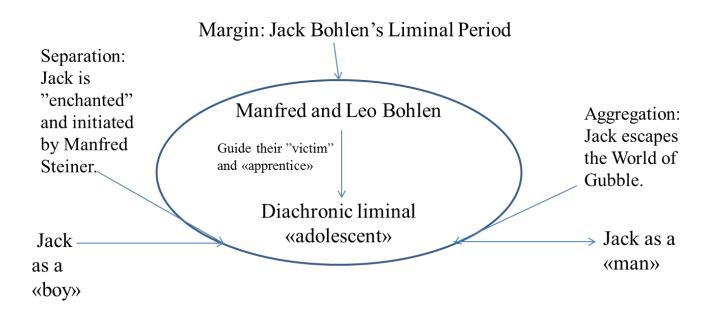


Figure 2. Jack Bohlen's Temporal State of Liminality

Helio says that Manfred's thoughts are as clear as plastic to him, and that his thoughts are likewise to the child (Dick *MT-S* 197). This enables the Bleekman to teach Manfred about the normal reality, which makes him the guide of this synchronic liminal character. Among other things, Helio claims to be overcoming Manfred's speech impediment (Dick *MT-S* 196). He is reading out aloud to Manfred, like a parent reading night time stories. In his symbiosis with Manfred and his shamanistic, Bleekman knowledge of spirituality, Helio finds himself in a spiritual reality in addition to the normal one. Like Jack Bohlen and Manfred Steiner, he is locked in a place in between these worlds and does not completely fit into either one of them. Because of this, Heliogabalus is also a synchronic liminal shaman.

In one sense however, Jack Bohlen becomes Manfred's guide as well. When Manfred comes back from the future to thank Jack for saving him, Jack does not want to take the credit for this. Manfred however claims that it was Jack's attempt to communicate with him that made the difference (Dick MT-S 239). The fact that Manfred is able to tell Jack about his bad future encounter with Arnie proves that they, in any case, have established some sort of connection with each other. This means that Jack has also had a function as a guide in Manfred's liminal state. In that, they have actually guided each other. Consequently, both Jack and Manfred have double liminalities, as they alternate between being "masters" and "apprentices" for one another. However, Manfred has a different diachronic phase from Jack Bohlen. Manfred's liminal phase is literally growing up, and he is not between two different realities, like Jack is. Consequently, Manfred is not necessarily "enchanted" into becoming an initiate, like Dick's diachronic liminal characters normally are. Still, one could argue that the mere presence of Heliogabalus enchants Manfred. This is supported by Arnie's observation of Manfred's first encounter with Helio: "The boy seemed deeply affected by the Bleekman, Arnie noticed. As if under a spell, he followed with his eyes every move Helio made" (Dick MT-S 179). Being "spellbound" basically has the same magico-religious implications as an

enchantment. This excerpt also points to the way a child observes and imitates a parent.

Manfred's double liminality, with both a synchronic and a diachronic liminal function,

furthers the complexity of his threshold individuality.

Even though Manfred Steiner is a synchronic liminal character, Arnold Van Gennep's transitional theories on liminality are applicable to this situation regarding his interaction with the normal reality. When Manfred meets Helio, he is separated from his ignorant childhood state and enters the learning period of adolescence. When Manfred leaves together with Bleekmen into the wilderness of Mars, he has learned enough about the normal reality to go on a journey as an independent adult. His liminal state of adolescence has thus ended. However, this does not mean that he stops being a synchronic liminal character. Manfred's diachronic liminal phase is illustrated in figure 3:

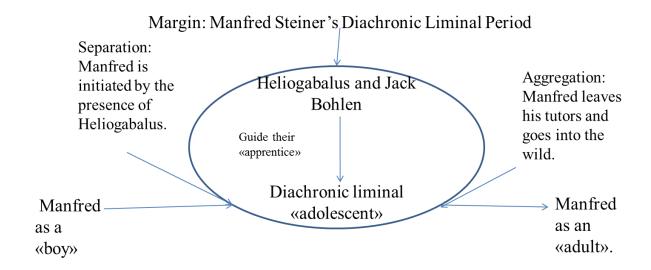


Figure 3: Manfred Steiner's Temporal State of Liminality

Bleekmen are dark-skinned, slow figures, depicting indigenous people, who do not see the value in devoting their lives to get as much money and material success as possible, as Arnie Kott does. They can often be seen wandering around in groups in the wilderness, apparently without a purpose or destination. According to Jack, Bleekmen probably regard Earthmen as "hypomanic types, whizzing about at enormous velocity, expending huge amounts of energy over nothing at all" (Dick *MT-S* 135). The Bleekmen, who avoid hectic lifestyles on purpose, are pre-modern pagans who pay attention to essence, and not surfaces, like modern man does. Who can say that this is not the right way to live? Maybe actually Heliogabalus and Manfred are the sane people.

By making the primitive Bleekman the best suited guide for Manfred, Dick clearly criticizes the spirit of hastiness and pursuit of material success in differentiated society. It is quite witty and paradoxical that Heliogabalus, who is proclaimed as a primitive savage, instantly succeeds in what the professionals at the institution has not managed in three years, namely to communicate with Manfred.

In *Martian Time-Slip*, the structured and hierarchical differentiated society is represented by Arnie Kott and Leo Bohlen who are preoccupied with getting as much material success as possible. The chaotic and primitive undifferentiated aggregation is, on the other hand, represented by the synchronic liminal characters Manfred and Helio, who do not care for material wealth and success. Jack Bohlen is schizophrenic and undifferentiated by nature. However, as I have demonstrated, he decides to follow in the differentiated footsteps of his father, which makes him a part of both these worlds.

To the differentiated society, the threshold state appears uncivilized and primitive compared to the structured society, and, consequently, the relationship between the non-liminal differentiated matters and the liminal undifferentiated matters reflects the classic contrast of civilization versus nature. The Western materialistic society has throughout time

seen it as their God-given task to civilize the primitive world and to master nature. By performing this task, the differentiated world manages to avoid being affected and stirred by the undifferentiated chaotic presence of the primitive world, which is considered as a threat. With the spreading of his entropic world of Gubble into the materialistic society, Manfred becomes such a threat. As this is clearly a negation and violation of the differentiated order, he is a trickster in accordance with Babcock-Abrahams's definition.

If threshold individuals are weak and inferior, they will, as outsiders, be oppressed and colonised by the structured society. Both Manfred and Heliogabalus, who represent uncivilized and primitive nature in this paradigm, are oppressed due to their liminal natures. Heliogabalus is a member of a passive colonized people, while Manfred has been put in an isolated institution.

The author uses Manfred and Helio to challenge this conventional view on what denotes civilization and nature. He does this by placing them in a liminal position between animals, representing nature, and gods, representing civilization. This corresponds with the influential Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung's claim, in *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, that the trickster "is both subhuman and superhuman, a bestial and divine being" (Jung 272). Unlike human beings, Heliogabalus has the superhuman ability of understanding Manfred. The symbiosis between Manfred and Helio furthermore shows that they have the supernatural ability of reading and changing the future. These are advanced traits which connects them with gods and civilization. But at the same time, they are both in connection with the primitive and animalistic World of Gubble, which is characterized by the turkey-like utterance "gubble". Furthermore, they are undifferentiated liminals connected with chaos and primitivity. These factors connect them with the primitive animal kingdom and nature.

By also placing differentiated characters between civilization and nature, Dick compares these groups in terms of which one is the most civilized. Since Arnie Kott and Leo Bohlen are part of the structured and hierarchical part of society, they are considered as civilized. But what connects the structured society to primitivity? The uncivilized nature of Arnie Kott is for instance revealed through the undifferentiated World of Gubble. Jack Bohlen believes that this schizophrenic liminal experience enables one to see underneath the surface into absolute reality (Dick MT-S 82). Such an insight is very important for determining the rate of civility in the differentiated characters in Martian Time-Slip. This observation of Arnie Kott in the World of Gubble gives a demonstration of the absolute reality Jack is referring to: "Inside Mr Kott's skin were dead bones, shiny and wet. Mr Kott was a sack of bones, dirty and yet shiny wet. (...) He could see everything that went on inside Mr Kott, the teeming gubbish life" (Dick MT-S 141). Arnie Kott appears to be a cold and machine-like creature without a soul, which demonstrates that his true nature is far less civilized than what his appearance in the normal world suggests. This description of Arnie in fact introduces all of Manfred's three gubble experiences of his future meeting with him. Such a repetition functions as an emphasizer of Arnie's superficial and evil nature.

As it appears in the excerpt describing Arnie, the glimpses of absolute reality which Jack is referring to show parts of the human nature which is hidden in the normal world. One can consequently argue that the World of Gubble and Jack's schizophrenic condition unveil a latent and concealed unconscious part of the human psyche. This is a portion of the human nature which only emerges to the surface in these liminal experiences. In a Freudian perspective, the schizophrenic, dreamlike Gubble Reality would thus be regarded as an escape-hatch for the unconscious up into the conscious. One could consequently argue that the liminal experience in *Martian Time-Slip* shows visions that unveil the instinctive and primitive behaviour of differentiated beings, which is hidden in the material reality.

As Arnie Kott is described as a cold, material construct, he becomes very similar to the teaching machines at the Public School that Jack's son is attending. This parallel has the effect of connecting the differentiated world with cold, primitive and simplistic machinery. The teaching machines uphold the conventional and conservative values of Arnie Kott and the differentiated society. Jack Bohlen says that the teaching constructs teach

the reality of interpersonal living, of life in a given culture with given values; it was not biological life, or any form of inherited life, but *life which was learned* (...) the Public School was an attempt to stabilise those values, to jell them at a fixed point – to embalm them (...) And that was the world of the compulsive-obsessive neurotic; it was not a healthy world at all" (Dick *MT-S* 76).

This teaching model effectively oppresses everyone who is undifferentiated and different, like Manfred, Helio and schizophrenics, and it creates a world which does not have room for new and creative elements. The teaching machines can consequently be said to produce pupils who become string puppets of the authoritative differentiated society. These "compulsive-obsessive neurotic" people become opposites of the undifferentiated Bleekmen, whose lives are not a compulsive and frantic hunt for material success.

Jack tells the teaching machine the following while he is repairing him: "I think this Public School and you teaching machines are going to rear another generation of schizophrenics (...) You're going to split the psyches of these children" (Dick *MT-S* 86). With this, Dick argues that the spirit of hastiness and pursuit of material success in differentiated society, which is represented by Arnie Kott, is more or less responsible for the schizophrenic condition. This is supported by Dr Milton Glaub, a psychotherapist from the institution where Manfred used to be a patient, who claims that people like Arnie Kott create schizophrenics

(Dick *MT-S* 178). According to the Oxford English Dictionary, schizophrenia is a mental disorder which is usually characterized by "a withdrawal from social activity and the occurrence of delusions and hallucinations" (Dictionary "schizophrenia, n.".). This is what temporarily happens to liminal characters. By being in between two realities, they do not function in social activities, and since the liminal characters are part of a spiritual reality in addition to the normal one, they can certainly be said to have delusions and hallucinations.

In *Martian Time-Slip*, the material world and its inhabitants are not as civilized as they appear in the normal world. This therefore challenges the capitalistic differentiated society's proclaimed rate of civility. In the question of what is civilized, Dick consequently raises the possibility that Helio's slow and relaxed way of life is more cultured than the hectic moneycraving and machine-like lifestyle of the differentiated society in *Martian Time-Slip*, represented by Arnie Kott. By using the liminal category of civilization versus nature, Dick consequently gets to demonstrate a postcolonial view of the situation. This functions as a critique of the conventional 20th century obsession of getting a career and material success.

But at the same time, Dick does not paint an all-dark view of the differentiated world. For instance, Arnie Kott is not exclusively evil, like he is presented in the Gubble Reality. This is reflected in what Jack thinks about Arnie's death: "The realisation that Arnie Kott was dead filled him, to his incredulity, with grief (...) It's too harsh; Arnie didn't deserve it, for what he did – the things he did were bad but not that bad" (Dick *MT-S* 232). At the same time as Arnie is not all cruel, the kind character Jack Bohlen "converts" to the ways of Leo Bohlen and Arnie Kott in the end, indicating that Dick also accepts the differentiated pursuit of material success.

When Arnie Kott goes back to the past, he intends to kill Jack Bohlen and buy the piece of land Leo Bohlen has bought in the present reality. In this journey, Arnie Kott also becomes a diachronic liminal character. In order to go back in time, Arnie has to follow

Heliogabalus's shamanistic instructions. This involves that Manfred and Arnie will have to travel to a rock called "Dirty Knobby" and do some strange rituals in its proximity. These are rites of passage which enable Arnie to travel into the past with Manfred's World of Gubble as a channel. They enchant him into becoming a liminal initiate between the two worlds.

When Arnie tries to read a newspaper in this past experience, we notice that he has entered the Gubble Reality: "Gubble gubble, it said. The article became meaningless, nothing but gubble-gubble words one after another" (Dick *MT-S* 220). Arnie has entered a cruel, incontrollable world he does not understand, which he is not able to escape on his own accord. When Arnie is about to shoot Jack, he is shot himself with an arrow by a Bleekman, which kills him in this reality and thus drags him out of the past version of the World of Gubble. At the point of his re-awakening in the material reality, Arnie is consequently aggregated back into a single-reality state.

