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Negotiating Reality in Philip K. Dick's Fiction: from Postmodernism to Posthumanism

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Negocjowanie rzeczywistości w powieściach Philipa K. Dicka: od postmodernizmu do posthumanizmu

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Introduction

The aim of this dissertation is to discern, delineate, track down and place the modes of subjectivity that emerge amidst the socio-material realities depicted in Philip K. Dick's selected novels. The author's focus on the theme of questioning and scrutinizing the nature of reality stands out for the complexity of perspectives from which it is presented. His characters are placed in parallel worlds, whose truth status is always subject to investigation and interpretation; they create worlds using hybrids of psychic evolution and technological devices; finally, they experience transformations of subjectivity or are victims of hallucinations – induced by themselves or others – that alter their perception of reality. Each of these themes in Dick's narratives reveals new ways of observing and interacting with reality, while posing difficult questions about the procedures and principles responsible for our own sense of realism, truth, and subjectivity, both human and posthuman.

I will attempt to locate in Dick's novels instances of posthuman subjectivity in relation to cybernetics and theory of autopoiesis, but also taking into consideration later

developments in the field of posthumanism and its ongoing discourse with postmodernism, and create a comprehensive insight into what characterizes subjectivities emergent within the unstable worlds imagined by Dick. My goal is to discern patterns of scrutinizing reality, subjectivity and agency developing in the author's works that employ figurations later more fully explored by the posthumanists. In so doing, I hope to discuss Dick as an author who anticipated the posthuman turn whose fuller conceptualization in philosophical thought was yet to come.

Finding such mechanisms and analyzing the results of their implementation within the bounds of Dick's literary worlds and narratives would provide an important insight into the validity of employing posthumanist perspectives in the contemporary political and philosophical landscapes. Numerous commentaries on Dick prove his relevance to providing literary insight into issues whose provenance and area of concern trace a fascinating trajectory leading from poststructuralist/ postmodernist paradigm to the posthumanism overcoming of the deadlock that that paradigm had become. It is thus my hope that discussing certain stipulations, imaginative constructs or intuitions on the fate of the human animal in Dick's texts would illuminate possible directions of resolving the postmodern aporias by means of concepts afforded by the posthumanist thought.

Overview of theory

For the purposes of this dissertation, I will analyze the selected science-fiction works of Philip K. Dick not only within the framework of the notions proposed by posthumanist scholars such as Donna Haraway, Rosi Braidotti, N. Katherine Hayles and others, but also in relation to some of the prominent representatives of the postmodernist and

poststructuralist perspectives. This will allow me to outline the comparisons and confrontations of ideas in the ongoing discourse between those related but distinct philosophical stances, as well as the progression of Dick's own idiosyncratic philosophy towards a posthumanist perspective throughout his oeuvre. The following sections will introduce the posthumanist and postmodernist ideas that guide my readings throughout this dissertation.

Posthumanism

Critical posthumanism[1] will be my point of reference to reading Dick throughout this work. While the exact definition of the term is elusive, as the framework shifts between different discourses and contexts, one could propose a rudimentary model of posthumanism as a radical deconstruction of the categorical hierarchies that have governed Western discourses, such as human vs. nonhuman, biological vs. artificial or male vs. female.

From this point of view, this philosophical movement continues the work of poststructuralists and postmodernists, striving for a dissolution of logocentric hierarchies and essentialist modes of thought. Posthumanists call for, in Pramod K. Nayar's words, "a more inclusive definition of life, and a greater moral-ethical

1 Not to be confused with the techno-enthusiastic movement of transhumanism represented by such thinkers as Max More or Nick Bostrom: an idealistic drive to enhance humanity with technology, thus breaking the limitations of the mortal body. As Cary Wolfe points out: "[transhumanists] are, philosophically speaking, rather traditional humanists. Bostrom's version of the posthuman derives, as he freely admits, from ideals of rational agency and human perfectibility drawn directly from Renaissance Humanism and the Enlightenment" ("Posthumanism," *Glossary* 356). The transhumanist stance reiterates the ideas of liberal individualism with its reliance on the transcendent, exceptional qualities of traditional humanism and the drive towards the separation of mind and body. This is also the straw-man envisioning of the posthumanist movements as seen by its conservative opponents, such as Fukuyama, who argues that it poses a danger to the concept of human dignity (*Our Posthuman Future* 160). Operating under the thesis that there exists some naturalistic human "essence," he considers it unethical to strive for "a posthuman future, in which technology will give us the capacity gradually to alter that essence" (217). Fukuyama insists that this essential, rational humanism lies at the foundation of all political rights and to refute it would mean destabilizing basic liberties.

response, and responsibility, to non-human life forms in the age of species blurring and species mixing. Posthumanism therefore has a definite politics in that it interrogates the hierarchic ordering … of life forms" (19). It is a movement towards dismantling the social development of liberal humanism and the anthropocentric taxonomies of the modern world. The focus of this undertaking falls on sustainable, ethical and conscientious modes of being, often but not necessarily, mediated by technology. At the same time posthumanist scholars remain cautiously critical of the ways we utilize technology towards that goal, as they remain conscious of its possible pitfalls.

a) Donna Haraway's Cyborg

A formative moment for posthumanist movements is the publication of Donna Haraway's "A Cyborg Manifesto" in 1985[2]. In the essay, she establishes the figure of a cyborg. The term, borrowed from science fiction literature, describes a being immersed in a technological environment, free to modify itself and its relation to the world. Jennifer González justifies the necessity for the cyborgized ontology in a postmodern world by stating that "when the current ontological model of human being does not fit a new paradigm, a hybrid model of existence is required to encompass a new, complex and contradictory lived experience" (61). The point is not to follow the individualistic idea of being human, but to equalize it with nonhuman or non-biological perspectives. Haraway describes this new paradigm and its consequences accordingly:

> By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorised and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs. The cyborg is

2 While Haraway's "A Cyborg Manifesto" is often considered to be the foundational work for posthumanism, Neil Badmington, in the collection *Posthumanism* (2000) includes this text only after a selection of a number of essays which were written prior to it. These articles and book excerpts already contain the seeds of ideas from which critical posthumanism branches out. These include, among others, Roland Barthes's "The Great Family of Man," Michel Foucault's "The Order of Things…" and Louis Althusser's "Marxism and Humanism." The inclusion of these philosophers allows Badmington to showcase, in his editorial capacity, the origins of the posthuman thought in earlier philosophical movements. As he concludes in his introduction to the collection: "An approach informed by poststructuralism testifies to an endless opposition from within the traditional account of what it means to be human… Humanism never manages to constitute itself; it forever rewrites itself as posthumanism" (9).

> our ontology; it gives us our politics. The cyborg is a condensed image of both imagination and material reality, the two joined centres structuring any possibility of historical transformation. (“A Cyborg Manifesto” 70)

To expand upon this statement, the cyborg is both a rhetorical figure as well as a possible state of being or praxis. It illustrates the new possibilities of flight away from the “tradition of racist, male-dominated capitalism” (70). When life becomes mediated by ever more invasive instances of mass communication, automation, prostheses and informational white noise, the most immediate danger is the possibility of these technologies being usurped by oppressive power structures such as sexism or racial segregation. For marginalized groups the solution is to immerse themselves in the technological landscape to create hybridized, embodied non-naturalist subjectivities. As Haraway notices “Late twentieth-century machines have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body … and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines” (72). Therefore, the cyborg stands as a road map for dismantling the dualistic taxonomies which prioritize the human, the organic, the normalized, and opens up a way to embrace the non-hierarchical relationships to the human and nonhuman *Other*.

Haraway conceptualizes in the figure of a cyborg a wayward progeny of the military-industrial complex that has the capacity to subvert the order of masculinist and euro-centric politics. As she argues: “The cyborg is a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self. This is the self feminists must code” (79). The critical socialist-feminist discourse in the posthuman era has to become interdisciplinary and adapt to the areas of science and technology in a collective, embodied and experienced effort towards disrupting the modern power structures.

b) Autopoiesis

Following Haraway's vision of a hybridized nature-cultural being, many philosophers undertook interdisciplinary projects to establish theoretical frameworks which would account for such models of subjectivity. One such framework is the notion of autopoiesis, adapted by scholars such as N. Katherine Hayles, Cary Wolfe, or Bruce Clarke, and rooted in biology and cybernetics. In her *How We Became Posthuman,* Hayles asserts that the human is already immersed in the informational medium, as a part of a reflexive cybernetic system. If information flows through the nervous system to agitate the consciousness, then, in her words "the boundaries of the autonomous subject are up for grabs, since feedback loops can flow not only *within* the subject but also *between* the subject and the environment" (2).These feedback loops are processes through which the body and the environment create *us* just as much as we are able to modify them; a collection of stimuli we experience through biological processes constructs the consciousness. As a result, the boundary between the subject and their surroundings becomes a porous threshold. Thus, "the posthuman subject is an amalgam, a collection of heterogeneous components, a material-informational entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction" (3). The emergence of subjectivity is dependent on their environment to such a degree that information cannot be separated from materiality, be it biological embodiment or digital medium, because each allows the other to exist.

Hayles compares this configuration to the phenomenon of *autopoiesis* as described by Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela: a process of self-organization or self-creation of organisms[3], in which the elements of a given system are organizing

3 "An autopoietic system is organized (defined as a unity) as a network of processes of production (transformation and destruction) of components that produces the components that: 1. through their interactions and transformations continuously regenerate and realize the network of processes (relations) that produced them; and 2. constitute it (the machine) as a concrete unity in the space in which they [the components] exist by specifying the topological domain of its realization as such a

themselves through decentralized closed loops of internal operations, but the overall structure of the system is open in that it reacts to environmental stimuli as a coherent unit. As Stefan Herbrechter argues:

> Systems as dynamic and processual forms of organization as well as stable, recursive structures are, despite their self-referentiality at organizational level, open to their environment and they are thus perfectly suited for explanations of human and nonhuman subjects in a non-dualistic way (i.e. as 'embodied minds', emergence or complexities). … Humans can be seen as one form of observing subjects among many others, within one or several systems, each of which depends on its environment autopoietically while influencing it in return. (*Posthumanism. A critical analysis* 207)

For Hayles as well, the systems theory can be employed to critique the idea of transcendent human consciousness. She argues that we instead can conceptualize the human as a self-organization of distributed biological, technological and environmental components. In this framework, there is no essential, fixed subject, but a dynamic network of interactions between the organism and its environment that organizes itself as the emergent subjectivity. Hayles wants us to see the new digital technologies such as virtual realities or artificial life models as elements contributing to the organization of this system, and therefore to the formation of human subjectivity. For Hayles, the goal of this shift in perspective is to approach "a dynamic partnership between humans and intelligent machines [that] replaces the liberal humanist subject's manifest destiny to dominate and control nature" (*How We Became Posthuman* 288) and embrace our posthuman, cyborgized selves.

Related models have been proposed by such scholars as Robert Pepperell and Catherine Malabou who both analyze philosophical and scientific perspectives on consciousness, body, and embodied intelligence to suggest that the consciousness is a manifestation of the material autopoietic processes. Pepperell argues that "the human is a 'fuzzy edged' entity that is profoundly dependent into its surroundings, much as the brain is dependent on the body" (20). The constant interaction between the human

network." (Varela, qtd in Schatten, Bača 839).

subject and their environment implies that the boundaries of the former are not fixed, but in a continuous flux dictated by the changes in its surroundings, and leads Pepperell to the conclusion that "consciousness and the environment cannot be absolutely distinguished" (22). Human consciousness is the emergent property of the interactions between the body and surroundings – a byproduct of the system's complexity (178). Malabou also combines the fields of biology, neurology and critical theory to propose an ontological model of what she calls "brain plasticity." She argues against the claims of a "flexible brain," that is a supposed construction of subjectivity which can return to its original organization by rebuilding itself following psychological or physical trauma or injury. Marc Jeannerod explains in the foreword to Malabou's *What should we do with our brain*: "plasticity is a mechanism for adapting, while flexibility is a mechanism for submitting" (xiv). In contrast to the flexible model, the plastic brain has the capacity of "a sort of neuronal creativity that depends on nothing but the individual's experience, his life, and his interactions with the surroundings" (21-22). In chapter 5, we will see how this idea is useful in understanding the formation of a new subjective perspective out of a damaged brain in Dick's *A Scanner Darkly.* The consciousness, in the purview of posthumanism, is therefore a dynamic process of autopoiesis dependent on the subject's embodiment.

c) Inter-subjective assemblages and new materialisms

The idea of productive interdependence between human and nonhuman elements of a common material system continues to be explored by posthumanist philosophers such as Rosi Braidotti, Jane Bennett, or Francesca Ferrando. As constructed in her 2013 work *The Posthuman*, Braidotti's view is that "the common denominator for the posthuman condition is an assumption about the vital, self-organizing and yet non-naturalistic structure of living matter itself" (2). Braidotti, therefore, echoes the previous scholars

(as well as the philosophical stance of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari), adapting Hayles's perspective on autopoiesis and Haraway's rejection of nature/culture dualities. However, she departs from the cyborg metaphor to instead put forward a model of the posthuman practice which emphasizes a non-anthropocentric perspective and the potential force of self-organization of living matter. She searches for its basis in "the Other": those participants of the society which were traditionally excluded or persecuted under the binary logic of the Eurocentric liberal humanism on the grounds of race, sex, class or species. The posthuman subject, as presented by Braidotti, rather than being an autonomous entity, is a network of relations with other entities together forming a common ecology. She asserts:

> Posthuman subjects are a work-in-progress: they emerge as both a critical and a creative project within the posthuman convergence along posthumanist and post-anthropocentric axes of interrogation. They interrogate the selfrepresentations and conventional understandings of being human, which "we" have inherited from the past. In doing so, they explore the multi-faceted and differential nature of the collective "we." (*Posthuman Knowledge* 41)

The formation of posthuman subjectivity can be understood as a negotiation with the other nodes in a common network to the end of furthering their self-organization. This inter-subjective autopoiesis requires openness to diverse perspectives and positive, non-hierarchical relations to the other participants of life[4]. Braidotti's subject is aware of their potential – the vital force – to co-create the environments to which they belong. This process can take many forms: subverting anthropocentric hierarchies, feminist and minoritarian empowerment or the generation of mutual inter-dependence of living organisms as a reaction to bio-genetic and technological developments of capitalism. This idea of the affirmative posthuman is developed further by Francesca Ferrando, who

4 But also death: Braidotti, similarly to other scholars of the posthuman, such as MacCormack or Ferrando, disputes the humanistic and transhumanistic ambitions of immortality, instead arguing that "Making friends with the impersonal necessity of death is an ethical way of installing oneself in life as transient, slightly wounded visitor" (*The Posthuman* 132). Therefore the awareness and acceptance of the inevitability of death is a vital part of creating the posthuman relation to other beings, as it affirms one's place as a part of a dynamic, interdependent element in the system of living matter.

envisions the posthuman entity as one that experiences itself and is experienced by the other not as an "anthropos," a sovereign consciousness, but as an embodied network of connections to human and nonhuman others. Here, especially important is the deconstruction of the concept of "the human," which historically "has been reinscribed within categories marked by exclusionary practices" (*Philosophical Posthumanism* 4). In the western cultural paradigm, categories of gender, ability, race, and species are often used as justification for exclusion and discrimination against marginalized groups. To engage in a posthumanist discourse is therefore to invalidate those culturally constructed distinctions by producing schemata of perception which are not grounded in oppositions (107), and instead create an environment of pluralism among living beings.

The framing of reality as a dynamic assemblage of living matter or a structural coupling of human and nonhuman subjects is also the focus of developments within the area of new materialism that are related, even if distinct, from critical posthumanism. Represented by thinkers such as Karen Barad, Jane Bennett, Bruno Latour or Graham Harman[5], the philosophy extends this dynamic agency to all animate and inanimate objects. Diana Coole and Samantha Frost present it as an ontological reorientation "that is posthumanist in the sense that it conceives of matter itself as lively or as exhibiting agency" (7), and thus questions the conventional conception of agency as an exclusively human capacity. New materialism accomplishes this by framing all entities as equal "agents" or "actors"[6] and examining the instances of their active involvement in the organization of reality.

5 It must be noted at this point that Harman, in contrast to posthumanists, stands in vocal opposition to Derridean deconstructionist framework. I will return to this contention and attempt to resolve it in my reading in chapter 1 of this dissertation.

6 Admittedly, this position can be seen as problematic from a posthumanist standpoint, as it may lead to a discursive erasure of heterogeneity of life. For example, Ferrando argues that Jane Bennett's vital materialism anthropomorphizes nonhuman agents and thus "runs the risk of turning their existence into a humanistic assimilation, which dissolves the original encounter with alterity, in a homogenization and reduction of the difference to the same" (*Philosophical Posthumanism* 162). Bennett's counterargument to this issue can be found in section 4 of chapter 1.

Further, Graham Harman, whose stance will be instrumental in my analysis of *The Man in The High Castle,* in his *Object-Oriented Ontology* takes from Manuel DeLanda the concept of flat ontology. DeLanda asserts that categories of organisms such as species, form distinct entities on different spatio-temporal scales, and those "individuals" are not the same as discreet organic wholes; instead, they are "interacting parts and emergent wholes … made exclusively of unique, singular individuals, differing in spatio-temporal scale but not in ontological status" (*Intensive Science* 47). Harman extends the scope of this idea to include all entities, "whether they be human, non-human, natural, cultural, real or fictional" (Harman, *OOO* 11) to argue for a nonhierarchical model that sees the world as made up of individuated entities which must be given equal attention. They all hold the same status of the "real" in that they cannot be reduced to their qualities, general categories or constituent parts, but simultaneously can be perceived only indirectly, through those qualities.

Operating within a similar field, Jane Bennett outlines her theory of vital materialism. Bennett sees material reality as a complex network of heterogeneous, contingent assemblages of objects, which possess the capacity "not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans, but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own" (viii). In this framework, the agency of matter manifests itself both independently and in interaction with the human perception. As such, nonhuman objects take an active role in shaping of public life, catalyzing events and initiating difference, both by virtue of their location in an assemblage and their physical qualities (9). Bennett articulates her argument against anthropocentrism, where

> almost as soon as [the manifestations of matter's agency] appear in public (often at first by disrupting human projects or expectations), these activities and powers are represented as human mood, action, meaning, agenda, or ideology. This quick substitution sustains the fantasy that 'we' really are in charge of all those 'its' (x).

As much as the humanist paradigm envisions the individual as unique and independent in their subjectivity, the new materialist philosophy forces us to acknowledge that our agency too is contingent on the dynamic assemblages of the matter that constitute the human and our environment.

As this short overview showcases, the posthumanist and new materialist paradigms put forward the notion that the human is a manufactured category that arbitrarily separates us from the complex entanglements and material systems of the nonhuman world. As thinkers such as Haraway and Braidotti argue, with the rigid, anthropocentric taxonomy come practices of exclusion, hierarchy and even systemic violence. Throughout this dissertation I will argue that both the posthumanist philosophies as well as the narratives of Philip K. Dick find similar ways to confront these issues by recontextualizing or transforming the human and constructing modes of open, dynamic relationships between the subjects, their environment and the technologies that populate the world.

Poststructuralism and Postmodernism

As we have seen, at the outset of the posthumanist thought there is the critique of the flaws of the essentialist taxonomies of modernism and liberal humanism instigated by the 20th century postmodern and poststructuralist thinkers. This section introduces those critical frameworks and their influence on posthumanism, as well as their points of departure. The postmodernist perspectives, which I will be using throughout the following chapters, include thinkers such as: Jean-François Lyotard, Jaques Derrida, Jean Baudrillard, Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. The inclusion of these perspectives will allow me to identify and describe the related crises of the

subject and reality depicted by Dick with greater precision, to then apply the posthumanist approaches to the analyses of how the narratives engage with these issues. Since many of the contributors to posthumanism draw heavily on the postmodern theories and vocabulary, the preliminary inquiry into the postmodern modes of scrutinizing reality, or rather responding the crisis of traditional realism, will also serve to more firmly locate the posthumanist perspective in Dick's novels.