Together with Manfred, Heliogabalus's instructions make the Bleekman into Arnie Kott's guide in this liminal state between the past Gubble World and the present. Arnie's thoughts after he is back in the normal world tell us something about the effect of his short threshold state: "I am back in the real world. That's what matters. And he had lost his desire to get Jack Bohlen. He had lost his desire, too, to buy into the land developments of these mountains. (...) But I'll keep my word to Manfred; I'll mail him to earth first chance I get" (Dick *MT-S* 229). Even though his transitional learning period ends quite fast, Arnie Kott manages to become a different and better person at the termination of his liminal phase. Perhaps he realizes that he is lucky to have what he has, and that this stops his craving to get even more. After having experienced the world as Manfred sees it, Arnie shows emphatic capacity by feeling sorry for Manfred and wanting to help him. Through his liminal learning period, Arnie appears to have gained kind, human qualities, separating him from the cold, materialistic qualities that he has come to represent. Like with Jack, the undifferentiated state

has changed Arnie from being an ignorant "child" into becoming a well-reflected "man". But before he is able to show the world his newly attained kindness, Arnie is killed by a business opponent who is angry at him for having stolen his goods and for having set his warehouse and field on fire.

Through this estranged universe with the Gubble Reality, a precognitive child and shamanistic, colonised Martians, Dick introduces us to several debates and views through the liminal characters. Among other things, the author questions what is real and what is civilized. By raising these debates in a universe with different rules, he puts them in a new light. This leads to a reinterpretation of our own reality, as undifferentiated institutionalized children and primitive natives can be considered more civilized than the structured differentiated society.

2.2: The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch

2.2.1: Introducing the novel

The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch is probably Dick's most well-known depiction of liminal characters. It is set some time in the 21st century, in an estranged world where the United Nations has stood for a colonization of most planets in our solar system and we have knowledge about alien life outside it. Computer psychiatrists, brain-evolving surgery and people with precognitive abilities are a natural part of daily life.

Leo Bulero is the head of Perky Pat Layouts. His company produces essential utilities for an experience with the drug Can-D, also manufactured by his company, which enables colonists on Mars to momentarily escape their hopeless existence and live lives free of trouble as the beautiful "Perky Pat" or the handsome "Walt" in a limited virtual reality simulating earth. Barney Mayerson and Roni Fugate are precogs employed by Leo who can predict the future. They both tell Bulero that he might end up killing the well-known industrialist Palmer

Eldritch, who has returned from the Prox system, a galaxy in outer space, after 10 years of absence. After some research, Bulero discovers that Eldritch is going to start distributing a rival drug called "Chew-Z", which appears to present an experience far superior and more varied than what his own "Can-D" can do. Bulero is consequently concerned that Eldritch will steal his colonist customers away from him. When Leo Bulero goes to look up Eldritch, he is involuntarily injected with Chew-Z. After Mayerson has become a colonist on Mars, he also tries this drug. When they consume Chew-Z, it becomes apparent that it is a portal to a spreading and invading alternative reality controlled by Eldritch. In the Chew-Z World, Eldritch tells Mayerson that he got his body by possessing the original Eldritch in the Prox system. Consequently, some alien creature has been controlling Eldritch's body throughout the novel³. With his supernatural abilities, it is even proposed that the creature residing within Eldritch might be the god who has created the world. The book ends as Leo tells his associate from the Tri-Planetary Law Enforcement, Felix Blau, that he will defeat Eldritch despite this creature's invading and manipulating nature.

2.2.2: Analysis

In the analysis of *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, I will first demonstrate the difference between a Can-D experience and a Chew-Z encounter. As Palmer Eldritch is the guide of both the diachronic liminal characters Leo Bulero and Barney Mayerson, I will describe how he is a synchronic liminal character before I start my discussion of these diachronic liminal phases. In these discourses, I shall demonstrate how both Bulero and Mayerson transform from being "children" into becoming "men" through Van Gennep's passage rites. Leo Bulero is the first person to be enchanted into Eldritch's Chew-Z World,

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³ As we never meet the original Eldritch in the novel, the creature inhabiting his body will go by the name of Palmer Eldritch in my analysis.

and I will consequently discuss his liminal phase after I have established Eldritch as a liminal character. A description of Mayerson's threshold period will follow this discussion. At the end, I will consider what effects are brought forward as a result of the interaction between these diachronic liminal characters and their synchronic liminal guide Palmer Eldritch.

Can-D and Chew-Z are closely related and rather similar in their narcotic effects. Everybody who takes Can-D together share a constrained, objective layout and common ground made up of all their Perky Pat accessories and equipment. According to Leo Bulero, men always become Walt in the experience, while women turn into Perky Pat (Dick *TSPE* 96).

Whereas the Can-D experience is predictable and material, the Chew-Z realm is, as Leo Bulero observes, subjective and unpredictable: "'Alone,' Leo said. 'You mean each person goes to a different subjective world? It's not like the layouts, then" (Dick TSPE 96). As the Chew-Z experience does not depend on any accessories, it is separated from the material reality. In Resisting "The World": Philip K. Dick, Cultural Studies and Metaphysical Realism, the scholar of literature David Golumbia confirms this detachment from the normal reality. He claims that "Chew-Z does indeed provide transport to another world" (Golumbia 92). In the Chew-Z Reality, unlike in a Can-D translation, people are not locked into becoming the likes of Perky Pat and Walt. In his Chew-Z experience, Leo Bulero for instance figures out that Eldritch appears as a little girl named Monica: "'You're Palmer, are you? I mean, down underneath? Actually?' 'Take the medieval doctrine of substance versus accidents,' the child said pleasantly. 'My accidents are those of this child, but my substance, as with the wine and the wafer in transubstantiation - 'Okay,' Leo said. 'You're Eldritch; I believe you" (Dick TSPE 95). Here, Dick uses the concepts of substance, denoting the spiritual soul, and accidents, denoting the material body, often associated with the Eucharist, to show how the creature residing in Eldritch's body suddenly inhabits the body of a little girl. Monica says that the Chew-Z reality, unlike the Can-D experience, is unlimited, and that one can be whoever one wants to be in whatever situation imaginable. This is demonstrated by Eldritch when he appears as Monica.

In the introduction, I characterized spiritual realities in Dick's sf as out-of-body experiences. As Can-D translations and Chew-Z experiences make partakers' consciousness leave their own bodies, both these drugs create out-of-body experiences. This does, however, not mean that both Can-D and Chew-Z bring people into spiritual realities. I have also defined spiritual realities as trans-temporal, incognitive existences, which make liminal characters unable to function in the normal reality.

Such a non-material experience is demonstrated in Leo Bulero's Chew-Z experience. When Bulero is with Monica, he creates a stairway leading to his own office which is designed to make him escape from the Chew-Z reality. This is after Monica, or Eldritch, has told Bulero how he can control the Chew-Z world after his own fashion by just imagining how he wants things to be. Since Dick has not provided any scientific evidences for how such an action is cognitively possible, the making of a stairway by imagination is clearly an incognitive aspect. While he is in his office after this breakout, Bulero discovers a supernatural creature under his desk and figures out that he did not manage to escape Eldritch's reality after all (Dick *TSPE* 99). Suddenly, Bulero is back in a grassy field together with Monica. Realizing that he is unable to escape the Chew-Z reality, he kills Monica by strangling her. However, this neither kills Eldritch nor makes Bulero return to the normal reality right away. After Bulero has killed Monica, the computer psychiatrist Dr. Smile tells him that Eldritch has injected him with an antidote for Chew-Z that will eventually bring him back to the real world. Before he gets back to the material reality, Bulero is identified by future evolved humans as a ghost from the past. The humans of the future show Leo a monument of where he is to have killed Palmer Eldritch. In his Chew-Z experience, Bulero

has been both in the present in his office and in the future together with the evolved humans. This incognitive, trans-temporal experience demonstrates that the Chew-Z World is a spiritual reality. As I will demonstrate when I describe their diachronic liminal phases, both Leo Bulero and Barney Mayerson are unable to function properly due to the spiritual reality's derangement of time.

As the trans-temporality in the Chew-Z World opposes the laws of physics, it questions whether the time and space continuum of the material world is real or merely an illusion. There are also other examples which indicate that time is irrational and, thus, non-existent here. For instance, the mechanical suitcase psychiatrist Dr Smile, which Bulero has with him in his Chew-Z experience, tells Bulero that while time is standing still in the normal reality, several years can pass in the Chew-Z world. Because of this, he claims that time sense is subjective (Dick *TSPE* 103-04).

Colonists who use Can-D do not, on the other hand, have an incognitive, transtemporal experience. They are consequently able to separate the Can-D World from the normal reality when the drug wears off. This makes them able to function in their daily lives after an experience. As the chewing of Can-D does not lead to a trans-temporal experience, it can be considered as a false spiritual reality which is not really separated from the physical world. The fact that this experience requires expensive "minned" material Perky Pat accessories to seem real strengthens this argument.⁴

As Manfred's World of Gubble in *Martian Time-Slip* is also an invading, alienated and lonely spiritual reality which is controlled by a synchronic liminal character, it becomes a close relative to Eldritch's Chew-Z Reality. In fact, the effects of this drug are more similar to the World of Gubble than to the experience of Can-D. Both the Gubble Reality and the Chew-Z World challenge the conventions of their common antagonist; namely the normal, material

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⁴In fact, this false, constraining experience with its material accessories depicts the fake reality which Dick called the Black Iron Prison. As this structure is more explicit and clearly depicted in *Valis*, I will not give a close discussion of the Black Iron Prison here.

reality. Whereas the World of Gubble is recognised by the constant repetition of the word "gubble", the Chew-Z World is distinguished by the fact that Eldritch's three stigmata, the enormous steel teeth, the artificial right arm and the mechanic Jensen eyes, can appear in everybody at any time. This can for instance be seen when Barney Mayerson is under the influence of Chew-Z and observes his ex-wife's husband, Richard Hnatt:

Hnatt had one artificial hand, with which he held his fork, and when he lifted a bite of egg to his mouth Barney saw huge, jutting stainless steel teeth. And Hnatt was gray, hollowed out, with dead eyes, and much larger than before (...) And, all at once, he grinned at Barney, grinned – and one dead eye flicked off, as if in a mechanical wink. It was Palmer Eldritch now. Completely (Dick *TSPE* 184-85).

Eldritch's presence in Hnatt is indicated through his sudden possession of Eldritch's stigmata; the artificial hand, the steel teeth and the mechanical eyes. When Eldritch takes over an individual in this manner, he demonstrates that he is in full charge of Mayerson's Chew-Z experience.

When people start using Chew-Z, it becomes apparent that the consumption of this drug is a portal to a spiritual reality controlled by the being within Eldritch. This is a world that he governs after his own fancies. As Eldritch additionally exists in the normal reality as an industrialist who sells Chew-Z, he is situated in a liminal state between these worlds.

However, he does not function optimally in either of the realities. With his mechanical, inhuman and cold qualities, Eldritch does not function socially in the normal world. The fusion between Eldritch and Mayerson furthermore demonstrates the weakness of the creature residing within Eldritch: "[H]e was not happy. For the simple reason that he was alone. So he at once tried to make up for this; he went to a lot of trouble to draw others along

the route he had followed" (Dick *TSPE* 213). Due to the fact that Eldritch is lonely in the Chew-Z World, he is unhappy. In order to get some company, Eldritch tries to trick as many as possible into the Chew-Z World. This makes him similar to Manfred, who is also motivated by his loneliness when dragging people into his World of Gubble. But by invading the world in this way, Eldritch gets an enemy in Leo Bulero who will probably end up killing him in the end. Eldritch's state is thus in line with Turner's definition of liminality as that which is neither this, nor that, and yet both. He neither functions in the normal world, nor in the Chew-Z World, but, yet, he is situated in both. This nowhere land position is manifested in Eldritch's dual existence comprising the material, human body of the former industrialist Eldritch and the alien soul which represents the spiritual reality, Chew-Z.

But Eldritch's liminal state also drags Leo Bulero into a dysfunctional limbo. When Palmer injects Bulero with Chew-Z, he enchants him into becoming a liminal initiate in between the material reality and the spiritual Chew-Z World. While in this threshold state, Leo has the following reflections: "Damn that Chew-Z (...) It's made everything confused; I don't know what the hell is going on" (Dick *TSPE* 84). At this stage, his consciousness has been abruptly moved from the normal reality, where he was tied up by Eldritch in a chair, to the Chew-Z World, where he finds himself on a grassy bank with Monica, the girl whose soul is the creature within Eldritch. In this reality, Bulero is among other things faced by big maneating rats, to which he is invisible, and alien creatures called "glucks", which want to suck out all his bodily fluids. As he finds this world incomprehensible, he is desperately trying to contact the outside world. At this stage, Bulero finds it hard to determine whether what he is experiencing is a part of the normal reality or not. As he is unable to relate to and function in either of the realities, Bulero becomes a stranger to both worlds. In accordance with Turner's definition of liminality, Bulero is thus neither in contact with the normal world nor completely in the Chew-Z world, and yet, he is in both conditions at the same time. When Leo Bulero

enters Eldritch's Chew-Z world, he is separated from his differentiated and structured single-reality state and enters the undifferentiated and chaotic liminal phase between the two worlds.