The term "postmodernism" as understood in contemporary philosophy arrives in the second half of the century, with the turbulent social changes after the World Wars, as a response to the issues of industrial capitalism, mass-media, despotic political movements and commodification of culture. As Best and Kellner observe, the circumstances of mid-century society "produced a sense that a widespread rebellion was occurring against a rigid and oppressive modern society. The Sixties' radicalism put in question modern social structures and practices, culture, and modes of thought" (*Postmodern Theory* ix). They further propose that the postmodernist philosophy arose as a mode of analyzing and critiquing the continuous breakdowns of social organization. The causes of this crisis are to be found in rapid political shifts, proliferation of capitalistic, exploitative systems, developments in technology and media, and temporal and spatial confusion.

a) Lyotard, Derrida

The postmodernist movement as a whole refuses to provide a singular thesis, or a program, since it stands in an inherent opposition to central narratives that traditionally provided the concept of history with structure and unity. Indeed, this rejection is the very *postmodern condition*, as Lyotard argues in 1979 in his work by the same name. As stated in the introduction to the work: "Simplifying to the extreme, I define *postmodernism* as incredulity toward metanarratives … [The narrative function] is being

dispersed in the clouds of narrative language elements – narrative, but also denotative, prescriptive, descriptive, and so on" (xxiv). The great narratives of the past which shaped modernity are stripped of their legitimacy to metaphysically supported claims to veracity, as are concepts that justify themselves through such narratives. The focus is to be shifted, as Lyotard argues, to more localized and contemporary narratives; to engage in what he calls "local determinism." These heterogeneous assemblages still have unbound potential to be active and dynamic through discourse. A postmodern discourse is engaged in a language game where the "rules do not carry within themselves their own legitimation, but are the object of a contract, explicit or not, between players" (10). This activity serves not only to disrupt the foundations of the modern knowledge-production but also to expose the arbitrary nature of the structures taken for granted within the humanist discourse. Lyotard continues this line of thought in *The Differend,* which will serve as the basis for the discussion on the mechanisms and consequences of hegemonic discursive practices in chapter 3, where I discuss Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*.

This undertaking is also developed in-depth by Jacques Derrida. He expands on the ideas of philosophers such as Husserl, Heidegger, Saussure and Levi-Strauss to develop his highly influential philosophy of deconstruction. In the span of multiple works, mainly *Writing and Difference, Of Grammatology* and *Speech and Phenomena,* he argues against the classical metaphysics of presence, rejecting the notions of essence or ideal, transcendent forms or real referents. Instead, he proposes, following de Saussure, what denotes the meaning of a sign are all the ways it differs from other signs. As Claire Colebrook explains it: "[deconstruction] rather than see any structure (such as writing, nature, history or culture) as the cause of everything else … argues that all the features we tend to think of as effects of structure pervade everything …, reality 'itself'

is already constantly differing from itself, always becoming other than itself" ("Deconstruction" 30). Therefore, the project of deconstruction is to unmask, by a thorough rereading of those paradigms of thought which are based on natural orders, structures rooted in metaphysically anchored origins. Still sought within modernity, they are revealed by Derrida, as processes of differing and deferring working incessantly within the freely floating networks of signifiers in a bold and highly influential gesture that sent a long-standing shockwave thought the Western episteme, undermining its metaphysical foundations – the myth of presence and unmediated essence.

Both Lyotard's and Derrida's ideas emphasize how our understanding of reality is shaped by language, culture, and power relations. Different social and cultural contexts produce discourses and modes of signification which inform the subject's understanding of reality and their position within it. Therefore, the broader implication of these approaches is the dissolution of the idea of an individualistic, liberal concept of the subject, since as Lyotard argues: "no *self* is an island, each exists in a fabric of relations that is now more complex and mobile than ever before" (*Postmodern Condition* 15). There can be no universalized conception of justice, privileging of an established dogma or a totalizing thought when every subject is a multiplicity of shifting differences and contexts. Posthumanism builds on these deconstructionist ideas by continuing to question the discursive hierarchies of modernity, and especially the binary oppositions between human and animal, nature and culture or consciousness and body. This relation is also noticed by Cary Wolfe, who argues that social autopoietic systems, as proposed by Niklas Luhmann, operate under the principles of Derrida's *différance* (this framework will be discussed further in chapter 2, in my analysis of Dick's *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*).

b) Deleuze and Guattari

The influence for such models of posthuman subjectivity can also be traced to the notions developed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus,* which together form *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*[7] duology. They introduce a model of reality based on the idea of rhizome. In simplified terms, it is a non-hierarchical network of dynamic assemblages (relationships between objects, units of information or language) expanding unpredictably in many directions. This conception of reality is based on multiplicity and heterogeneity, since, as the authors argue, "any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be. This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 7). In such a configuration no meaning is static, allowing signs, objects and subjects to flow freely through modes of deterritorialization. The lines through which these units are connected can be either "molar," "molecular" or "lines of flight." Lines of flight are the movements of total deconstruction or deterritorialization of the subject into a Body without Organs – a concept which will be developed upon in chapter 5, focusing on Dick's *A Scanner Darkly.* Such a body is unburdened by the constraints of social conventions and ideas and is free to recreate itself and enter new sets of relations and assemblages.

Deleuze and Guattari's project reframes the societal breakdowns of modernity, uncertainty and dissolution of established modes of being as creative forces with

7 While ultimately encompassing a wide range of topics, the work begins as a critique of Freudian psychoanalysis. Deleuze and Guattari find Freud's concepts such as oedipal complex as reactionary and reductive. They deem that the modern configurations of the human psyche cannot be adequately expressed as merely a culmination of libidinal and traumatic drives. As they claim, Freud "doesn't like schizophrenics. He doesn't like their resistance to being oedipalized" (*Anti-Oedipus* 23). They point out, on the basis on the case of dr Schreber, that Freud ignores the aspects of divergent mental states which do not fit his psychoanalytical model. The alternative is a model of a subject under capitalist economy, driven by productive desire. They argue that "If desire is productive, it can be productive only in the real world and can produce only reality" (25) and that "the social field is immediately invested by desire, that it is the historically determined product of desire, and that libido has no need of any mediation or sublimation… in order to invade and invest productive forces and the relations of production" (27).

revolutionary potential. At the same time the focus on the body as the vital medium for those transformations stresses the importance of material and biological conditions of the subject, often overlooked in the postmodern philosophical discourses. This aspect of their approach is perhaps the most relevant context within which to observe the rise of posthumanist developments of continental philosophy. Rosi Braidotti, for example, signals her Deleuzoguattarian influence by asserting that

> What constitutes subjectivity is a structural relational capacity, coupled with the specific degree of force or power that any one entity is endowed with: their ability to extend towards and in proximity with others. They compose a subjectivity without a centralized subject and 'his' ancestral tree of knowledge. No arborescent subjects, but rhizomic ones (Deleuze and Guattari 1994). Bodies are both embedded and embodied, and have relational and affective powers. (*Posthuman Knowledge* 42)

Therefore, both Deleuzoguattarian schizoanalysis and posthumanism call attention to the importance of embodiment as a medium of interconnections between humans, animals, machines, and the environment, in the process of developing dynamic and sustainable forms of subjectivity. Catherine Malabou also references the rhizome as a good model for "the idea of a multiple, fragmentary organization, an ensemble of micro-powers more than the form of a central committee" (*What should we do with our brains* 36). Malabou finds an expression of what it may mean for the subject to move between territories that is grounded in materiality[8] and gives a posthumanist interpretation to the Deleuze and Guattari's framework: the rearranging of organs into new assemblages is for her the creation of new neural pathways in the process of biological adaptation.

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8 Tom Giesbers comments that Malabou's notion of brain plasticity, similarly to Deleuze and Guattari, exposes the inadequacy of Freudian approach:

> Since the psychoanalytic ability to explain is… strictly dependent on what psychic reality allows us access to, Malabou attempts to develop the topology of the brain wound as a plastic way of relating to a realm of materiality that is independent of the subjectivism involved in avenues of research which are dependent on a psychic reality. ("Plasticity," *Posthuman Glossary* 321-322)

c) Baudrillard and Foucault

The relationship between the subject's body and politics is also explored by the French philosopher Michael Foucault, whose perspective on the matter of the mechanisms of surveillance in a techno-capitalist economy will be utilized in chapter 5 as well. Foucault invented the term "biopower" to refer to practices through which the apparatus of control has changed from visible and obvious displays of power to indirect interventions into the consciousness of society, which use knowledge as a tool to enforce docility in the subject. Thus, the subject's body becomes a site of sustained political intervention. As Rabinow succinctly summarizes, for Foucault "the body [is] approached not directly in its biological dimension, but as an object to be manipulated and controlled. A new set of operations, of procedures – those joinings of knowledge and power that Foucault calls 'technologies' – come together around the objectification of the body" (*Foucault Reader* 17). The goal of those technologies is to internalize in the body the practices of subjugation so that the subject reflexively self-disciplines. The Foucaultian framework brings to the forefront the critique that becomes instrumental in the later posthumanist developments of continental philosophy: that of examining the way in which the body becomes subject to power relations through hierarchizing and subjugating practices.

However, according to N. Katherine Hayles, Foucault errs in universalizing the corporeality of the subject. As she reminds us, embodiment thrives on and moves along the instances of difference. Each variation, abnormality and deviation from the norm creates "tension between it [embodiment] and hegemonic cultural constructs" (*How We Became Posthuman* 197). Therefore, it is those differences that provide the basis for enacting resistance against biopower. From a posthumanist viewpoint, embodiment is a specific quality of any living thing's experiencing of reality, diverse in the modes and

media of this experience. Each instance of embodiment is a new pattern, "a specific instantiation generated from the noise of difference" (196), while the Foucaultian "body" refers to a normalized concept – a mold to be compared against. Foucault studies the body that may be deviating from the arbitrary norm, whereas the posthumanists reject the existence of a norm altogether.