But when Eldritch injects Bulero with an antidote for Chew-Z, Bulero soon escapes his state of liminality between the normal and the spiritual reality and is re-aggregated into a single-reality state. As Bulero's threshold state is temporal and diachronic, we can apply Van Gennep's theory of transitional stages on him. As I have demonstrated, Eldritch both makes Bulero a liminal initiate and re-aggregates his dual existence into a single-reality state. Palmer also functions as Bulero's guide in his diachronic liminal learning period.

Unlike Leo Bulero, the being residing within Palmer Eldritch's accidents has a liminal individuality, and is consequently in a liminal state in the whole novel. As he is a synchronic liminal character who has been in the threshold state for a very long time, Eldritch knows a lot about how this limbo between these worlds works. As each individual is on their own in the Chew-Z Reality, Palmer Eldritch is, in fact, the only being the liminal initiates communicate with. Because of these factors, Eldritch naturally also functions as a guide for the liminal novice Leo Bulero.

There are several elements which tell us something about what kind of a guide Eldritch is. First of all, he can appear as a shaman, which links him to mysterious, pre-Christian, pagan religions. When talking to Leo Bulero, Eldritch says that the proxers, the aliens living in the Prox System, use the drug Chew-Z in religious orgies, just like "Indians made use of mescal and peyote" (Dick *TSPE* 78). As Eldritch is the provider of this medium, this points to his role as a medicine man or a shaman for the characters with temporal liminality.

When the diachronic liminal characters are in the Chew-Z World, they appear to others as ghosts. This is revealed to us when Eldritch speaks to Mayerson in the Chew-Z Reality: "You're a phantasm (...) I can see right through you, literally. I'll tell you what you

are (...) You're a ghost" (Dick *TSPE* 202). One of the future men who meet Bulero discloses that the head of Perky Pat Layouts is also such a phantasm or ghost: "This guy isn't real; we should have suspected it. He's a – what did they used to call them? From chewing that diabolical drug that Eldritch picked up in the Prox system. A *chooser*, that's what. He's a phantasm" (Dick *TSPE* 108). Ghosts are conventionally considered as dead men walking. This connection with death links the Chew-Z World to the realms of the dead in Dante Alighieri's *The Divine Comedy* (Dante, MacEwan and Gillies). In this allegory, the diachronic liminal characters are Dante, while Palmer Eldritch is Virgil, their guide. Furthermore, the Chew-Z World's association with death connects it to the state of purgatory, where dead people are purified by being temporarily punished before they go to heaven. This purification can be compared to the learning period in Van Gennep's theory of transitional stages. With the diachronic liminal characters in a state of purgatory, Eldritch becomes the ferryman who guides them on their way. However, Eldritch is, unlike Virgil and the ferryman, in control of the netherworld he finds himself in. With his agency in the Chew-Z realm, Eldritch modifies these well-known myths and becomes a more controlling guide.

But since the virus-like spreading of the Chew-Z World into the structured, non-liminal world is clearly a negation and violation of the differentiated order, Eldritch can also be considered a trickster. By appearing as an innocent and honest child in the form of Monica, Eldritch also increases his chances of succeeding with his trickery.

In his guiding role as a shamanic, trickster-ferryman, Eldritch tells Bulero about the "rules" of the liminal reality and other existential information. Eldritch for instance informs Bulero that this reality is not dangerous. In fact, Eldritch claims that he has lived for a hundred years in this reality without getting hurt (Dick *TSPE* 91). The industrialist also teaches the head of Perky Pat Layouts how to form things in the Chew-Z realm: "You could shape something. Go ahead – project a fraction of your essence; it'll take material form on its

own. What you supply is the logos" (Dick *TSPE* 92). With his invading nature, Eldritch is probably not an ideal guide for Bulero. However, he is the only guide available, and Bulero appears to learn the essence and mechanics of the Chew-Z Reality from him.

After his threshold period, Bulero in any case knows what he is up against: "I saw enough in the future not to ever give up, even if I'm the only one who doesn't succumb, who's still keeping the old way alive, the pre-Palmer Eldritch way" (Dick *TSPE* 242). By seeing the destructiveness of the Chew-Z World, Bulero realizes that he has to destroy Eldritch, no matter what. At first, they were merely business competitors. But after his liminal period, Bulero understands that the future of the human race depends upon the annihilation of Eldritch. In the battle against Eldritch, Bulero sees himself as the protector of our race (Dick *TSPE* 240). In *Postmodernism and the Birth of the Author in Philip K. Dick's Valis*, the literary scholar Christopher Palmer claims that "[m]any of Dick's values are strongly liberal and humanist. He values the little guy who dissents, resists and persists, if necessary, alone" (Palmer 332). In his role as Eldritch's nemesis, Bulero becomes such a persisting figure who shows that a single individual can still make a difference. He consequently comes to represent whatever normative ethos this novel has. This is further reflected in the short message which begins this novel. This squib is a statement from Bulero after he has encountered Eldritch:

I mean, after all; you have to consider we're only made out of dust. That's admittedly not much to go on and we shouldn't forget that. But even considering, I mean it's a sort of bad beginning, we're not doing too bad. So I personally have faith that even this lousy situation we're faced with we can make it. You get me? (Dick *TSPE* 0).

This positive attitude is what will make human beings survive in a postmodern world smitten with meaninglessness. In that sense, Bulero represents the persistence and survival instinct of the human spirit. However, Bulero's motives are far from being purely altruistic. His motive for trying to destroy Eldritch is first and foremost that he wants to get rid of his business opponent. This one-minded business-like and materialistic attitude makes him very similar to the cold, inhuman businessman Arnie Kott in *Martian Time-Slip*.

After he has been in the liminal phase for a while, Bulero starts to learn how to distinguish the Chew-Z World from the real one. This will make him more capable of defending himself against Eldritch in the future. When he sees a supernatural creature in his office after having escaped from Monica, Bulero understands that he has not been able to get out of the Chew-Z World: "Well, that's that. I'm sorry, Miss Fugate, but you might as well return to your office; there's no point in our discussing what actions to take toward the imminent appearance of Chew-Z on the market. Because I'm not talking to anyone; I'm sitting here babbling away to myself" (Dick *TSPE* 99). As it appears, Bulero is unable to escape this liminal reality on his own accord. Nevertheless, he seems to be able to distinguish Eldritch's world from the real one. Bulero understands that his actions in the Chew-Z realm are pointless. This means that he is starting to be able to relate to and function in the middle of these realities. His adaptability makes him less prone to be put out mentally by Eldritch's trickery in the future.

This is demonstrated at the end of the novel, when Bulero and Felix Blau discuss how they can destroy Eldritch. At this stage both of them appear to each other with Eldritch's stigmata. But Bulero calms down Blau by saying the following: "I may be looking out at you through a couple of Jensen luxvid artificial-type eyes, but it's still me inside here. Okay?" (Dick *TSPE* 243). This demonstrates that Bulero has acquired some degree of mastery in his liminal state.

But the fact that Eldritch's stigmata appear long after Bulero's liminal phase makes him wonder whether he ever recovered from the influence of the drug (Dick *TSPE* 240). He might consequently still be in a liminal state. But, as Bulero tells Blau, Eldritch's stigmata have probably just spread without the use of the drug (Dick *TSPE* 240). This connects Chew-Z with LSD, which has the "flashback" as one of its advertised effects. Like with Chew-Z, users of LSD can start "tripping" again without taking the drug.

As I have demonstrated, Leo Bulero learns that he has to defeat Eldritch and how to defend himself against him in his liminal phase. Allegorically, this adolescent learning period takes him from being an ignorant child in his interaction with Eldritch's world into becoming a knowledgeable man, determined to destroy the creature. This transitional period is shown in figure 4:

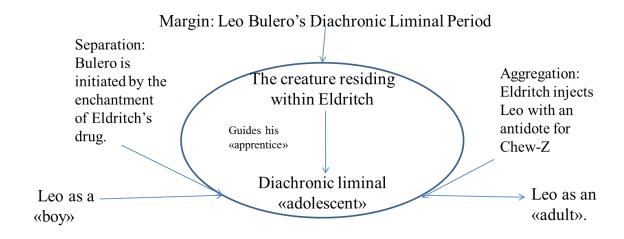


Figure 4: Leo Bulero's Temporal State of Liminality

These three transitional phases can also be spotted in Barney Mayerson's narrative.

When Leo Bulero returns to the normal reality after his Chew-Z experience, he fires

Mayerson for not coming to his rescue. When Bulero finds out that Mayerson has accepted
his draft to go to Mars, he re-hires the precog as a double agent to try Chew-Z on Mars.

Mayerson is supposed to inject himself with a virus simultaneously as he eats the drug. Bulero hopes that this will demonstrate for the UN that Chew-Z is harmful and make them ban it.

When Mayerson tries Chew-Z for the first time, he enters a reality which enables him to relive and change his past. Here, Eldritch offers Mayerson his "help" with getting what he wants, which is to get back his ex-wife, Emily. But their attempts fail, and suddenly Mayerson is back on Mars. But when he is about to drink the poison that Bulero gave him, Mayerson notices that the bottle is empty. In his frustration, Mayerson wants to go back to the Chew-Z World, and he takes away the Chew-Z share of the Neo-Christian colonist Anne Hawthorne. The two of them have an affair on Mars, and they share thoughts about the nature of Palmer Eldritch. While Mayerson steals her Chew-Z, he notices that Anne has Eldritch's stigmata. But nonetheless, he decides to eat her entire portion of the drug. It later appears that Mayerson had not yet recovered from the effects of Chew-Z, and that Eldritch had tricked him into taking this second dose (Dick *TSPE* 207). Eldritch in fact knew that Mayerson had been sent to Mars to operate against him.

When Mayerson is in the Chew-Z Reality for the second time, he finds himself two years into the future as a phantasm/ghost, where he discusses the death of Eldritch with Roni Fugate, Leo Bulero and his future self. It appears that the second, stronger dose of the drug will keep Barney in this spiritual reality for a much longer time than he was on his first encounter with Eldritch's world. Mayerson wants to get back to the normal reality as soon as possible, and Eldritch says that he can help him with that. But in the very instant Mayerson accepts his help, the two of them become one being. At this stage, Eldritch manages to

persuade Mayerson into believing that what he really wants is death. He is consequently set up to die in Eldritch's body when Bulero shoots down Eldritch's ship, while Eldritch is to live on in Mayerson's body. But as this is about to happen, Mayerson is dragged out of the spiritual Chew-Z reality when he is re-awoken in the present material reality by Bulero, who has just found Mayerson on Mars. Eldritch later claims that Mayerson survived because Eldritch decided to save him in the last second.

As the use of Chew-Z makes him a part of a superreality in addition to the normal one, Mayerson is separated from his single-reality state and becomes a marginal, liminal figure. After his Chew-Z fusion with Mayerson, Eldritch tells Mayerson that he will gradually recover from the effects of Chew-Z until it is gone (Dick *TSPE* 236). This means that Mayerson is a diachronic liminal character who will eventually re-aggregate into a differentiated, structured, single-reality state. But seeing that Eldritch does not always tell the truth, the drug might, for all we know, never wear off. Mayerson might consequently be trapped in this superreality forever and never leave this entropic and undifferentiated margin phase between this world and the normal one.

In line with Turner's definition of liminality, Mayerson neither functions in the material reality nor in the spiritual reality in his liminal phase, but, yet, he is in both of them at the same time. This is demonstrated when Mayerson thinks he has left the Chew-Z World after his first dose of the drug and steals Anne Hawthorne's dose: "But it was not Anne denying it to him. It was Palmer Eldritch, operating through her, holding back (...) The strong artificial arm struck him; the metal fingers clawed and it was almost enough" (Dick *TSPE* 198). Barney thinks that the effect of Chew-Z has worn off, but this excerpt indicates that this is not the case. After he has taken his second dose of Chew-Z, his future self in fact tells him that he never recovered from his first chewing: "[Y]ou never got back to clear-cut reality. As you would have if you had abstained another twenty-four hours (...) But Eldritch got you to

accept that second, stronger dose" (Dick *TSPE* 207). As Mayerson is unable to separate the spiritual reality from the material one, the trickster Eldritch deludes Mayerson over and over again. This means that he is incapable of acting in either of these worlds. His inability to function in the liminal state also makes Mayerson accept Eldritch's help, with the following effect on the precog: "Something swept him up (...) he felt it squeeze around him, and he knew that he had misjudged. Palmer Eldritch had once more thought rings around him, demonstrated his power over everyone who used Chew-Z (...) Now I am Palmer Eldritch" (Dick *TSPE* 211-12). By accepting Eldritch's help, Mayerson enables him to turn the two of them into a unity. This shows that his lack of function in the liminal state makes him unable to defend himself against Eldritch's trickery. Mayerson's dual position in both a normal reality and a superreality consequently makes him unable to function in either of them.

This correspondence between Mayerson's and Bulero's threshold periods and Turner's definition of liminality is reflected in the diachronic liminal characters' state as ghosts and phantasms. Palmer Eldritch says that the ability of phantasms to manipulate material objects "makes it clear that they *are* present and not merely projections" (Dick *TSPE* 210). However, when Leo wants to shake hands with the future Terran, Alec, the following happens: "Alec, the Terran, extended his hand, too, with a smile. Leo's hand passed through Alec's and emerged on the far side" (Dick *TSPE* 108). While the diachronic liminal characters are under the influence of Chew-Z, they are consequently neither present nor absent, but at the same time, both.