Another philosopher interested in the dissolution of essentialist approach to reality is Jean Baudrillard, whose scrutiny of commodity economy provides the basis for my reading of *Ubik* in chapter 4. The French thinker is deeply invested in the questions of reality, and the artifice that the society projects upon it. However, his conclusions seem comparatively more pessimistic than the previously mentioned stances. As he argues in his influential *Simulacra and Simulations* that the commodified society of the 20th century has achieved a third-order of simulacra, that is copies which not only obscure or replace the original, but which produce reality on their own. These signs are created from already existing social relations of signification and therefore do not refer to any original in the first place. Baudrillard argues that these simulacra proliferate in a self-accelerating mode of consumerism, creating "hyperreality." In this state, which permeates the contemporary world, the simulacra, the signs, *precede* reality.

This crisis of truth, which will be explained further in my analysis of *Ubik,* is illustrated and brought to light in Baudrillard's writings. However, he falls short of negotiating productive solutions to this issue. As Best and Kellner argue, in his later works, Baudrillard moves toward "nihilistic cynicism" (112) and "aligns himself with a conservative tradition of passive and apologetic thought that envisages no alternatives to the existing order of society" (135). Best and Kellner expand this sentiment upon the general direction of the "extreme postmodernists" whom they accuse of employing "a

fatal strategy of hastening the process of nihilism without advancing any positive social and political alternatives" (284). Additionally, N. Katherine Hayles comments that Baudrillard may be too hasty in disregarding materiality in regards to hyperreal environments, which causes his perspective to inadvertently feed transhumanist techno-utopian fantasies. As she comments:

> The borders separating simulations from reality are important because they remind us of the limits that make dreams of technological transcendence dangerous fantasies. Hyperreality does not erase these limits, for they exist whether we recognize them or not; it only erases them from our consciousness. Insofar as Baudrillard's claims about hyperreality diminish our awareness of these limits, it borders on a madness whose likely end is apocalypse. ("The Borders of Madness" 322)

In short, it can be said that the postmodern projects such as Baudrillard's or Foucault's accurately discern a number of social issues but fall short of finding sustainable solutions. This inadequacy generated a number of new critical movements, one of which was posthumanism. Similarly to how postmodernism arose as a critique of modernity, posthumanism aims to contribute to the discourse a response to the issues of subjectivity identified by the poststructuralists and postmodernists.

Therefore, posthumanism could be understood as both a critique and a continuation of the postmodern discourses. It ventures to accomplish this by negotiating new models of subjectivity, based neither on the humanistic, autonomous individual, nor on the postmodern subject as seen by Baudrillard or Foucault, pulverized and subservient to the capital and its systems of control. Instead, as I will showcase throughout this dissertation, posthumanists strive for a move towards a vitalist, dynamic subject.

Science-fictional/Postmodern/Posthuman Dick

Now, let us locate Philip K. Dick in the context of the 20th century American literary landscape[9]. Born in Chicago, Illinois, in 1928, University of California drop-out, Dick began selling his first short stories in the early 1950s to a number of popular science-fiction magazines. During that time, he wrote a number of realist novels (e.g. *Voices from the Street, Mary and the Giant)* but his first full length publication was a 1955 science fiction novel *Solar Lottery.* In fact, much of the realist portion of his literary output was received poorly[10] by the potential publishers and premiered only after the commercial success of Dick's genre fiction. Nevertheless, the author's numerous science fiction works dealing with complex themes of epistemological uncertainty, socio-political issues, the nature of human identity and the construction of reality, by the late 60's earned him recognition inside of the genre niche as well as in academic circles[11], with titles such as *Martian Time-Slip* (1964), *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (1968), *Ubik* (1969).

The America of that decade experienced social and political unrest, still recovering from the aftershocks of the Second World War, yet already in the midst of The Cold War, and the conflict in Vietnam. With the rise the Iron Curtain and daily threat of nuclear war on one hand and the memories of McCarthyism on the other, the political climate changed form, shifting from the general trust in the transparency the official discourse to a widening rift between the power structure and the governed

9 For biographically focused analyses, see *Divine Invasions: A Life of Philip K. Dick* by Lawrence Sutin, and *Understanding Philip K. Dick* by Eric Carl Link.

10 Kim Stanley Robinson provides a possible explanation, arguing: "All of the realist novels are prolix in a way that is utterly unlike Dick's mature work… [I]t is obvious in all of these works that Dick had not yet developed functioning principles of selection for deciding what he needed to include to make his descriptions of characters and actions vivid and full to his readers" (4).

11 Nevertheless, as Carl Freedman acknowledges, most of the critical academic attention outside of *Science Fiction Studies* was given to the author posthumously. Additionally, the film adaptation of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep,* Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner,* released only months after Dick's death, introduced the author to a much broader audience. ("Editorial Introduction: Philip K. Dick and Criticism").

population. The proliferation of mass-media and rampart commodification of almost every aspect of life also contributed to the dissolution of the sense of community and stable construction of reality. At the same time, the Civil Rights movements and counter-culture in general promised the possibility of alternative modes of social order and identity.

All of these factors contributed to a shift in the way that science fiction writers such as Dick imagined the future, as well as how they used science fictional devices to comment on the present. Along with other authors sharing similar thematic sensibilities, such as Ursula K. Le Guin (*The Left Hand of Darkness),* Samuel R. Delany (*Babel-17, Trouble on Triton)* or Roger Zelazny (*This Immortal, Lord of Light)*, these qualities placed Dick in the "New Wave" style of science fiction (Latham, "The New Wave"). The representatives of the movement emphasized in their narratives the contemporary social and political issues as well as philosophical commentary, in contrast to the preoccupation with scientific and technical accuracy that characterized the earlier "Golden Age" of science-fiction (Harris-Fain, Canavan, et al. 33-36). Taking this context into consideration, as Carl Freedman argues in his excellent overview, "Dick is a paradigmatic '60s' writer and one of the great social critic of the era" (126).

At the same time, these thematic and stylistic choices produced comparisons to American postmodern fiction. Darren Harris-Fain emphasizes the "blurry middle-ground" between science fiction and postmodern literature that the New Wave occupies, by including authors such as Kurt Vonnegut and Thomas Pynchon in the category[12]. He

12 Although, as Paweł Frelik observes, this taxonomic aspect of the sf discourse often stemmed from the critics' preoccupation with either border policing of the sf "ghetto" or conversely with legitimizing certain sf writers as belonging to high literature, whereas one of the points of postmodern theory (and later practices, such as "slipstream" texts) is to hybridize literature and put an end to the high/low culture divide ("Of Slipstream and Others"). Dick too notices the phenomenon, and brings attention to the arbitrariness of the strict distinction between these categories, commenting in an interview:

> Nowadays, you can call anything you want "science fiction" or you can decide not to call it "science fiction." For example, I have a book coming out. If you buy the

claims: “in many ways the conventions and concerns of postmodernism considerably blurred the distinctions between the world of the mainstream literary narrative and SF” (36). Especially the 1962 alternative history novel *The Man in the High Castle,* a critical and commercial breakthrough for Dick, earned him both prestige in the science fiction circles[13] and the attention of scholars and critics, particularly those publishing in *Science Fiction Studies* Journal (with important contributions by Stanisław Lem, Frederic Jameson, Peter Fitting and Patricia S. Warrick among others). Much of this early critical output has been since collected in a comprehensive anthology *On Philip K. Dick* (ed. Mullen, Evans, et al.). Jason P. Vest points to Csicsery-Ronay and Sutin as the examples of some of the first scholars who argued that Dick "is the quintessential postmodern author" (*The Postmodern Humanism* xi). He continues to explain that "[t]hese critics imply that Dick's peculiar, fragmentary, and paranoid fiction perfectly expresses the tensions, ambivalences, and dislocations of twentieth-century American life" (xi). Additionally, Brian McHale, in his study of the characteristics of postmodernist fiction argues that Dick’s novels represent the crucial elements of the postmodern ontological shift, in contrast to the modernist epistemological focus, in literature: the relativizing of reality and temporal branching of the narratives (59). McHale demonstrates how both in *The Man in the High Castle*, as well as in the later *Ubik,* Dick constructs an ontological confrontation between two possible worlds. The resulting narrative tensions, temporal discontinuities and the collapse of epistemological certainty are presented as proof that science fiction “obeys the same underlying principles of ontological poetics as postmodernist fiction” (60).

> Doubleday hard-cover, you're reading a "mainstream" novel; if you buy the Ballantine paperback, you're reading a "science fiction" novel ... We'd be talking about *packaging* and *marketing* a book; we wouldn't be talking about *content* at all. ("The Mainstream That Through the Ghetto Flows" 164)

13 *The Man in the High Castle* won the 1963 Hugo Award for Best Novel, placing Dick among authors such as Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke and Frank Herbert.

Later, in what could be called the middle period of Dick's reception, some of the philosophers who are at the center of the postmodernist theory also cite his works as apt illustrations of the postmodern issues. For example, Fredric Jameson in his book on the concept of the Utopia, *Archeologies of the Future* (2005), calls Dick "the epic poet of entropy" (82), noticing his preoccupation with the dissolution of the notion of the modernist models of reality and the problematization of decentered subjects. In the chapter devoted to Dick, he details the ways in which the author renders and intensifies the issues of consumer media society. Similarly, in his essay "Simulacra and Science Fiction"[14] Jean Baudrillard mentions Dick's works from a critical standpoint, commenting that "perhaps the SF of this era of cybernetics and hyperreality will only be able to attempt to 'artificially' resurrect 'historical' worlds of the past, trying to reconstruct in vitro … events, persons, defunct ideologies – all now empty of meaning and of their original essence" (310). The philosopher argues that the imagination central to the genre has been invalidated by hyperreality. Instead, science-fiction in the postmodern era should seek to call attention to the crisis of reality and the saturation of the contemporary life with simulacra, "to reinvent the real as fiction, precisely because the real has disappeared from our lives" (311). As Baudrillard concludes, Dick's works contain a potential to tackle the complexity of the postmodern condition. Rather than a naive "charm of discovery," they "seek to revitalize, to reactualize, to rebanalize … fragments of this universal simulation which our presumed 'real' world has now become to us" (311). Indeed, in this dissertation I will attempt to identify some of those "revitalizations" of reality through the lens of posthumanism.