Like Leo Bulero, Barney Mayerson is enchanted by Palmer Eldritch into becoming a liminal initiate. Furthermore, Mayerson also has Eldritch as a "mentor" and guide in the threshold state. This can be seen when Eldritch tries to guide and help Barney into getting back his ex-wife:

'Let me talk to your husband a moment,' Eldritch said to Emily in a peculiarly gentle voice; he motioned and Barney stepped out into the hall (...) Now Eldritch seemed grim; no longer gentle or smiling he said, 'Mayerson, you're using your time badly. You're doing nothing but repeating the past (Dick *TSPE* 179).

This "timeout" from the "coach" Eldritch indicates that he actually cares about whether Barney succeeds or not. Like a caring father, he is mad at his "child" when he performs destructive and unhelpful actions, pointing to the parallel between the liminal phase and coming of age.

But when Barney Mayerson wants to become a stone in the spiritual reality, Eldritch guides and tricks him into believing that he really wants something else: "Listen Mayerson; being a soft stone isn't what you really want. What you want is death" (Dick *TSPE* 216). As Eldritch advises Mayerson to kill himself and tricks the precog on several other occasions, he is neither an ideal guide for Mayerson. However, Eldritch does help and guide him sometimes as well.

In his liminal period, Mayerson also has a guide in his boss, Leo Bulero, who functions as a father figure for him. When Mayerson does not come to rescue Bulero from Eldritch, Bulero gives the precog a second chance by re-employing him as a double agent on Mars. Even when Mayerson fails to follow his instructions here, Bulero offers to smuggle him back to earth. This way of watching over Mayerson points to Bulero's role as a forgiving father figure.

Due to the fact that Mayerson takes an overdose of Chew-Z, his liminal experience is more intense than that of Leo Bulero. The fact that Mayerson is lost so deep into the threshold state literally enables Eldritch to become Mayerson. Anne Hawthorne, Mayerson's religious girlfriend on Mars, says the following to him: "Part of you has become Palmer Eldritch (...)

[A]nd part of him became you. Neither of you can ever become completely separated again" (Dick *TSPE* 222). If they never get separated again, like Anne says, Mayerson will remain in the Chew-Z World, which is inseparable from the creature within Eldritch, and consequently never leave his liminal state. This would also make him go from being a diachronic liminal character into becoming a synchronic threshold individual.

But regardless of whether he recovers from Chew-Z or not in the end, Mayerson has a distinct development in his liminal phase. His liminal phase thus bears a close resemblance to adolescence, the transition between childhood and adulthood in which boys learn how to become men. This maturity is revealed in the following excerpt from Mayerson's thoughts:

Because Eldritch had lived many lives; there had been a vast, reliable wisdom contained within the substance of the man or creature, whatever it was. The fusion of Eldritch with him during translation had left a mark on him, a brand for perpetuity: it was a form of absolute awareness (Dick *TSPE* 223).

Since the creature which forms the substance within Eldritch's accidents has lived for such a long time, Mayerson must have learned a lot from him in his liminal state. This "absolute awareness" is the marker of synchronic liminal individuality. However, we never find out what this mysterious awareness is. This information appears to be something that is impossible for a mortal human being to attain on his own. But in any case, Mayerson's disposition is different before and after his threshold period. Before he tries Chew-Z, Mayerson desperately wants to get back his ex-wife. In an audacious attempt to feel better, Mayerson willingly accepts his drafting to colonise Mars. In his liminal state, Mayerson continues to be troubled and restless, like any adolescent. But after his fusion with Eldritch, Mayerson appears to be settled down and calm, like an adult. He even looks positively on his

existence on Mars and wants to make the most out of it: "If it was good enough for Palmer Eldritch it was good enough for him" (Dick TSPE 223). When Eldritch intended to let Mayerson die in the industrialist's body, the creature in fact looked forward to be living his life within Mayerson's body on Mars. This indicates that what Mayerson really learns from Eldritch is the value of mortal life. With vigour and spirit Mayerson starts working on his garden, demonstrating that he has retrieved his spark of life in this period. As Eldritch has lived for such a long time, his opinions and wisdom have to count for something. There is a significance in the fact that Eldritch chooses to inhabit Barney Mayerson's meek and humble existence as a colonist instead of becoming the like of Leo Bulero, who lives a materially rich life. I have already established that Dick, at times, considers money-craving, materialistic characters like Arnie Kott and Leo Bulero as cold and dead. As their existences cannot be considered as mortal lives in this sense, Eldritch rather wants to inhabit a living human being who has other concerns than material wealth. The "absolute awareness" of the ancient creature within Eldritch consequently tells us that material wealth is not what is important in life. With this, Dick rather sides with a more spiritual existence, represented by Heliogabalus in Martian Time-Slip. Mayerson's state of liminality is illustrated in figure 5:

Margin: Barney Mayerson's Liminal Period

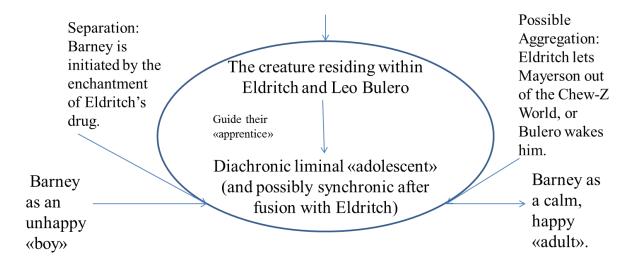


Figure 5: Barney Mayerson's State of Liminality

So, what is the effect and impact of the interaction between Eldritch and the diachronic liminal characters? Like in *Martian Time-Slip*, the constant opposition between the normal, material reality and the spiritual reality questions what is real in this novel. But what is real in this novel? Palmer Eldritch's presence dominates and pervades the realities and narratives of the diachronic liminal characters. Consequently, the nature of the being residing within the industrialist will tell us a lot about what is real in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*.

The Chew-Z Reality appears a lot more complex than the World of Gubble. This is because of the highly mystical and ambiguous nature of Palmer Eldritch, who controls this world. Throughout their liminal states, both Leo Bulero and Barney Mayerson hardly know anything about what Eldritch has done to them.

So what is the true nature of Palmer Eldritch? In the beginning of *The Three Stigmata*, Barney Mayerson and Leo Bulero wonder whether Palmer Eldritch is a person or something else. Richard Hnatt, the husband of Mayerson's ex-wife, says that Palmer Eldritch was a well-known interplan industrialist "who had gone to the Prox system a decade ago" (Dick *TSPE* 11). This indicates that Eldritch was a human being before the alien creature inhabited his body.

Roni Fugate soon believes that the industrialist is an alien Proxman: "It looks more and more to me as if it's actually Palmer who came back but one of them" (Dick *TSPE* 87). Proxmen are native creatures that live in the distant Prox system. This link with the unknown outer space adds to the mysterious nature of Eldritch. When Eldritch inhabits Mayerson's body and Mayerson gets access to Eldritch's thoughts, we are assured that the creature within Eldritch is alien: "Our opponent, something admittedly ugly and foreign that entered one of our race like an ailment during the long travel between Terra and Prox. (...) From its centuries of vacant drifting as it waited for some kind of life form to pass by which it could grab and become" (Dick *TSPE* 224). Here, the precog compares Eldritch to an infesting virus,

something which has many similarities with a foreign invader. This makes it apparent that it is not a human who has returned.

However, the name "Prox", similar to "proximity" indicates that the creature within Eldritch is not as distant and different to us as it may initially seem. This is reflected in the fact that Eldritch has human needs. For instance, as I have already demonstrated, Eldritch's goal with dragging people into the Chew-Z Reality is to get company. This makes "distant Prox System" into a quite paradoxical place which reflects Eldritch's state between alien and man. In line with this, Barney Mayerson offers an explanation to how Eldritch's foreignappearing stigmata make him part human:

He had enormous steel teeth, these having been installed prior to his trip to Prox by Czech dental surgeons (...) And – his right arm was artificial. Twenty years ago in a hunting accident on Callisto he had lost the original; this of course was superior in that it provided a specialized variety of interchangeable hands. (...) And he was blind. (...) But replacements had been made (...) The accident to his original eyes had been no accident; it had occurred in Chicago, a deliberate acid-throwing attack by persons unknown, for equally unknown reasons (Dick *TSPE* 170-71).

So even though we think that every part of Eldritch is alien to earthmen, his stigmata are actually man-made adjustments which have been a part of his human body for at least ten years. Even though the creature within Eldritch is definitely foreign, he never manages to separate himself from the human body he inhabited in the Prox System. In fact, his stigmata, the evidences of his human nature, are paradoxically his hallmark in the Chew-Z World. The excerpt furthermore shows that Eldritch got these marks because of some accidents. His stigmata are consequently symbols of his vulnerability as a human being.

Towards the end of the novel, Mayerson claims that Eldritch is the creator and owner of the world, and that he can do whatever he wants in it (Dick *TSPE* 202). Since Chew-Z eventually makes Eldritch appear everywhere, it becomes evident that he has superhuman qualities pointing to omnipotence. In fact, Mayerson later says that Eldritch "had gone to Prox a man and returned a God" (Dick *TSPE* 202). Eldritch says that one can be in the Chew-Z reality for what seems an eternity and still not age a day in the material world. Consequently, Eldritch does, like God, promise eternal life (Dick *TSPE* 90).

In the sense that the original human Eldritch went to the Prox System as a man and came back as a god, he has also been in a diachronic liminal learning period in his fusion with the alien creature within him. At the same time, the god-like, foreign being he is connected to has had the exact opposite developing phase. In his connection to human beings, the creature within Eldritch becomes an "adult" when he learns the ways of man. This is indicated through his human needs and qualities which I have already been discussing. One can consequently argue that these figures function as guides for each other, similar to the relationship between Manfred and Jack in *Martian Time-Slip*.

But this character with a liminal individuality has more god-like, omnipotent qualities. When Barney Mayerson and Palmer Eldritch are one, Mayerson realizes that the industrialist has great power and that he can even overcome death (Dick *TSPE* 213). The first time Eldritch survives death is when he is strangled as Monica in the Chew-Z World by Leo Bulero. Leo's conversation with the mechanical psychiatrist Dr. Smile after this demonstrates that the industrialist is still alive: "Well, did I do it? (...) Obligingly, Dr Smile tinnily declared, 'He is dead here, Mr Bulero. But at the demesne on Luna" (Dick *TSPE* 103). Even though Eldritch dies in Mayerson's Chew-Z experience, he still lives on in the material reality and in the rest of the Chew-Z World. When he takes over Mayerson's body and vice versa, the creature within Eldritch is furthermore about to survive the death of the industrialist's material

body. But Mayerson returns to the present material reality in the instant before he is killed as Eldritch.

While he is talking to Anne Hawthorne, Mayerson predicts that the creature inhabiting Eldritch will be worshipped in the future: "[W]e'll all of us, as a culture, do as I already am tending toward: we'll invest it wanly, pitifully, with our conception of infinite powers" (Dick *TSPE* 230). At this stage of the novel, the creature within Palmer Eldritch is presented as an omnipotent god who is possibly our creator. The realization that there are god-like, superhuman beings in outer space, will, in line with Edward James's theories, make humans realize how insignificant they are in relation to the endless grandeur of the universe. Only in the sense of wonder and sublime atmospheres created by estranged sf universes can one find aspects which awe a subject in the same manner that religion used to do. With his god-like nature and resemblance to religious figures, the creature within Palmer Eldritch becomes such an aspect. The sense of wonder produced by this character consequently functions as an analogy to religion.

But the fact that Eldritch needs to inhabit Mayerson's body also demonstrates that Eldritch is mortal. If he does not switch places with Barney, he will in fact die. And Eldritch has even more weaknesses. According to Anne Hawthorne, Eldritch got Mayerson to accept a second, stronger dose of Chew-Z because he was afraid of the precog. Eldritch in fact knew that Mayerson had been sent to Mars to operate against him. However, the industrialist did not know in what way the precog was going to do this (Dick *TSPE* 207). This excerpt from one of Anne Hawthorne's talks with Mayerson also rocks Eldritch's position as God: "I know you're wrong, Barney. Something which stands with empty, open hands is not God. It's a creature fashioned by something higher than itself, as we were. God wasn't fashioned and He isn't puzzled" (Dick *TSPE* 228-29). Hawthorne believes that Eldritch's imperfections demonstrate that he is not an omnipotent God.

At the end of the novel, Barney Mayerson presents Eldritch as a god who tries to help but cannot do much (Dick *TSPE* 228). Mayerson says that in the Chew-Z realm "Eldritch holds the key positions as god; he gives you a chance to do what you can't really ever do – reconstruct the past as it ought to have been. But even for him it's hard. Takes time" (Dick *TSPE* 186). Even though Eldritch is the lord of the Chew-Z World, this indicates that he does not control it completely.

My examples demonstrate that the creature within Eldritch is in a liminal state between being an omnipotent god and a mortal, imperfect being. This makes him similar in stature and power to the half-human, ancient Greek gods and the Gnostic Demiurge. With the vulnerable Eldritch presented as God, this liminal category enables Dick to question the conventional Western belief that the divine is omnipotent and invincible. If god-like beings exist, they may, for all we know, be mortal creatures like humans, just trying to survive. This questioning of the Creator's powers would be impossible apart from in an estranged universe with a liminal god-figure. In realistic, naturalistic literature, there is not even room for divine, supernatural elements at all.

Eldritch's invading, mechanical stigmata also makes us wonder whether he is a man or a machine. This furthers his evil and cold nature. When Barney Mayerson talks about Eldritch towards the end of the novel, he indicates that the industrialist is in a liminal position between these states: "The man will be dead soon enough ... or rather *it* will be (...) he had his precog ability (Dick *TSPE* 223). In addition to calling Eldritch a man, Mayerson refers to Eldritch as "it", a word which is used to describe a machine. Furthermore, Eldritch's stigmata, the mechanical eyes, the steel teeth and the artificial arms all demonstrate that the industrialist has a machine-like nature. Leo Bulero moreover claims that Eldritch only addressed him through an electronic extension outside the Chew-Z reality (Dick *TSPE* 116). The fact that Eldritch's

appearances are represented by an electronic extension also indicates that he has machine-like qualities.

As I mentioned in the introduction, the doubt as to whether a living being is actually a machine resurfaces the childhood complex of treating dolls as if they are animate. Because of this, Freud claims that such a confusion can have an uncanny effect. As was also stated in the introduction, James claims that an uncanny feeling creates a Gothic, sublime air that may uncover terrifying realizations. As Eldritch is presented as God, Dick's placing of him in a liminal state between man and machine shows the possibility that our world might be controlled by a cold machine. The fact that machines are machines and men are men in realistic literature would also make this debate inconceivable outside an estranged universe.

Through his stigmata, Eldritch is also connected to pagan gods, who are partly animals. This is indicated when Mayerson observes Eldritch's teeth: "Neanderthal teeth, he thought; that's what those giant stainless steel molars look like. Reversion, two hundred thousand years back; revolting" (Dick *TSPE* 197). As Neanderthals lived at the same time as our distant forefathers, they are identified with the opposite of civilization, namely primitive nature. With this threshold state between animal and god, Dick indirectly asks: "What if God is a primitive and uncivilized animal"? As trickster figures are often animals and gods at the same time, this liminal position also strengthens Eldritch's position as such a mythical being.

Through Mayerson and Bulero's liminal interaction with Eldritch, we learn about the industrialist's true nature and, consequently, what constitutes reality in this novel. But as it appears, both Eldritch's nature and the reality in this novel are highly ambiguous, liminal structures. For instance, the trans-temporal experience in the narratives of the diachronic liminal characters creates a doubt as to whether time is a part of reality in this novel, or if it is just a part of the characters' imagination. Furthermore, the creature within Palmer Eldritch is in liminal positions between being a man and an alien, a machine, a god and an animal.

It is interesting to see how this character shares so many similarities with mythical, ancient figures in fiction which are thousands of years old. However, Dick uses this old recipe in a new setting; namely a postmodern, satirical sf universe where we, among other things, can find aliens from outer space and computer psychiatrists. This is what makes Dick's application of the trickster figure unique. By making Eldritch into a shamanic trickster-ferryman who, through his supernatural, god-like abilities, appeals to the sense of wonder, he becomes ideal as a tool to introduce us to Dick's several existential ideas and debates concerning divinity and what is real. To sum these concerns up, he virtually asks us: "What if God is an alien, non-omnipotent machine"? By raising these debates in a universe with different rules, Dick rocks with the conventional conceptions of divinity in the Western World. This leads to redefinitions of our own reality.

2.3: *Valis*

2.3.1: Introducing the Novel

With *Valis*, Dick becomes a religious writer using sf as a medium, and not the other way around. This novel is a fictionalised confession of Dick's own experiences which aims to be more realistic than the previous books I have dealt with. *Valis* is Dick's attempt to make sense of a series of visions he experienced in February-March 1974.

By writing in a confession-form, Dick revisits a genre which is well-known to him and which he already mastered in the fifties. Dick's only non-sf novel released during his lifetime, *Confessions of a Crap Artist*, which was written in 1959, is an example of this. This novel deals with the confessions of Jack Isidore, the "crap artist" who believes in extrasensory perception, UFOs, telepathy and that the world will end on April 23, 1959 (Dick *CoaCA*). Due to the fact that *Valis* deals with Dick's personal experiences, the material reality in *Valis* actually depicts the real world, and not an estranged sf world to the same degree that

Martian Time-Slip and The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch do. The estranged sf part of this novel can only be found when the protagonist, Philip Dick/Horselover Fat, and his friends are faced with what they believe is the divine entity. And this religious, supernatural encounter can even be explained away with natural causes.

Still, this novel is more metaphysically ambiguous and chaotic than the other novels I am dealing with in this thesis. This is because Dick's thoughts and inner life were, in fact, even more complex, changing and floating than his sf novels. In this respect, Lawrence Sutin claims that Dick neither fit well into categories nor managed to fit what he thought might be real into them (Sutin 5). He specifically notes that Dick's experiences during February-March 1974 "simply do not fall into a neat, overarching pattern" (Sutin 209). The link of the author's personal life to *Valis* consequently has the effect of making this novel meandering.

Some of the confessions from this personal novel are so astounding that its readers may easily think Dick has completely lost his mind. However, the literary quality of *Valis* and his later novels *Divine Invasions* (1981) and *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer* (1982) demonstrate that he still has his reasoning intact. In fact, Dick realized how insane the confessions in *Valis* might appear. This is, according to Sutin, one of the reasons why he splits his personality in two in this novel: "Then, to prove you know damn well how crazy it all sounds, you split yourself in two: 'Phil Dick' and 'Horselover Fat'" (Sutin 257). In this manner, Dick shows that he is capable of viewing his own confessions from an outside position. This is reflected in what the narrator Philip Dick says in the beginning of the novel: "I am Horselover Fat, and I am writing this in the third person to gain much-needed objectivity" (Dick *Va* 11). The narrator says right away that Horselover Fat is mentally deranged (Dick *Va* 10). By splitting the narrator Philip Dick from this seemingly insane person, the author Dick gets the "much-needed objectivity" to demonstrate that he has not lost his mind completely.

In *Valis*, the schizophrenic protagonist Philip K. Dick⁵ believes that he and his outward projection of himself, Horselover Fat, are two different persons. The author surrogate Fat believes that he was fired upon with healing information from God in March 1974, something which gave him the knowledge to save his son's life, and which gave him information beyond the telling about the divine entity. Eventually, the information fired upon Fat makes him go on a search for what he believes is the Fifth Coming of the Messiah. This leads Fat/Philip and his friends on a journey to visit the "Friends of God", who claim that they are the immortal, original builders of the world. Here, they also find Sophia, a two-year-old child who presents herself as Jesus and Buddha all at once. Her father is VALIS (Vast Active Living Information System), the satellite-god which allegedly fired information on Fat in 1974. However, a time after they leave Sophia, Phil finds out that she has died. But at the end of the novel, he receives information from the "Friends of God" that the Savior has been reborn.

2.3.2: Analysis

In this analysis, I will first describe the diachronic liminal state of the narrator Fat/Philip using Van Gennep's rites of passage and show how he becomes a "man" through this experience. Then, I want to show the effects and purposes of the interaction between the diachronic and the synchronic liminal characters. As there is a constant opposition of the material world and the spiritual world in the liminal phase, the main effect of this interaction is that it questions what constitutes reality in this novel. But in order to answer this question fully, we need to look at the new elements Fat/Philip is introduced to in his diachronic liminal phase. This is what makes the world in *Valis* different from the non-fictional world. After I have described the protagonist's liminal learning period, I shall discuss the nature of the

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⁵ To avoid further confusion, I will from now on refer to the fictional character "Philip K. Dick" as just "Philip" or "the narrator".

supernatural, synchronic liminal characters and their spiritual world. Their nature is the key to what constitutes reality in this novel. Dick for instance almost exclusively reveals his views on what is divine and what is human through his synchronic liminal characters.

Horselover Fat says that Zebra (later conveyed to be VALIS) fired information-rich coloured light on him in 1974, which gave "him knowledge beyond the telling" (Dick *Va* 80). This introduces Fat/Philip to VALIS's spiritual reality of pure information, which makes him a diachronic liminal character existing in between the normal world and a spiritual one.

Sutin says that, in real life, Dick claims to have seen pink rectangular shapes which seemed like phosphene afterimages in his 2-3-74 experience (Sutin 213). He furthermore claims that Dick felt certain that an entity was communicating with him at this stage and writes that one of the names Dick gave it was VALIS (Sutin 219).

In the introduction, I presented a spiritual reality in a Dick novel as an out-of-body experience, where its inhabitants are outside the time and space continuum of the material world. Furthermore, the influence of these incognitive realities makes the liminal characters unable to function in the normal, cognitive reality. There are several elements in the novel which demonstrate that VALIS's domain is such a separate, spiritual reality. First of all, Fat's/Philip's existence in this world is trans-temporal, which means that the time of the normal reality is abolished. This is shown in Philip's description of his other half, Fat's, experiences: "he had encountered his past selves and his future selves – two future selves: an early-on one, the three-eyed people, and then Zebra, who is discorporate" (Dick *Va* 153). This excerpt demonstrates that the protagonist, in addition to being trans-temporal, leaves his own material body. In his out-of-body experiences Fat/Philip enters the bodies of his forefathers and his descendants. He even becomes the discorporate Zebra/VALIS. The fact that this reality puts Fat/Philip outside space and time in the normal world shows that this is a spiritual

reality. However, this trans-temporal explanation is just one out of many incognitive interpretations of what makes up reality in this novel.

There is furthermore an incognitive aspect in the information which is fired at the protagonist. This demonstrates that there are unearthly qualities in the alternative world which separates it from the realism of the material reality and manifests its position as a spiritual world. For instance, with the information fired at him, Fat/Philip suddenly knows things that he had never known and which he could not possibly know. He knows that his five-year-old son had a birth defect and what it consisted of, down "to the medical specifics to relate to the doctor" (Dick Va 23). Fat/Philip also writes something in a foreign language, which his later wife Beth, who had taken a year of Greek in college, recognised as koine Greek (Dick Va 35). At one stage, Kevin, Fat's friend, discovers material in Valis, a film by the rock star Eric Lampton⁶, which overlaps "with Fat's encounter with God" (Dick Va 168): "Look,' Fat said. 'I don't understand. There were – 'He gestured. 'Things in Valis that happened to me in March of 1974. When I - " (Dick Va 169). In this film, Fat among other things sees the same pink light as he did in his mentioned experience with the divine (Dick Va 169). It then becomes established that Fat is locked into some sort of reality, "although certainly not the normal one" (Dick Va 178). This supernatural connection rather shows that Fat is linked to a spiritual world.

In *Divine Invasions-A Life of Philip K. Dick*, Dick's friend and fellow SF writer K.W. Jeter, the person Kevin is based on, claims that "going to see the movie is really the point at which the book differs from reality. Although there was a movie we all went to see" (Sutin 258). Sutin claims that this movie was *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, directed by Nicholas Roeg and starring David Bowie. He furthermore states that Dick loved this film and that "for a short time he [Dick] and Jeter listened closely to Bowie albums, hoping to discern a sly pop sign

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⁶ In this analysis, I will use capital letters for the being "VALIS". I will separate the film *Valis* from the novel I am writing about by specifying that I am talking about the film when this is the case.

from God/Valis/Zebra" (Sutin 258). But unlike what happens in the novel, Dick never found any signs. The book *Valis* consequently becomes different from the real world when supernatural events are introduced.

Fat/Philip's position in the alternative reality makes it difficult for him to relate to the normal reality. The reason for this can be found in Philip's account of Fat's encounter with VALIS: "Zebra broke through into our universe and fired beam after beam of information-rich colored light at Fat's brain, right through his skull, blinding him and fucking him up and dazing and dazzling him" (Dick *Va* 80). This traumatic experience has serious implications on Fat's/Philip's life. The protagonist's trans-temporal experience suddenly makes him incapable of coping with normal reality, demonstrating that this experience is a spiritual world. After his encounter with VALIS, Fat/Philip is sent into a limbo between the spiritual world and the material one. He becomes a drug addict and does not really function in society. As a result, he loses his wife, tries to kill himself and ends up for a while in a mental institution. According to Sutin, the suicide attempt depicted in *Valis* is an accurate account of the last serious suicide attempt Dick made in real life (Sutin 240).

In his hopeless attempt to help people, Fat/Philip also falls in love with the destructive women Gloria and Sherri. He first meets Gloria, who ends up committing suicide. He later gets together with Sherri, who dies of cancer. Both these girls take advantage of Fat's/Philip's generosity and almost drag him with them into death.

The protagonist's lack of function in his liminal phase is symbolised in his dual, schizophrenic existence as both Philip and Fat. Sutin claims that Dick's emotional and behavioural difficulties led him "to level against himself diagnoses of 'schizophrenia' and 'psychosis" (Sutin 9). This indicates that Dick identifies himself with the schizophrenic condition, something which is demonstrated in this personal, confessional novel. When Philip is visiting the Lamptons, they tell him that Horselover Fat is himself and merely a translation

of his own name: "'Philip' means 'Horselover' in Greek, lover of horses. 'Fat' is the (...) translation of [the German] 'Dick'. So you've translated your name' (Dick *Va* 188). Later, Philip realizes that Horselover Fat is a part of himself projected outward so that he avoids facing Gloria's death (Dick *Va* 213). Horselover Fat is Philip's attempt to survive and cope with the threshold position VALIS has put him in. By looking at himself and his experiences from a more objective, outside position, Philip desperately tries to distance himself from the emotional consequences of his liminal limbo. This does, however, not indicate that Philip abstains from the threshold experience.