These perspectives are valid contributions to the present day's understanding of Dick's literary output, and I will be at times returning to the postmodern analyses of

14 From a 1991 issue of *Science Fiction Studies.* A revised version of the article was later included in *Simulacra and Simulation.*

Dick, as they provide sound foundations, or, on other occasions, polemic points of departure, for the posthumanist reading. As we will see, the postmodernist readings do overlook an important layer of Dick's prose. I do agree with Jason Vest that they are blind to Dick's attempts to create in his narratives a movement against "the fractured pessimism of the postmodern era" (xi). Indeed, the nihilistic, commodified worlds are ontological prisons from which the protagonists often attempt to flee. However, Vest's own perspective on the issue, as well as a similar analysis by Christopher Palmer, both argue for instead reading Dick as an author with a humanistic agenda.

Palmer, in his 2003 work *Philip K. Dick: Exhilaration and Terror of the Postmodern,* constructs a compelling argument that the worlds and narratives imagined by Dick are reflections of the postmodern condition. They are plagued by the dissolution of the human subject, enhanced by a crisis of the concept of stable reality, and they institutionalize subordination to the mechanisms of capital. These ailments are intensified by the futuristic, dystopian settings, which, however, may all be traced back to twentieth century's political realities. To sum it up: "Dick frequently dramatizes dismaying predicaments of dissolved reality and instrumental brutality … There is a crisis of subjectivity … and a crisis of the subject" (33). However, Palmer continues to argue that Dick's reaction to those circumstances is a return to "ethical humanism" (30). He proposes that the main conflict in Dick's novels is "the historical tragedy of liberalism, its shaping of a monadic society which makes it impossible, but also makes necessary, the acting out of the most cherished individual and intersubjective values of liberalism" (38). This apparently unsolvable paradox is what creates the Dickian schizoid; however, as I will argue, it also opens up the possibility of a reformulated subjectivity, beyond the conventions of humanism.

Vest organizes his analysis by juxtaposing Dick with Kafka, Borges and Calvino to conclude that the themes of ontological uncertainty, dissolution of reality and dangers of institutional dehumanization are comparable between these writers. For example, he writes that "The fate of humanism, in the fiction of Franz Kafka and Philip K. Dick is ... unenviable. Humanism becomes untenable, unbelievable, always out of reach" (43). Yet, the solution to these issues which Vest sees in Dick's narratives is to acknowledge these inherent contradictions and limits of the contemporary world and overcome them by celebrating the principles of a rational, individualistic subjectivity. Based on his comparisons, Vest argues that Dick, despite futuristic narratives is "an old-fashioned writer", who "examines, explores and encourages humanist values ... His fiction demonstrates that ... humanist values are crucial to maintaining the sense of authenticity individual must experience in order to endure" (193-4).

It is however difficult to agree that the narrative figures in Dick's work truly can represent the essentialist humanist rationality for which Vest argues[15]. A postmodern world would hardly be receptive of traditionalist contests, all pulverized into fragmented narratives of history or constructed only as veneers for political agendas. Additionally, not all of the subjectivities represented in Dick's fictions fit into the privileged position of the human. As I will demonstrate throughout this work, the experience of reality that Vest argues for may be achieved in ways disconnected from the anthropocentric, humanist subject position. This is why I am not entirely convinced by Palmer's and Vest's assertions. The attributes that they ascribe to Dick's literary agenda may be inadequate, or not precise enough to represent the intricate configurations of

15 Palmer circumvents this trap by acknowledging that "[m]uch about Dick's humanism is problematic precisely because of the context in which it attempts to operate; if it is best to think in terms of a will to value the individual subject, rather than a settled conviction of its essence, then this more embattled position still leads to a challenging collision between humanism and what undermines it." (*Exhilaration and Terror* 8)

subjectivities present in the novels. Granted, solidarity and empathy are some of the fundamental elements in Dick's ontological road-maps out of the postmodern predicament. However, his chosen path is not one of a return to the human; instead, as I will argue, he offers a journey into new territories that may provide non-exclusive modes of subjectivity. We will see examples of such subjects in the chapters on *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* and *Ubik.* They are capable of asserting themselves through the notions of empathy and interconnectedness, as Palmer rightly notices. However, pace Palmer, the resultant configuration of the self is more comparable to a dynamic subject, co-responsible but not co-dependent, assuming multiple positions in its material network. Therefore, throughout this work I will be arguing that those shifts into new ontologies in response to the postmodern condition are expressed through means similar to the practices proposed by the philosophers of posthumanism.

Perhaps the most comprehensive posthumanist reading of Dick's works to date has been conducted by Hayles in *How We Became Posthuman*. From her perspective, Dick's texts unveil the possibilities and consequences of the technological saturation of the contemporary world. She examines Dick's mid-sixties novels, noticing in them

> connections between cybernetics and a wide range of concerns, including a devastating critique of capitalism, a view of gender relations that ties together females and androids, an idiosyncratic connection between entropy and schizophrenic delusion, and a persistent suspicion that the objects surrounding us – and indeed reality itself – are fakes. (161)

Focusing on the cybernetic aspect of the posthuman condition, Hayles places the Dickian android at the center of her inquiry into the machine-human relations. She points to this science-fiction construct as a being associated with the idea of permeable boundaries between the self and the environment. In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep,* she sees a narrative analysis of the political dimension within the autopoietic model. The cybernetic slaves presented in the novel may be seen as beings trying to

establish themselves as independent from humanity, while being treated as a means to an end by humans. This narrative can be therefore read as "a boundary dispute in which one tries to claim the privileged 'outside' position of an entity ... while forcing the opponent to take the 'inside' position of an allopoietic component incorporated into a larger system" (161). The struggle for liberty against the oppressive dominant paradigm along the boundaries of subjectivity is to Hayles the defining characteristic of Dick's mid-sixties works. She distinguishes a character trope which she calls the "schizoid android" through which the author explores the scientific, political and psychological complexities of cybernetics. This usually female, neurodivergent figure[16] is placed at the margins of the system which subjugates her. Often, this subjugation relates to the fact that this character is not recognized as fully human. The male character, confronted with a schizoid android experiences an ontological confusion, forced to transform his perspective on the boundaries of the inside/outside.

Hayles's chapter on Dick's work became an important marker guiding further analyses of the posthuman themes in Dick's writing. In some of the newest academic articles on Dick, scholars such as Jill Galvan and Tony M. Vinci explore the significance of the android figure in their essays on *Do Androids Dream*. Galvan builds upon the crisis of subjectivity of the main character noticed by Hayles, by proposing that Deckard himself becomes a model for the posthuman (a claim which I will follow but also expand on in the chapter on the novel). To Galvan, the posthuman perspective reveals itself in the novel's protagonist as an experience of interconnection with the world; a

16 Hayles traces this motif to Dick's biography, pointing out how his turbulent and often problematic relationships with women surfaced in his work as the trope of the 'dark-haired girl' – a character type who in his early writing reappears as the villain: cold, apathetic and android-like but in the later works becomes more ambiguous or even sympathetic. This shift explains why the "schizoid android" is such a complex, sometimes contradictory figure: at the same time inhuman or unreal, but also capable of dissolving the constructed boundaries of human and reality. Due to the oscillation between those states and a partial overlap between the Dickian android and the "dark-haired girl," "the android serves as an ambiguous term that simultaneously incorporates the liberal subject into the machine and challenges its construction in the flesh" (*How We Became Posthuman* 170).

rejection of the individual self, replaced by an immersion into the techno-collective. (“Entering the Posthuman Collective”)

Tony Vinci, in turn, focuses on the broader dynamic of connection through non-anthropocentric vulnerability between the human, the android and the animal. He argues that because of the shared trauma of their dystopian reality, human and nonhuman participants in the world have the capacity of creating a bond based in mutual care. Only by confronting that trauma can one “feel for otherness as part of the ‘human’ or posthuman subject” (102). Similarly, Sherryl Vint approaches the novel’s ethical concerns from the point of view of animal studies, arguing that the novel depicts political deployment of the man/animal boundary as an exclusionary practice, which the protagonist subsequently overcomes. She notes that “Deckard's struggle to have a non-commodity relationship with animals and others within the novel reveals the damage that capitalist modes of relation have done to his subjectivity, but also point, given Deckard's ability to change, to a potential way out of such damaging social structures” (“Speceism and Species Being” 120). Therefore, all three scholars, Galvan, Vinci and Vint, read Dick’s prose to locate catalysts for the subjects’ transformation which, although different, are similar in activating their posthuman sensibilities.

Finally, a mention must be made of the last three novels in Dick’s oeuvre, the *VALIS* trilogy, written in the years following the author’s divine revelation/mental breakdown in February of 1974[17] and before his death in 1982. Especially in *VALIS,* the author fictionalizes his life in relation to the supposedly mystical experiences of divine intelligence beaming information to him through a beam of pink light. Dick's thematic shift in the aftermath of these events prompts some critics to consider the novels written

17 An in-depth account of the event and analyses of the resulting works can be found in Kyle Arnold’s *The Divine Madness of Philip K. Dick;* chapters 8-10 of *The Twisted Worlds of Philip K. Dick* by Umberto Rossi; chapter 7 of *Philip K. Dick. Canonical Writer of the Digital Age* by Lejla Kucukalic, and "From Exegesis to Ecology" by James Burton.

after 1974 separately from the rest of Dick's oeuvre. Jameson, for example aims to "disconnect the religious thematic from the earlier works" (*Archeologies* 363), and Freedman deems the trilogy “atypical of Dick’s central achievement” (123). However, while *VALIS* is primarily a philosophical exploration of religion and spirituality (and especially Dick’s idiosyncratic views on Buddhism, Christianity and Gnosticism), the experimental style, combining autobiographical and fictional events, shifting between 1st and 3rd person narrative voice[18], all guide towards a postmodernist reading. As Umberto Rossi comments: "the novel oscillates between religious sf and realism, and ... such oscillation is not resolved, not even in the ending: it so exemplifies the principle of ontological uncertainty” (211).