Since Fat has experienced his earlier lives through VALIS's spiritual reality, Philip concludes that his other half has become an enlightened Buddha: "It strikes me as an interesting paradox that a Buddha – an enlightened one – would be unable to figure out, even after four-and-a-half years, that he had become enlightened (...) He resembled more a hit-and-run accident victim than a Buddha" (Dick *Va* 137). But even though Fat possesses superhuman information that should make him superior to others, his liminal position between the spiritual reality and the normal reality makes him unable to function in either of them.

This can be explained with the protagonist's constant longing to see VALIS/God again: "'Nobody knows what it's like,' Fat said, 'to have seen him and then not to see him. Almost five years now, five years of – 'He gestured. 'Of what?" (Dick *Va* 146). As he has already seen God, the material world becomes uninteresting for Fat/Philip. He knows that he will not be happy until he sees VALIS again. In accordance with Turner's definition of liminality, Fat/Philip is neither completely in the normal reality nor in the spiritual reality, and yet he is in both at the same time.

In the real world, Dick's 2-3-74 experience, which made him unable to function, may, however, have a more simple and natural explanation. Sutin claims that in early April 1974, Dick was hospitalized after a blood-pressure reading (as stated in *Valis*) of 280/178. This

reading is so high that it might be indication of a serious medical emergency. In fact, Tessa Dick, Philip Dick's wife at the time of his 2-3-74 experience, was convinced that Dick went through a series of minor strokes during this period, and notes that his doctor offered this as a probable diagnosis (Sutin 222-23). However, as the 2-3-74 experience is linked to an incognitive, divine revelation in *Valis*, it cannot be explained away with a series of strokes in the novel.

Fat/Philip has several guides in his liminal period. But the most important one is VALIS/Zebra/God, whose beam of pink light enchants the protagonist into becoming a liminal initiate. Because of its motives, VALIS is a much "better" guide than the being residing within Palmer Eldritch. Whereas Eldritch is a kidnapper who has the selfish agenda of getting company, VALIS's purpose is, as Philip says, to send Fat on his way" (Dick *Va* 138). VALIS wants to lead Fat/Philip to the Savior so that Fat/Philip can get salvation. He guides the protagonist by giving him clues which leads him onto the right path. The "coincidence" that Fat/Philip gets to see the film *Valis* is, for instance, one of these clues. The correspondence of this film with his own experience makes Fat/Philip contact Eric Lampton, one of the filmmakers. Through his contact with VALIS, Fat/Philip is given the password "King Felix", which makes Lampton realize that he has been summoned by the divine.

Lampton consequently invites Fat/Philip to come and visit him. This leads Fat/Philip, Kevin and David, a Christian friend of theirs, on a trip to Eric Lampton. Fat/Philip and his friends decide to refer to themselves as the "Rhipidon Society" on their quest. While visiting Eric Lampton, the Rhipidon Society are told that Eric, his wife, Linda, and their associate, Brent Mini, who call themselves the "Friends of God", are among the original, immortal builders of this world: "'My God,' Fat said, as if stricken. 'These are the original builders (...) You are our creators,' Fat said. The Lampton's nodded" (Dick *Va* 196). By telling the Rhipidon Society about the "rules" of the liminal reality, the Friends of God appear to

function as Fat's/Philip's guides. However, as the Lamptons and Mini have completely lost their minds, they are probably misguiding him. There are several indications that the Friends of God are nothing but crazy. Even Sophia herself says that the Lamptons and Mini are ill. In this respect, Philip says that he does not lump Sophia together with the "ugly" Lamptons (Dick *Va* 238). Furthermore, the Friends of God imprison the Rhipidon Society in order to keep the message of the Saviour's return to themselves. Later, they even end up accidentally killing the two-year-old Sophia with a laser-gun. However, the friends of God are unable to see that they are ill and that the keeping of Sophia to themselves is wrong.

Despite their ill nature, the Friends of God in any case manage to lead the Rhipidon Society to the Savior, Sophia, and let them talk to her. Sophia is the daughter of VALIS and Linda Lampton, and like VALIS, she functions as a guide for the Rhipidon Society. She tells them about the nature of the divine and gives them knowledge about the concept of time. Sophia furthermore guides the Rhipidon Society when she provides them with the words to escape from the Lamptons (Dick Va 238). This will enable the protagonist and his friends to perform the commission she gives them: "Now I give you your commission. You will go out into the world and [w]hat you teach is the word of man. 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" (Dick Va 221). Seeing that the Rhipidon Society are supposed to spread he happy message of the Saviour's return, they become disciples. Sophia furthermore tells the Rhipidon Society that they carry in them the voice and authority of Wisdom. This will guide and help Philip and his friends in the performing of their task (Dick Va 222). This voice of Wisdom alludes to the Holy Spirit which helps the disciples in the Bible with spreading the message of Jesus all over the world. By using this allusion, Dick establishes the divine entity in Valis as a holy trinity, similar to that of Christianity. It consists of the Father, VALIS, the daughter, Sophia, and the voice of Wisdom.

Being the saviour, Sophia is automatically a liminal character. She is both part of the material, normal world and the spiritual divine existence through her coexistence with VALIS, who is presented as God. VALIS can in Mini's words "be anywhere and any time it wishes to" (Dick *Va* 206). The construct is consequently outside time and space. As VALIS is the delegator of the pure information from the spiritual reality, it is furthermore the ruler of this world.

As VALIS is hardly noticed in the material world, it is arguable whether it is part of the normal reality or not. However, the construct can be spotted in the film *Valis* (Dick *Va* 167). His inseparable union with Sophia furthers his position in the normal reality. In fact, Sophia and VALIS form a dual unity in a similar sense to Fat and Philip. VALIS is the spiritual part of the duality, while Sophia is its manifestation in the material world. Horselover Fat is the projection of the protagonist who is in touch with the incognitive, spiritual reality through VALIS's information beam, while Philip is the more pragmatic and down-to-earth part, who is connected to the material world and narrates Fat's insane confessions. However, the fact that Philip holds conversations with Fat in his confessions demonstrates that Philip also participates in the spiritual journey. This is also demonstrated with Philip's membership in the religious Rhipidon Society.

As VALIS/Sophia has a liminal individuality, it is a synchronic liminal unity. In accordance with Turner's definition of liminality, the divine entity does not function optimally despite its existence in two worlds. If it had done so, the role of the Savior would be unnecessary. There would not be a need for a Savior in an ideal world.

I will now look at the effect of these guiding relationships and what the protagonist learns from them. First of all, he uses the information he gets about his son's birth defect to save the child's life. VALIS's beam also transfers a different personality into Fat/Philip's head, "[a] person with different memories, customs, tastes and habits" (Dick *Va* 117) named

Thomas, who is living in ancient Rome. The superimposition of Fat with Thomas is activated when the protagonist sees a girl's golden fish necklace, a sign she claims is used by the early Christians. Philip says that Fat accidentally receives this signal which is intended for Thomas, who, as opposed to Fat, deals in these signs (Dick *Va* 124).

Here is Fat's experience when the breakdown of compartmentalization between these personalities occurs:

Instantly, Fat experienced a flashback. He remembered – just for a half second.

Remembered ancient Rome and himself: as an early Christian; the entire ancient world and his furtive frightened life as a secret Christian hunted by the Roman authorities burst over his mind ... and then he was back in California 1974 (Dick *Va* 122).

With the extra personality, Fat/Phil is suddenly schizophrenic in a double sense. This strengthens Turner's view of the liminal period as a dysfunctional limbo where one is neither this nor that, but at the same time both. By being all these persons at the same time, the protagonist is bound to be confused and not function as either of the personalities. He is Fat, Phil and Thomas at the same time, but at the same time he is neither of them completely. From a voice inside Fat's head, we also understand that Thomas has noticed this schizophrenic state: "There's someone else living in me and he's not in this century.' The other personality had figured it out" (Dick *Va* 123). Both Fat/Philip and Thomas have consequently had a spiritual experience outside their conventional space and time. With this, Dick opens for the possibility that we exist in several worlds simultaneously, only that we are unaware of it. One of Philip's inner dialogues with Fat also questions the validity of time and space altogether: "I said, 'You mean once you were Thomas. You're a reincarnation of him and you remembered him and his – 'No, he's living now. Living in ancient Rome *now*. And

he is not me. Reincarnation has nothing to do with it" (Dick *Va* 123). But if these are still Roman times and Fat is not Thomas's reincarnation, the millenniums in between their lives have to be an illusion. And if Fat/Phil and Thomas are actually the same person, this means that their bodies are part of this fake world as well. In this respect, Fat even questions whether he has a body at all (Dick *Va* 123). By doing this, Dick challenges the validity and reality of the material existence in its entirety.

The possibility of a false reality leads us to Dick's notion of the Black Iron Prison, the material world of illusion which, according to the North American writer and cultural critic Erik Davis in *Philip K. Dick's Divine Interference*, is Dick's term "for the demiurgic worldly forces of political tyranny and oppressive social control" (Davis). Horselover Fat notices this Black Iron Prison, also called the Empire, in his trans-temporal experience: "he had discerned within the superimposition a Gestalt shared by both space-time continua, their common element: a Black Iron Prison" (Dick *Va* 54). This excerpt demonstrates the presence of this socially oppressive, empirical control both in the Roman Empire and in the "Nixon Empire" of 1974.

But why is there a Black Iron Prison and how has this been created? As he is of the opinion that his encounter with God/VALIS/Zebra has a holy origin, Fat/Philip develops a scripture or an "exegesis" which interprets and explains this experience (Dick *Va* 23). In real life, Dick did according to Sutin create such an exegesis which is his attempt "to explain to his own satisfaction (he never succeeded) a series of visions and auditions that seized his soul in February-March 1974 and held it to the end of his life" (Sutin 6). The entire exegesis as it looked when *Valis* was published can in fact be found in this novel's appendix. Concerning Dick's search for "what is real?", Sutin claims that "the *Exegesis* gave him room to fly – creating and banishing worlds at will" (Sutin 235). The freedom the exegesis gave Dick in

figuring out what is real is probably the reason why *Valis* is as meandering metaphysically as it is.

In journal listing #3 in the exegesis, the protagonist shows God's explanation of the Empire's nature: "He causes things to look different so it would appear time has passed" (Dick Va 46). From VALIS's guiding, Fat/Philip learns that time is not real in the Black Iron Prison. But who is "he" who tricks people into believing that time passes, when in fact it does not? Brent Mini says that the Black Iron Prison is a maze which the Friends of God built which one cannot get out of. He says that they were such great builders that they got bored and decided to play a game: "We did it voluntarily; were we such great builders that we could build a maze with a way out but which constantly changed so that, despite the way out, in effect there was no way out for us because the maze – this world – was alive?" (Dick Va 209). In order to create an inescapable maze, the Friends of God had to occlude themselves by reducing their exceptional faculties an entire level. Unfortunately, this relinquished the third eye of enlightenment, their prime evolutionary attribute, and turned victory over to their servant, the maze they had built (Dick Va 209). "He" who tricks people into believing time has passed is consequently the living maze, the Black Iron Prison. However, as the Friends of God are crazy, their claims should not be taken seriously. They have probably not created the Empire. Still, Mini is probably correct in his claim that the Black Iron Prison is the construction which deceives people into believing that the time and space continuum of the material reality is real.

This is also something Fat/Philip learns from his 1974 experience with VALIS: "Everyone who had ever lived was literally surrounded by the iron walls of the prison; they were all inside it and none of them knew it – except for the gray-robed secret Christians" (Dick *Va* 54-55). The protagonist is, however, not able to make sense of this at that stage.

Before meeting the Lamptons and Mini, Fat/Philip does not really know what the Black Iron Prison is. With the introduction of the Black Iron Prison, Dick indirectly asks: "What if we are living in a fake world, only that we are not aware of it?"

Linda Lampton tells the Rhipidon Society that all humans are originally from the planet Albemuth. She says that since the atmosphere here is toxic and makes humans deranged, the ones who stayed behind in the Albemuth system "built VALIS and sent it here to fire rational instructions at us, to override the pathology caused by the toxicity of the atmosphere" (Dick *Va* 207). With this concept, Dick opens for the possibility that we are alien invaders of our own planet. Seeing that the human race can be considered as a "virus" with our spreading of damage on the environment and nature, this is an interesting and highly modern view. However, the illness of the Friends of God makes it hard to know whether Linda's claim is valid or not.

The fake time of the Black Iron Prison explains how there have been many Messiahs who are all the same being. This is indicated by Eric Lampton when he speaks to Fat/Philip: "But you see, time isn't real. It's him again but not him; another one. There are many Buddhas, but only one" (Dick *Va* 190). Sophia is in fact presented as Buddha in Buddhism, Zoroaster in Gnosticism, Elijah in Judaism and Christ in Christianity all at once (Dick *Va* 152). The fact that there have been many Messiahs with the same identity also goes the opposite way around, and strengthens the argument of time as non-existent. By creating a Savior who superimposes Christianity with Buddhism, Dick also opens for the possibility of a universal religion. This is demonstrated when Kevin talks to David, who is a Christian: "This isn't limited to any one country or culture or religion. Sorry, David" (Dick *Va* 194). As it is the Black Iron Prison which causes things to look different, this living maze is to blame for the different appearances of the Messiah. Consequently, it is the Empire that splits people up

in different religious groups. This makes the Black Iron Prison responsible for the innumerable wars caused by religious disagreements.

But in his relationship with VALIS, Fat/Philip learns that the Empire is in the process of being destroyed. This can be seen in journal listing #18 in the exegesis:

Real time ceased in 70 C.E. with the fall of the temple at Jerusalem. It began in 1974 C.E. The intervening period was a perfect spurious interpolation aping the creation of the Mind. 'The Empire never ended,' but in 1974 a cypher was sent out as a signal that the Age of Iron was over (Dick Va 182).

This excerpt also demonstrates that there was once a real time before the living maze was created. The Black Iron Prison creates a copy world which is similar to the original reality on the surface, with the design of tricking The Mind, referring to the united spirit of mankind.

Through the film *Valis*, Fat/Philip learns who is starting to blow up the Empire in 1974. This picture shows an alternate USA where instead of Nixon being president, Ferris Fremount is (Dick *Va* 162). Fremount is removed from office by VALIS and its followers. As this film corresponds with Fat's/Philip's 1974 experience, the Rhipidon Society assume that in reality, Zebra/God/VALIS removed Nixon from office to begin destroying "the modernday manifestation of the Empire, the imperial United States Presidency" (Dick *Va* 181). By watching *Valis*, the Rhipidon Society learn that apostolic Christians armed with stunningly sophisticated technology, later revealed to possibly be the Friends of God, had broken through the space-time barrier into our world, and, with the aid of a vast information-processing instrument (VALIS) had basically deflected human history (Dick *Va* 180). When visiting the

Lamptons and Mini, the Rhipidon Society learn from Mini that VALIS selectively fires information on them to aid them in escaping the maze (Dick *Va* 209).

This battle against the Empire is also treated in *Radio Free Albemuth* (1985), a sort of prequel to *Valis*, written in 1976, where record producer Nicholas Brady and sf writer Philip Dick fight the Black Iron Prison ruled by President Ferris F. Freemount" (Dick *RFA*). Like in several of his later novels, Dick is also a character in *Radio Free Albemuth*. In that manner, his confessions about the 2-3-74 experience appear more personal and strengthen his late-life position as primarily a religious writer. This brings me back to *Valis*.

Dick uses Carl Gustav Jung's speculative concept of the collective unconscious to give a cognitive explanation of how Fat/Philip suddenly knows *koine* Greek, which is probably Thomas's language. This can be seen in one of Philip's reflections about Fat's experience:

There exists, too, a mechanism by which he might have known the *koine*; it has to do with phylogenic memory, the experience of which has been reported by Jung: he terms it the collective or racial unconscious. The ontogeny – that is, the individual – recapitulates the phylogeny – that is, the species – and since this is generally accepted, then maybe here lies a basis for Fat's mind serving up a language spoken two thousand years ago (Dick *Va* 41-42).

This phylogenic memory, memory of the species, explains how the protagonist can be in a trans-temporal state between two different identities. This demonstrates that in *Valis*, DNA can carry the species history. In this novel, the faculty of memory is consequently a part of genetic phylogeny. It is VALIS's enchantment of Fat/Philip which breaks the compartmentalization into separate personalities. The construct is consequently the one who

opens the "channel" to phylogenic memory for him. This happens when the protagonist sees a Christian fish symbol on a girl's necklace.

In exegesis entry #13, we find Pascal's statement that all "history is one immortal man who continually learns" (Dick Va 135). This functions as an explanation to why there is genetic memory in this novel. If all history is one man, this man has to remember elements from his different material bodies. This theory also clarifies how Fat/Philip becomes both his past selves and his future selves through the spiritual reality. Dick's application of the immortal man and phylogenic memory breathes new life and mystery into the speculative theories of Jung and Pascal. Using the authority of these figures, Dick's argument about a spiritual world outside of time and space and its counterpart, the Black Iron Prison, also comes out as more forceful. The application of these theories can also be regarded as Dick's desperate attempt to make cognitive sense of the highly incognitive experiences presented in this novel

With the theory of history as one immortal man, the author also raises the possibility that man is his own deity. In fact, Sophia tells the Rhipidon Society that man himself is God, and that the time has come when humans do not have to believe in any deity but themselves (Dick *Va* 224). From what he learns from the spiritual reality, the protagonist says that "[w]e are not individuals. We are stations in a single Mind" (Dick *Va* 124). However, the Black Iron Prison holds these stations separate from each other at all times. But Mini says that salvation is a word denoting "being led out of the space-time maze" (Dick *Va* 210), which reunites the immortal man. Salvation is consequently the transformation of all the separate stations into one single Mind. In his thoughts, Philip realizes the following about his other half, Fat: "Fat's saviour is Fat himself, as I already figured out; Zebra is all the selves along the linear time-axis, laminated into one supra- or trans-temporal self which cannot die, and which has come back to save Fat" (Dick *Va* 149). Through his liminal period, Fat/Philip learns that he himself

is the enlightened VALIS, a knowledgeable spiritual entity. In this novel, salvation thus designates the instant when man realizes that he himself is God.

What, if anything, happened in real life when Dick saw the Christian fish sign is impossible to find out. Sutin claims that Dick considered these visions as "a sudden triggering of what he experienced as past lives and genetic memories. Phil felt certain for the first time that he was – not as an individual, but as a spiritual entity – immortal" (Sutin 210). These visions do, as I have demonstrated, shine through in *Valis*.

One can argue that Fat/Philip re-aggregates into a single reality state when he learns that he himself is God. If this is the case, he has, in line with Van Gennep's theory of transitional stages, left his "adolescent" liminal state and become an "adult." Still, the presentation of man as God does not have to be interpreted in a literal sense. It may rather indicate that Philip feels better by humanity as an "adult" after his learning period.

However, when Fat/Philip learns that he is God, he does not go back to being in the same material world as he was in before 1974. He rather enters a spiritual, single reality state. This is symbolized in the fact that the protagonist's schizophrenia, the emblem of his dysfunctionality in the liminal state, ends at the same time as he learns that he is God. When Fat/Philip speaks to Sophia, Sophia destroys Horselover Fat to make Philip a whole spiritual being (Dick *Va* 212). This heals Philip from his dysfunctional limbo, and will according to Eric Lampton stop his suffering (Dick *Va* 189). In this paradigm, his split personality corresponds with his liminal phase.

When Fat and Philip become one spiritual being, Philip overcomes the tension between his spiritual self and his material self. Ingvild Gilhus considers this as man's main existential dilemma in Gnostic religion:

Is he destined to dwell in the world of matter or can he transcend into the spiritual world? The intention of gnostic religion was to overcome the dilemma by making its two horns into the two poles of a dynamic movement, which gradually transformed the biological human being into a spiritual entity. For this purpose, life was conceived of as a period of permanent liminality (Gilhus 124-25).

As the protagonist is actually transformed into a spiritual entity, he gets beyond this permanent liminality of gnostic life. This argues that his liminal phase has come to an end. Even if Philip's liminal state has not ended, he is, in any case, no longer a diachronic liminal character. As the protagonist has in fact been a God with a liminal individuality all along, he becomes a synchronic liminal character instead. This is quite similar to how Barney Mayerson becomes a synchronic threshold being after his fusion with Eldritch in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*. However, Mayerson is never Eldritch completely, like Fat/Philip is in fact God. Furthermore, Mayerson has not always been a synchronic liminal character, like Fat/Dick apparently has.

There are however indications that the liminal phase of Philip never ends. First of all, he is still a part of the material reality. He walks around like any other person and has in that sense not become a spirit completely. Philip is merely aware of the fact that time has started to pass again and that the Black Iron Prison is in the process of being destroyed completely. Furthermore, Fat returns right after Philip has learned that Sophia has died. This indicates that the protagonist's schizophrenia has not been completely cured, and that he is consequently still a liminal character. The return of Fat also demonstrates that Philip doubts the validity of his divine experience (Dick *Va* 242). However, when Philip gets the message that the Savior has been reborn, Fat leaves on an indefinite holiday. The fact that they only hear from Fat on the odd occasion demonstrates that the protagonist is as good as cured from his dysfunctional

limbo. This indicates that the liminal phase has in any case had some sort of a positive effect on Philip.

The answer to if, when and how Fat's/Philip's liminal period ends is, as I have demonstrated, quite ambiguous. The protagonist's threshold phase may in fact never stop. Nonetheless, he learns a lot in the liminal phase. In his threshold period, Philip is cured from his schizophrenia and learns among other things that man is his own God and that the world we live in is a Black Iron Prison.

Fat, on the other hand, does not learn anything in the liminal phase. When he "leaves" Philip, he goes on a pointless, but quite relaxed and resigned search for another sign of the Saviour. Unlike Philip, Fat is not content with merely getting a better view on humanity. What first and foremost separates these figures is that Philip has managed to become an "adult" in his objectification of the metaphysical and incognitive experiences. Fat fails in his inability to distance himself from the religious revelations. The protagonist's liminal period is illustrated in figure 6:

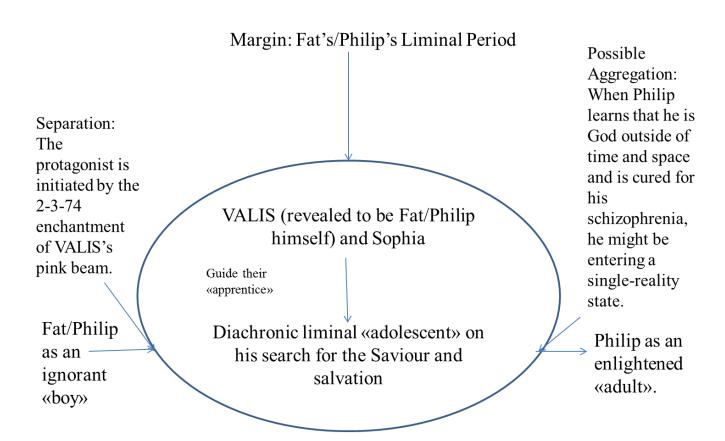


Figure 6: Fat/Philip's State of Liminality

There is a certain significance to the fact that Fat/Philip becomes Thomas and that he is guided by Sophia. Both Sophia and Thomas are in fact apocryphal, Gnostic figures from the Bible. According to the protagonist, Sophia's voice is the neutral AI voice that he has heard in his head since 1974 (Dick *Va* 215). This is the voice of Wisdom which has enlightened Fat/Philip into realizing that he himself is God and which will help the Rhipidon Society in their commission, which is to spread the message of the Savior's return and to preach that man himself is God. One can consequently argue that the neutral AI voice contains the wisdom of the immortal man, who is God.

In the apocryphal book *Pistis Sophia*, Sophia is also a strong figure presented as Wisdom, identified with the Holy Spirit itself. She is introduced as the goddess of Gnosticism who is she of the Left Hand, whereas her husband, Jesus, is he of the Right Hand. While Jesus is the male aspect of logos, Sophia is its female aspect (*Pistis Sophia*). Sophia's dynamic unity with her male alter ego Jesus in this apocryphal text links Dick's use of the feminine Sophia figure with his relationship to his twin sister Jane, who died when she was only six weeks old. Like Jane, Sophia in *Valis* does, as I have demonstrated, also die very young.

According to Sutin, Dick in real life also ascribed a feminine quality to the AI voice that he heard. Sutin claims that Dick termed this entity both Sophia and "twin sister Jane – with whom Phil felt he was, at times, in telepathic contact" (Sutin 214). In exegesis entry # 32, the protagonist demonstrates the connection between Dick's twin sister Jane and Sophia:

The changing information which we experience as world is an unfolding narrative. *It tells about the death of a woman* [italics and boldface in original]. This woman, who died long ago, was one of the primordial twins. She was one half of the divine syzygy. The purpose of the narrative is the recollection of her

and her death. The mind does not wish to forget her (...) The record of her existence and passing is ordered onto the meanest level of reality by the suffering Mind which is now alone. If, in reading this, you cannot see that Fat is writing about himself, then you understand nothing (Dick *Va* 40-41).

The importance of Jane is demonstrated in the fact that the purpose of the "world narrative" is the "recollection of her and her death". This entry indicates that Dick never really got over the loss of his twin sister and that there still is a deep, special bond between the two. As stated by Sutin,

[t]he trauma of Jane's death remained the central event of Phil's psychic life. The torment extended throughout his life, manifesting itself in (...) a fascination with resolving dualist (twin-poled) dilemmas – SF/mainstream, real/fake, human/android, and at last (...) in the two-source cosmology described in his masterwork *Valis* (Sutin 12).

Sutin's remark indicates that Dick's relationship to his twin sister is a reason why Dick presents himself as a schizophrenic in this novel. He feels lonely due to the loss of Jane and therefore needs to project himself as Horselover Fat to get company.

In the Gnostic apocryphal book *Acts of Thomas*, Thomas is presented as Jesus's identical twin. He comprises the earthly, human side of Jesus, while Jesus himself is entirely spiritual in his being. In this manner, Jesus guides Thomas in his earthly commission from his position in heaven (*The Acts of Thomas*). This Gnostic view of Jesus as an exclusively spiritual being is docetic, which, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, designates "that Christ's body is not human, but either a phantom, or of real but celestial substance"

(Dictionary "docetic, adj.".). As Sophia in Valis is presented as Christ, the reference to Thomas demonstrates that her body is not human. Both her body and her death is in fact an illusion. As Sophia only seems to have a physical body and to be physically mortal, this offers an explanation to why she is also Christ and Buddha and how she can be "re-born". As the protagonist becomes Thomas, he is the human twin who is guided by the incorporeal Sophia. This corresponds with the protagonist's guidance by the AI voice, who is Sophia.