Indeed, the cosmology or cosmogenesis, that Dick offers in *VALIS* also echoes at times his previous investigations of the nature of reality. At one point, the protagonist, Horselover Fat arrives at the conclusion that all of the universe is alive and interconnected as one vast living network (ch.5), which is a sentiment anticipating – albeit through the language of theology – some of the posthumanist and new materialist ideas that will be discussed throughout this dissertation. While I do not analyze *VALIS* itself here, I will attempt to showcase the literary process undertaken throughout Dick’s oeuvre that may have led to the late cosmological outlook developed in this novel. While the extensive philosophical deliberations on religion and the cosmic forces controlling reality contained in *VALIS* may be outside of the scope of this work, I will argue that it is in the domain of spirituality that Dick tends to align with the posthumanist perspective (e.g. *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch, Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*). However, I will focus on another novel from Dick’s later

18 Or, to be more precise, between the first person narration by the character Philip Dick, and his 3rd person recollections of his alter-ego/doppelganger, Horselover Fat.

period, which is more concerned with the material medium of subjectivity formation – the brain – and its interaction with reality: *A Scanner Darkly*.

Overall, while the literature on Dick is as expansive[19] as his oeuvre, and the above summary is not exhaustive, I argue that there is still a considerable area left to explore. The postmodernist readings may be expanded upon by the newer ideas and philosophies that emerged as a response to or a continuation of postmodernism. The analyses of Dick's novels, such as those by Hayles, Galvan, Vint and others mentioned above prove that, with the theoretical tools provided by posthumanism, it is still possible to read Dick from a fresh perspective. However, as can be seen from the above outline, the majority of posthumanist readings of Dick concentrate on *Do Androids Dream* and the interaction between the figure of the android and the human. I too will discuss this novel in search of the possible transformations of subjectivity in relation to the technological and nonhuman Other. However, throughout the dissertation I want to expand the scope of inquiry to include a broader set of such figures, which I will preliminarily outline in the next section.

Selection of novels and methods

Importantly, as I have outlined earlier, neither postmodernism nor posthumanism is a philosophical monolith. These terms encompass a number of approaches, interacting and building upon each other. Therefore, my readings of Dick's novels will also use sets of ideas and analytical tools developed by some of the quintessential thinkers of these currents and adjusted to the discussions I build around respective novels. Within the postmodernist domain of concepts, I will discuss Lyotard's *differend*, Derrida's

19 See also "Philip K. Dick Criticism 1982-2010" by Howard Canaan, as well as the already mentioned "Editorial Introduction: Philip K. Dick and Criticism" by Carl Freedman.

différance, Baudrillard's outlook on simulacra, Foucault's analysis of power dynamics, and finally Deleuze and Guattari's figure of Body without Organs. The main connective tissue between these thinkers, and also in relation to Dick, is their shared skepticism of the logocentric ideas of truth and reality[20] in the modern era, and of the power structures emergent under those circumstances. I will bring attention to those elements in Dick's narratives which, when read through the aforementioned theoretical tool-sets, reveal Dick's concurrence with postmodernist philosophies, in the way he scrutinizes the subjective construction of reality and related crises of the postmodern condition. Subsequently, I will utilize posthumanist frameworks to demonstrate that he imagines various shifts away from the humanistic, anthropocentric subject positions as a possible response to the crises identified within the postmodernist paradigm. Especially in the final chapter of my dissertation, I employ the works of Deleuze and Guattari to affirm my position that Dick is as much a postmodern writer as he is a posthumanist. This is because Deleuze and Guattari focus on the subject's embodiment and pave the way to dismantling the "human" as a stable category, and as such they may be seen as transitional thinkers between the postmodern and posthuman philosophical perspectives.

Posthumanism also is a diverse philosophical project, which continues to evolve and incorporate new fields of interest. Therefore, the texts concerning Dick can be developed upon and expanded with perspectives such as the new materialist frameworks

20 Dick's concurrence with the critique of logocentric metaphysics is perhaps the most overtly articulated in an early novel *Time Out of Joint* (1959). The main character, Reagle Gumm, discovers that he lives in a simulacrum of reality when objects in his vicinity dissolve into slips of paper with the names of those objects printed on them. The main character ponders the "[c]entral problem in philosophy. Relation of word to object ... what is a word? Arbitrary sign. But we live in words. Our reality, among words not things. No such thing as a thing anyhow… Word is more real than the object it represents. Word doesn't represent reality. Word is reality. For us, anyhow." (ch.4). This thought, formulated independently of Derrida, nevertheless mirrors his deconstructionist statement "There is no outside-text" expressed by the philosopher almost a decade after the publication of *Time Out of Joint*. Here, we can see how Dick constructs his universes under the same assumption, that the essential reality is inaccessible "for us" – from a standpoint of a human, who is already involved in the meta- and contextual networks of signification. This stance evolves throughout Dick's oeuvre, inspiring increasingly complex narratives of unreliable perceptions and characters attempting to glean beyond the arbitrariness of their realities.

of Graham Harman or Jane Bennett, Braidotti's and Ferrando's philosophical considerations, Hayles's insights into cybernetics, Haraway's figure of the cyborg, or Malabou's concept of plasticity. The integration between the postmodernist and the posthumanist frameworks of reading Dick, which I attempt in this dissertation, is supposed to showcase not only how precisely the author identifies the postmodern condition but also his ability to anticipate the ways in which this condition provokes the emergence of posthumanist perspectives. This can, in turn, offer a new understanding of his literary ideas and their relevancy in the landscape of the 21st century.

To those ends, I have selected five novels, out of the author's voluminous body of fiction (44 novels and over a hundred short stories in total) in which Dick, in my view, most skillfully conveys the issues of epistemological and political crises of humanity relevant to the postmodernist philosophy and simultaneously imagines figures and practices which may provide responses or possible solutions to them. These may include assemblages of objects displaying agency (*The Man in the High Castle*), cyborgs with technological or biological prostheses (*Three Stigmata, A Scanner Darkly*), social systems in simulated environments (*Three Stigmata, Ubik*), quasi-divine beings (*Ubik, Do Androids Dream)* and nonhuman animal and technological subjects (*Do Androids Dream).* Additionally, I have chosen the novels based on their release dates, as to encompass a relatively wide portion of Dick's creative output and to trace the author's evolving or shifting perspectives within these themes.

The earliest of the discussed novels, and the subject of chapter 1, *The Man in the High Castle,* while published quite early on Dick's career as an author, nevertheless marks a breakthrough in terms of literary maturation, signaling a shift towards more complex and nuanced storytelling. I concur with Freedman that "the other seven SF novels produced before *High Castle* are really apprentice work" (123). Indeed, while

some prior publications were very much involved with the questions of political ideology's influence on the shape of reality (*The World Jones Made* in 1956, *Eye in the Sky* in 1957), and the fragility of the individual's epistemological faculties in the face of the state's power (*Time out of Joint* in 1959), it is in *High Castle* that those issues are epitomized by the alternative history setting of a fascist post-war America. However, I want to pay special attention to how inanimate objects and works of art are portrayed in the novel as possible catalysts for change of the perception of reality for individual subjects. The new materialist and posthumanist frameworks of Graham Harman, Jane Bennett and Francesca Ferrando are at the core of this undertaking.

In chapter 2, I discuss the 1965 novel *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch,* in which the author imagines a conflict between the inhabitants of a Martian colony and the alien consciousness of the eponymous antagonist. The colonists partake in a fictional drug, Can-D, that allows them to enter, as a group, a hallucinatory state wherein they can recreate a facsimile of a regular day on Earth. I consider the drug-induced communal experience as a collaborative generation of a text within a medium of simulated reality which corresponds to the qualities of the textual principle of ongoing inner differentiation inherent to the space of writing that Jacques Derrida attempted to theorize as *différance*. Subsequently, I argue that the process can be understood as an instance of social autopoiesis, as outlined by Niklas Luhmann, and supported by the posthumanist ideas developed by Hayles and Cary Wolfe, where *différance* is the organizing principle of the inter-subjective system. I plan to show how Dick constructs a narrative which primarily deals with the conflict between different modes of reading reality, and how some of these perspectives may be prone to manipulation. I will bring attention to the consequences of a social structure in which one authority gains primacy over the process of conceptualizing that reality. Palmer

Eldritch, the cyborg antagonist of the novel, is analyzed as an instance of such an authority. The intersection between the Derridean deconstructionist approach and the posthumanist frameworks which I utilize in this chapter allows me to illustrate how Dick warns against experimenting with modes of subjectivity and community-building accorded by new techno-biological media (drugs, virtual environments), without first addressing the issues with logocentric taxonomies on which these communities and subject formations may rely.

The third chapter concerns the 1968 novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, one of the author's signature works, which deals in depth with questions of authenticity, the nature of humanity and spiritual belief, thus marking an important point in the thematic through-line of Dick's oeuvre. In the chapter, I continue combining the postmodern and posthuman frameworks, while additionally referring to the aforementioned posthumanist readings of the novel, such as those by Hayles, Galvan and Vinci, when appropriate. I begin by asserting that the relationships between the human characters and the android and animal Others may be seen as instances of the *differend* – a term coined by Lyotard to describe conflicts between incompatible discourses. I outline the humanistic, hegemonic discursive regimen established and exercised through a number of exclusionary and persecutive practices by the human society in the novel. Subsequently, I identify the subversions thereof and formations of new discursive perspectives which do not rely on anthropocentric hierarchies. These perspectives, arising from inter-subjective couplings between human and nonhuman actants are analyzed using primarily Donna Haraway's figure of the cyborg, as well as Rosi Braidotti's critique of anthropocentric, individualized subjectivity.