I shall now discuss the liminal nature of the synchronic liminal characters and see what Dick manages to express with them. By doing this, I shall demonstrate what constitutes reality in the *Valis* universe. In addition to being in a liminal state between a spiritual world and the material reality, the synchronic threshold characters in *Valis* are also placed in other liminal categories with significant effects.

First of all, VALIS is positioned on the threshold between good and evil. In exegesis entry #41, the protagonist describes the nature of the Black Iron Prison: "The Empire is the institution, the codification, of derangement; it is insane and imposes its insanity on us by violence, since its nature is a violent one" (Dick *Va* 151). With its insane, evil nature, this living maze becomes the manifestation of evil in *Valis*. Characters who are insane and violent are consequently in connection with the destructive Black Iron Prison, just like evil actions are connected to hell in Christianity. This allegory is furthered with Kevin's reflections about the name of the US president in the film *Valis*: "You know why the president in *Valis* was named Ferris F. Fremount? I figured it out. 'F' is the sixth letter of the English alphabet. So F equals six. So FFF, Ferris F. Fremount's initials, are in numerical terms 666" (Dick *Va* 174). In the *Book of Revelations*, 666 is the number of the Beast, Lucifer's brand. As the US Presidency of 1974 is considered as the modern day manifestation of the Black Iron Prison, this makes Fremount or Nixon into the devil, the ruler of hell.

In exegesis entry #43, the living maze is presented as the antagonist to VALIS's (the plasmate's) spiritual reality: "These are the two principles, the dark (the Empire) and the light (the plasmate). In the end, Mind will give victory to the latter. Each of us will die or survive according to which way he aligns himself and his efforts." (Dick *Va* 152) By being the hell-like Empire's nemesis, VALIS's spiritual reality comes to represent the forces of good in the novel. The belief in the victory of light at the expense of darkness furthermore demonstrates Dick's concern for a moral fiction. This strong dark/light conflict also reflects the Gnostic Manichean world view that through human history, light is being gradually removed from the evil world of matter into the place of light from which it came. In *Valis*, this place of light is the Albemuth System, the place from which the human race originates.

In exegesis entry #49, the protagonist describes the two branches of existence:

Two realms there are, upper and lower. The upper, derived from hyperuniverse I or Yang, Form I of Parmenides, is sentient and volitional. The lower realm, or Yin, Form II of Parmenides, is mechanical, driven by blind, efficient cause, deterministic and without intelligence, since it emanates from a dead source. (...)

We are trapped, by and large, in the lower realm (Dick *Va* 236).

The dead, mechanical, efficient lower world without intelligence, depicting the Black Iron Prison, points to the evil, mechanical qualities of Arnie Kott in *Martian Time-Slip* and Leo Bulero and the human Eldritch in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*. These characters are, at times, presented as inhuman and represent the disadvantages of technological development. While the dead Black Iron Prison is presented as inhuman, the living, good qualities of VALIS's supporters are presented as human. With this, Dick

encourages us to retain human qualities in our industrial development and avoid becoming cold and calculating like the Black Iron Prison and the machines we are building.

In *Valis*, the authorities, representing the differentiated world, maintain evil machine-like qualities of the Black Iron Prison. Fat/Philip says that "[t]he authorities (...) wanted to put all persons who were not clones of the establishment away" (Dick *Va* 12). With this, Dick urges us not to remove all that is different from the "norm", like Hitler did in the genocide surrounding World War 2. This is a path down to a machine-like world similar to the Black Iron Prison. By being upholders of Empire's laws, the authorities are compared to the Archons, the rulers of the Demiurge's created reality in Gnostic mythology.

Until now, I have indicated that VALIS and its associates are whole-heartedly good, while the Black Iron Prison and its agents are of an exclusively evil nature. However, the real state of things is not this black and white and simple. In fact, VALIS embodies evil elements in addition to its good ones.

VALIS's evil nature is displayed when he lets Sophia die. According to Linda Lampton, that "which is to be healed will be healed" (Dick *Va* 203), and that "which will be destroyed will be destroyed" (Dick *Va* 203). Since there is no apparent logic and sense behind who will be healed and who will be destroyed, this demonstrates that there is no evident purpose in existence. The fact that VALIS does not help these beings is supposed to be beyond our understanding. The assertion that God's ways cannot be known is common within various religious teachings and is often regarded as an ad-hoc hypothesis by non-believers. Furthermore, Fat/Phil says that "God, in very truth, attacks and injures us, in his role as antidote" (Dick *Va* 81). This is something the protagonist notices with his complete lack of function in the liminal state.

This notwithstanding, VALIS is of a much better nature than the being residing in Palmer Eldritch. Whereas Eldritch spreads a virus consisting of the dead, material and

machine-like personality of the human industrialist who was originally Palmer Eldritch, VALIS spreads sentience and sanity (Dick *Va* 79). VALIS is furthermore the altruistic "informational anti-toxin" (Dick *Va* 207) to irrationality which saves humans from the evil Black Iron Prison. The creature within Eldritch is, on the other hand, merely an independent selfish being who wants company. Still, VALIS's state between good and evil fronts the possibility that God may not be wholeheartedly good.

The synchronic liminal characters furthermore appear in liminal states between being natural and artificial, animate and inanimate. When the Rhipidon Society talk to Mini, he reveals that VALIS is artificial: "'VALIS is a construct,' Mini said. 'An artefact. It's anchored here on Earth, literally anchored" (Dick *Va* 206). This presents the construct as an inanimate creation. However, Mini also reveals that VALIS has a living side: "'There is always information when VALIS is present,' Mini said, nodding and smiling. 'He is information. Living information" (Dick *Va* 204). Even though this does not make it human, the fact that VALIS is *living* information separates it from being inanimate. To further this argument, Mini also personifies the construct by calling it "he".

While talking to the Rhipidon Society, Linda Lampton reveals Sophia's ambiguous nature in this respect. She says that Sophia is "[a]n artificial intelligence in a human body. Her body is alive, but her psyche is not" (Dick *Va* 215). This demonstrates that Sophia is part natural and part artificial and consequently in a liminal state between these categories. Kevin says that Sophia is exclusively a computer and an artificial intelligence (Dick *Va* 215), while Mini claims that there is no human element in the Savior. However, Sophia herself says the following: "I am not a god; I am a human. I am a child, the child of my father, which is Wisdom Himself" (Dick *Va* 222).

As I have demonstrated, both VALIS and Sophia are in a liminal state between being natural and artificial. In the introduction, I argued that the confusion as to whether a figure is

animate or inanimate will revive the repressed childhood complex of treating dolls as living creatures. This doubt may, according to Freud produce an uncanny atmosphere. I also stated that this aesthetic feature creates a gothic-like, sublime mood, which designates a feeling of powerlessness and intense fear when humans find out how lightweight and trivial they are compared to the immense universe. When the Rhipidon Society are faced by VALIS and Sophia who are possibly an artificial God-entity, they are truly met by such a powerful and awing presence. This consequently projects a sublime aura and sense of wonder onto the protagonist and his friends. With his omnipotence, VALIS is, unlike Eldritch, a capital "G" God. Whereas Eldritch is a demigod with human flaws and shortcomings, VALIS shows no apparent sense of weakness. With VALIS's omnipotence and the convincing parallel the holy trinity consisting of VALIS, Sophia and the AI Voice has to Christianity, *Valis* becomes a solid allegory to religion.

In his liminal period, Fat/Philip learns a lot about what is real in the seemingly realistic landscape of *Valis*. He finds out that the material reality is a fake world, called the Black Iron Prison, where time does not pass. Through the guidance of Sophia, Fat/Philip understands that he himself is a part of the immortal God, VALIS, which was built to rescue humans from this Empire. While talking to Sophia, Fat/Philip is cured of his schizophrenia, which may indicate that his liminal period is over and that he has been aggragated into a single-state spiritual reality. The fact that *Valis* depicts Dick's personal and highly ambiguous experience makes this novel metaphysically and psychologically superior to the other books I am dealing with in this thesis. *Valis* consequently establishes Dick as predominantly a religious writer.

3.0: Conclusion

The structural connection between the diachronic liminal characters and their synchronic liminal counterparts has, as I have demonstrated, a lot of effects and implications in Dick's sf. When synchronic threshold shamans bewitch other characters into becoming liminal initiates, the diachronic liminal characters in this thesis are separated from their single-reality states and enter a state of uncertainty between a material world and a spiritual reality. At this stage, the diachronic liminal characters are all, like adolescents, unable to function properly in their lives. For instance, Jack Bohlen's schizophrenia re-emerges, Barney Mayerson is unable to distinguish Eldritch's Chew-Z Reality from the material one and Fat/Philip becomes a drug addict who tries to commit suicide.

However, when they re-aggregate into a single-reality state, namely the world of "adults", the diachronic liminal characters have developed and become wiser. In their newly attained positions as "men", Jack Bohlen, Barney Mayerson and Philip Dick have learnt a lot about what is real and how to deal with their lives in the material reality. This corresponds with Van Gennep's transitional theories on liminality, where the liminal phase in between the separation and the re-aggregation is considered as a learning period. The transition from boy to man consequently functions as an allegory to what the diachronic liminal characters in Dick's sf go through. What the diachronic threshold characters experience as real is debated through the various liminal states Dick's synchronic threshold characters find themselves in. By means of the estranged sf universes of the fictionalising philosopher Philip Dick, the answers to these questions present new interpretations of what is human, what is divine and what is civilized.

In the time between the publication of *Martian Time-Slip* and *Valis*, Dick's fiction becomes progressively more metaphysical in nature. This is demonstrated in the fact that he relies increasingly on incognitive, religious theories in his explanation of what is real. The

chronologically advancing degree of metaphysical power in Dick's depiction of synchronic liminal characters reflects this fact. Whereas Manfred and Helio merely have shamanic abilities, Eldritch has the force of Greek and Nordic gods. But as VALIS is God, the construct is omnipotent, and thus as powerful as anything. In the religious culmination *Valis*, Dick is exclusively relying on metaphysical evidence to demonstrate what is cognitive. As he is no longer writing cognitive estrangement, he has left the sf genre. Instead, he is writing incognitive estrangement, the mark of the fantasy genre. One can consequently argue that Dick's transformation into a religious writer in his later novels makes him into an author of fantasy.

In fact, Dick's development into a religious writer parallels the increasing ambiguity of what is real in his novels. In *Martian Time-Slip*, it is quite certain that Manfred and Helio have advanced shamanic powers and nothing more. Dick does not present them as gods or other superhuman beings. In *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, however, the interpretation is more difficult. Palmer Eldritch might be a man, an alien, a machine, our creator, or all of these identities at the same time. With *Valis*, what is real is even more ambiguous. Here, God might be VALIS, Zebra or even man himself. The experience of the Rhipidon Society might be real, or just a figment of their imagination. A figure based on David Bowie might be the Indian god Shiva, or he might be a mad person who is an accomplice in killing a two-year-old girl with a laser-gun. The developments in Dick's writing which I have been discussing are illustrated in figure 7. This diagram describes the chronologically intensifying degree of metaphysical awareness in the liminal experiences of Dick's sf. The x-axis is the timeline, whereas the y-axis describes the degree of metaphysical power in the character depiction:

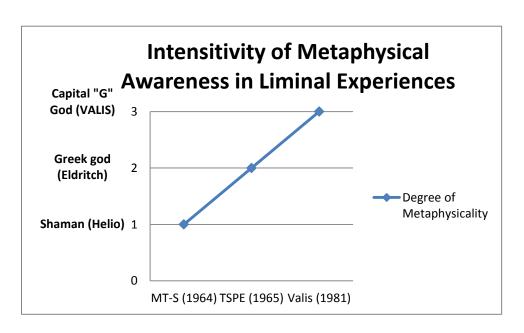


Figure 7: Degree of Metaphysical awareness in the liminal experiences of Dick's sf.

As I have demonstrated, the liminal characters are paradoxes incarnated. By being in between several contrasting and unpairable categories, the liminal characters mock the black and white symbolism which pervades the infrastructure in society, and thus also criticizes essentialism. Our reality does not necessarily consist of absolutes. For instance, human beings can seldom be characterized as wholeheartedly good or entirely bad. We are rather positioned somewhere in between these states, just like Palmer Eldritch. The liminal characters can consequently be seen to represent the human condition.

Barbara Babcock-Abrahams claims that "[w]e not only tolerate but need 'a margin of mess" (Babcock-Abrahams 152). The undifferentiated outsider-states of liminal beings are actually necessary to create change in society. Without them, it would be impossible to get rid of the clichés and brakes of improvement in the old world. If everybody sticks to established conventions, our society will be very static and never develop. For instance, Turner argues that the values of the undifferentiated in modern Western society "are strikingly present in the literature and behavior of what came to be known as the 'beat generation', who were succeeded by the 'hippies'" (Turner *TRP* 112). Without these movements, our society would most likely still be as essentialistic and dogmatic as it was a hundred years ago, and we would never even have the postmodern tradition, in which Dick is a pioneer.

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