In chapter 4, I analyze the 1969 novel *Ubik*, in which Dick returns to the setting of virtual reality but further develops the idea of the unreliability of human perception in

a commodified environment. I have chosen this novel as it uniquely combines some of the previously discussed themes, such as the simulated environment, scrutiny of signification as a factor influencing the human perception of reality, and of potential methods for transforming one's subjective perspective. I argue that the novel portrays the development of posthuman subjectivity against the backdrop of a simulated world, saturated with commodified signifiers without original referents, similar to Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality. By using Baudrillard's theory in relation to ideas proposed by scholars such as Braidotti and Nina Lykke, I investigate the circumstances that may facilitate the emergence of posthuman subjects in *Ubik.* Two characters in the novel are identified as possible candidates for this type of subjectivity – Jory Miller and Ella Runciter – and they get juxtaposed. The former is shown as "the worst case scenario" of a posthuman figure, as critiqued by Hayles and Patricia MacCormack: a being still dependent on possessive individualism, while striving for the techno-utopian disembodied immortality. The latter represents the *sustainable* posthuman subjectivity as argued for by Braidotti: one astutely aware of but embracing the limitations of embodiment, choosing to direct their energy towards a positive reinforcement of the autopoietic network to which they belong, rather than self-preservation.

In the final chapter, I analyze the 1977 novel *A Scanner Darkly*. As I have signaled earlier, this relatively late novel in Dick's *oeuvre* continues the author's literary examinations of reality and subjectivity while also exemplifying the shift of his focus in the 70's. The novel was written in a decade of major political and social upheaval in the United States, when the distrust towards the government was approaching all time high following the Nixon administration's Watergate scandal and an overall rise of policing and surveillance. In addition, the 70's America sees an increase in drug addiction and its broader societal consequences. Like the following *VALIS*, *A Scanner Darkly* is a thinly

veiled autobiographical account of Dick's life in that era. However, while the later work concerns Dick's spiritual experiences, this novel fictionalizes his time among the LA drug users' culture to explore the themes of addiction and state power. These issues, extrapolated into science-fictional elements, are at the forefront of the narrative: the technologies of surveillance and the destructive consequences of drug use on the minds and bodies of the addicts. Firstly, I draw upon Michel Foucault's concept of the Panopticon to demonstrate that Dick explores the relationship between the apparatus of surveillance and technologically or chemically modified embodiment. This provides the basis for my assessment that the author sees a possibility for a subversion of the state's technologies of control over the subject's body. However, Dick also warns about the potential dangers of the resulting shifts and fragmentations of identity. Drawing upon Deleuzoguattarian terminology and related posthumanist ideas advanced by scholars such as Hayles and MacCormack, I argue that the figures depicted in the novel resemble the "failed" or "empty" version of Bodies without Organs. Finally, using the Deleuzoguattarian framework in conjunction with Malabou's philosophical outlook on brain plasticity, I argue that the novel portrays a subject damaged by volatile deterritorializing movements, that compensates for the damage by organizing themselves as part of a broader autopoietic system, at the expense of individualized consciousness.

Ultimately, I conduct these analyses to showcase that Philip K. Dick, in his literary scrutiny of reality and the nature of the human subject, navigates through progressively more complex philosophical ideas of postmodernism and posthumanism. In this process, he not only provides a nuanced perspective on the political and epistemological crises of truth relevant to his contemporary America of the Sixties and

Seventies, but also anticipates how new technologies and experimentation with posthuman subject positions may emerge as a response to those crises.

1. *The Man in the High Castle* and the new materialist approaches to reality

1.1. Introduction

The aim of *this* chapter is to present *The Man in the High Castle* (1962) as a novel in which Dick expands the scope of inquiry into the postmodern crisis of truth with a burgeoning idea of a system of agency, or a mechanism of interaction with the world, which extends beyond individual human cognition. Different ways in which nonhuman assemblages are signaled in the novel will be analyzed, using the frameworks of new materialist philosophy as described by Graham Harman (object-oriented ontology), Jane Bennett (vibrant materialism) and the posthuman philosophy of Francesca Ferrando (specifically the concept of posthuman multiverse). As I shall attempt to demonstrate, these approaches, while focused on different aspects of philosophical theory, nevertheless converge on the area that is crucial to a posthumanist reading of *The Man in the High Castle*: both the posthumanist and new materialist frameworks venture to articulate the dynamic complexity of the material world which cannot be accounted for

by attributing agency, and the ability to construct a reality, solely to individual human subjects.

Central to Dick's experimentation with authenticity and reality as presented in *The Man in the High Castle* is the novel's setting. It is distinctive in his science-fiction bibliography inasmuch as instead of presenting a possible future, it tells the story of an alternative present. The plot of the work unfolds in a timeline that is alternative to the twentieth century America. In this alternative version of history, the axis powers have won the Second World War. Throughout the narrative the reader is allowed snippets of insight into these geopolitical circumstances. At certain key points the historical events diverge from those that belong to the reality shared by Dick's readers: president Roosevelt had been assassinated before the war, the Battle of Britain was lost by the Allies and Nazi Germany conquered Europe and Africa, subsequently committing mass exterminations on a scale even larger than the one that actually happened. The isolationist United States are then jointly invaded by the Nazis and the Imperial Japan. The plot of the novel begins in the 1960s' America, divided by the two fascist regimes holding each other in the clutches of a cold war. The majority of the story takes place in San Francisco, a territory occupied by the Japanese, and revolves around a fictional novel *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* and an ancient Chinese divination text – *I Ching*. While these items will be important to the analysis of nonhuman agency in *The High Castle,* I first want to scrutinize the relationships between human characters – both the occupants and the occupied – and the physical objects in their surroundings in order to outline the connections between Dick's narrative focus and the framework of materialist philosophy.

From the very beginning of the novel we can see a complex relationship that the Japanese occupiers have with American culture. They appropriate the artifacts of the

prewar United States, fetishizing and idealizing the symbols of a bygone era, while at the same time displaying overt superiority over the people of the conquered nation. This attitude becomes evident in the depicted interactions between Robert Childan – an American antiques dealer – and his clients – high ranking officials and businessmen from Japan. The novel begins with a phone-call between Childan and Nobusuke Tagomi, a prominent functionary at Trade Mission on the Pacific Coast. Tagomi is disrespectful towards the salesman, signaling his superiority underneath the cordiality of formal etiquette: "'… Mr. Child*an?'* Tagomi deliberately mispronounced the name; insult within the code that made Childan's ears burn" (10, ch.1). And yet, despite his disdain towards the antique dealer, Tagomi holds the purchases themselves in high esteem. He takes great care of his Colt revolver, and when he presents a bewildered guest with a Mickey Mouse wristwatch, he describes it as "most authentic of dying old U.S. culture, a rare retained artifact carrying flavor of bygone halcyon day" (47-8, ch.3). We can therefore see how the imperial invaders exhibit a certain nostalgia for an image of America that they themselves helped to destroy. The significance of the artifacts occupies an intersection between a war trophy and a substitute for national guilt for the invaders. As such, these objects and the historical signification attached to them become crucial in unveiling to the reader the power relations within the political regime.

The historicity of the objects lauded by the Japanese may be considered a manifestation of the modernist artifice as articulated by Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition*. As the French theorist argued, "modern aesthetics is an aesthetic of the sublime, though a nostalgic one. It allows the unpresentable to be put forward only as the missing contents; however, the form, because of its recognizable consistency, continues to offer to the reader or viewer matter for solace and pleasure" (81). What the occupants seek in those looted artifacts is an outlet for a kind of vicarious nostalgia over

the great narrative of American history. All of the sought-after items – antique guns, lighters, stamps and collectible cards – represent the modernist aesthetic. The Japanese attempt to reclaim a semblance of the lost stable points of reference – dissolved in the wake of the Second World War[21] – which allow them to engage in a particular kind of self-delusion: creating a narrative of history unburdened by the atrocities perpetrated through their invasion during the war. The objects are therefore steeped in the politics of the regime. Additionally, the underlying, unspoken antagonism is mutual, because Childan harbors his own prejudice against his clients, not only as the occupants of his homeland but because he himself is a racial supremacist, equally hateful towards the Blacks and the Jews. He internalizes and perpetuates the hierarchical structure of his society by transferring the racial sentiment further down the supremacist social ladder. The reader gets a glimpse at this process in the inner monologue of the character, when he rides a pedicab: "And it was pleasurable to be peddled along by another human being… To be pulled instead of having to pull. And to have, if even for a moment, higher place" (27-8, ch.2).

These short insights into the perspectives of both Mr. Tagomi and Childan allow us to see how the narrative of the novel reveals a complex network of relationships between physical objects, human beings and ideologies. The two issues on display here, the instrumentalization of people and fetishizing of objects as a form of culture appropriation are both symptoms of a broader epistemological crisis noticed by Dick, in which the power structure determines the human perception of the material objects and their meaning and value. Much of the novel's focus falls on scrutinizing this problem, by presenting the reader with human and nonhuman interactions which uncover a tension between material reality and subjective perspective. As I argue in this chapter,

21 The same idea will echo in a later novel, *Ubik*, where an unstable simulation of reality decays and reverts in time until it finds stability on the last day of August 1939, just before the outset of WW2.

Dick predicts a possibility of agency wherein physical objects counter the power structure by undermining and upsetting the hierarchies of the political regime.

1.2. Two lighters and the ontology of objects

We may be able to unravel the mechanisms of this process by reading a selected scene from The *Man in the High Castle* through the lenses of object-oriented ontology[22]. At the crux of this philosophy is the distinction between *real* objects and *sensual* objects and the matrix of possible interactions between them. Object-oriented ontology stands against the poststructuralist and postmodernist approaches in that, according to Graham Harman, "whereas many of these currents have asserted that reality is something 'constructed' by language, power of human cultural practices, OOO is a bluntly *realist* philosophy. This means among other things that the external world exists independently of human awareness" (Harman, *OOO* 12). As such, rather than with those currents, OOO resonates more directly with the posthumanist philosophers who advocate post-anthropocentric perspectives that take into consideration the materiality and embodiment of a lived experience. Nevertheless, Harman's position is not entirely incomparable with thinkers such as Lyotard or Derrida, when it comes to the scrutinizing of the *conscious*, or at least *human* perception of reality. He asserts that the entities in the world are never perceived directly, but mediated through comparison with other things[23]. Where these philosophies diverge is in Harman's new materialist

22 Abbreviated OOO. Throughout this chapter, the title of Harman's book, *Object-Oriented Ontology,* will be abbreviated *OOO* as well, but italicized, to avoid confusion.

23 Derrida's approach to how the subject constructs reality will be the focus of the next chapter in this dissertation. It should be mentioned that Harman is highly critical of Derrida and 20th century continental philosophy at large, claiming that:

> Derrida is a holistic anti-realist who thinks that all language is metaphorical; OOO is an anti-holistic realism which views the distinction between the literal and the metaphorical as one of the key oppositions for philosophy and for everything else. Derrideans are of course free to continue honouring Derrida's legacy for as long as they

assertion that the construction of this indirect perception is not relegated only to the human cultural or linguistic spheres, but that nonhuman objects are just as involved in actively producing metaphors. What is *real* is always "a surplus beyond any possible opinion" (*OOO* 158) – something that facilitates all interactions and influences subjective perspectives but is never contained within them. Harman argues that poststructuralists erroneously disregard the physical reality in their models of epistemology, and – Derrida especially – treat *metaphor* as a "supposed contamination of every individual reality by every other" (*OOO* 171). By contrast, for Harman, a metaphor is an interaction which consists of the displacement of the qualities of one object onto another (a proxy) that is witnessed/noticed by a third actant. Through what he calls *vicarious causation* (which we will discuss further on), things assert themselves as equal agents. By building upon the Heideggerian equipment, OOO attempts to resolve the postmodern crisis by asserting that

> the true danger to thought is not relativism but *idealism,* and hence the best remedy for what ails us is not the truth/knowledge pair … but *reality.* Reality is the rock against which our various ships always flounder, and as such it must be acknowledged and revered, however elusive it may be. (*OOO* 9)

Now, the obvious question is how to reconcile Dick's epistemologically uncertain narratives with this assertion? I'd argue that the reverence for the elusive reality that Harman describes is precisely the reason why Dick fills his stories with fakes, replicas, and phantasmagorical simulacra. They are a kind of test environments

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> wish. What they are not in a position to do is claim that Derrida beat OOO to the punch on its central insights (*OOO* 176)

Accordingly, I do not claim that Harman reiterates Derrida's approach, but merely that in the case of a posthumanist reading of Dick's novels the ideas of these two thinkers are not necessarily mutually exclusive. A supplementation of the posthumanist analysis of Dick's novels with poststructuralist perspectives may help us understand how the author perceives the epistemological crisis of a subject entangled in, and co-creating the web of social constructs (represented for instance by historicity in *The High Castle,* and by virtual realities of *Ubik* and *The Three Stigmata*). The subsequent posthumanist or new materialist approaches may then elucidate what alternative perspectives on reality and consciousness Dick imagines in circumstances where these anthropocentric structures collapse/are dismantled and where the subject acknowledges and participates in a material, embodied experience of the world.

that the author attempts to distinguish from an "authentic" reality in order to establish whether there is any difference at all. His literary search for the authentic experience of the world hinges upon often fruitless attempts to bring forth the qualities of reality that are not discernible from a limited perspective of a human being. Dick himself describes this limitation as *idios kosmos* – a private world – and in an essay "How to Build a Universe That Doesn't Fall Apart Two Days Later" (1978) he ponders: "Maybe each human being lives in ... a world different from those inhabited and experienced by all other humans … If reality differs from person to person, can we speak of reality singular, or shouldn't we really be talking about plural realities?" ("How to build…" 261).

While in the later works, as we shall see throughout this dissertation, he tries to resolve this issue by imagining posthuman subjects not bound by the same epistemological relativism, Dick in *The Man in the High Castle* contemplates the reality of *objects* as a counter to the solipsistic perspective of an individual. Similarly cognizant of humanistic biases and limitations, Graham Harman postulates that each thing, which also includes events and humans, possesses a collection of empirically inscrutable features that make up the *real* object – subsequently called the "real qualities" – and what the observer accesses is not that thing but the *sensual* object. In his words, "objects come in just two kinds: *real objects* exist whether or not they currently affect anything else, while *sensual objects* exist only in relation to some other object … Real objects cannot relate to one another directly, but only indirectly, by means of a sensual object" (*OOO* 11). In other words, reality, as well as the things and events constituting it, always withdraws behind its superficial qualities that are produced at the point of encounter between objects, either in the sense of it being a physical interaction or cognitive interpretation. While the real object exists independently of temporary

assemblages, the sensual exists as mediation between agents or "only as the correlate of our acts of consciousness" (*OOO* 132). Therefore, the "sensual qualities" are connected to the real object, yet distinct from it, as they appear temporarily at the point of encounter between entities.

The "withdrawal" is a term which Harman borrows from Martin Heidegger's theory of equipment from *Being and Time*, in which, from the point of view of a conscious user (a specific Dasein), tools disappear behind their functions and qualities, while the objects themselves "withdraw from human view into a dark subterranean reality that never becomes present to practical action any more than it does to theoretical awareness" (Harman, *Tool-Being* 1). Harman expands the idea by establishing that this phenomenon concerns not only humans' relations with objects, but any entity: each causal interaction between objects occurs between their *sensual* qualities, while the ontology of the real object, its "tool-being" remains unknowable. Harman emphasizes that "OOO renounces all claims to know the essence of anything directly. Yet this does not entail that nothing *has* an inner nature, and that therefore everything would be willfully performed or socially constructed" (*OOO* 135). Rather, the knowledge is always imperfect, able to only encompass the superficiality of whatever is being described while the real entity eludes – or withdraws from – scrutiny. The difference between the withdrawn entity of the real object and the instance of the sensually perceptible object that emerges in an interaction with another object is first demonstrated in the novel by a secondary character, Wyndam-Matson, when he explains the concept of historicity. Notably, he is the owner of a workshop where he manufactures forgeries of antique American firearms. His counterfeits are supposed to deceive the Japanese collectors – the people most seduced by the immaterial qualities of

objects. Ostensibly, he tries to justify to his mistress, Rita, the absurdity of the Japanese fetishism of historical artifacts. He explains:

> ‘This whole damn historicity business is nonsense. Those Japs are bats. I'll prove it.' Getting up, he hurried into his study, returned at once with two cigarette lighters which he set down on the coffee table. 'Look at these. Look the same, don't they? Well, listen. One has historicity in it.' He grinned at her. 'Pick them up. Go ahead. One's worth, oh, maybe forty or fifty thousand dollars on the collectors' market.'
> The girl gingerly picked up the two lighters and examined them.
> 'Don't you feel it?' he kidded her. 'The historicity?'
> She said, 'What is 'historicity'?'
> 'When a thing has history in it. Listen. One of those two Zippo lighters was in Franklin D. Roosevelt's pocket when he was assassinated. And one wasn't. One has historicity, a hell of a lot of it. As much as any object ever had. And one has nothing. Can you feel it?' He nudged her. 'You can't. You can't tell which is which. There's no 'mystical plasmic presence,' no 'aura' around it. (65-6, ch.5)

In this case the presumed real objects would be A) the Zippo lighter that had interacted with Franklin D. Roosevelt at the moment of his death, and whose unseen qualities and status as an object have been strongly modified by that historical event and B) the second Zippo lighter which presumably has not been a witness to any presidential assassinations. If we accept these conditions, we can therefore assume that the historicity spoken of in the above quote is a feature which distinguishes one object from another. As Harman establishes, “every object is the result of a connection. The history of this connection remains inscribed in its heart … But connections occur only between two real objects, not any other combination” (“On Vicarious Causation” 208). Therefore, the lighter A does not project its history onto its sensual representation. The real object *withdraws,* appearing to an observer to be identical to the other lighter. The reality of that encounter is therefore elusive to a limited observer and in an attempt to access it that particular quality must be approached indirectly.

For Wyndam-Matson this indirect interaction happens by the way of institutional scrutiny – the man produces a certificate from the Smithsonian Museum authenticating the connection between the lighter and the event. There is a chain transference of the sensual qualities: the observer interacts with the paper, applying meaning to the lighter

A and contrasting it with the lighter B, which in turn allows the lighter A to be something more than itself in the eyes of the observer. The historicity of the lighter, as understood by a human subject who reads the certificate, is therefore in a rather tenuous relationship with the lighter and its material history, having been transmitted over multiple instances of mediating operations.

In that sense, the *real* historicity of the Zippo lighter – the one that was physically present at a point in time in Roosevelt's pocket – is different from the constructed value of its sensual instance, which would be the historicity Fredric Jameson defines as "a *perception* of the present as history; that is, as a relationship to the present which somehow defamiliarizes it and allows us that distance from immediacy" (*Postmodernism* 284, emphasis mine). This secondary historicity comes from within the observer (themselves a "thing") as a reaction to their perception of an object, rather than from the object itself. It is also this phenomenon – the creation of a distance between the present and history – that the Japanese find so appealing in the American artifacts. They have collectively fallen under the spell of politicized nostalgia. This idea harks back to the aforementioned point about a narrative of historicity appropriated by the invader in order to escape the collective memory of war. Wyndam-Madson is therefore partly correct in that the quality he attempts to disprove is created around the object and not intrinsic to its reality. However, from the point of view afforded by Harman's OOO, he errs in dismissing completely the existence of qualities indiscernible by human perception of the present.

To justify his position, Wyndam-Matson shows the document of authenticity to his mistress, after which the narrator explains that "the paper and the lighter had cost him a fortune, but they were worth it — because they enabled him to prove that he was right, that the word 'fake' meant nothing really, since the word 'authentic' meant nothing

really" (66, ch.5). Of course, the irony here is that the certificate itself may have been falsified without his knowledge, yet Wyndam-Matson is willing to believe the seductive power of the symbolic value the paper represents. The stance represented by this character may be classified as a sort of postmodern cynicism about the epistemological uncertainty of reality (albeit much more naive than, for example, the theory of hyperreality proclaimed by Jean Baudrillard, whose own stance with regard to fake objects will be contrasted against Dick's *Ubik* in a further chapter). We can read his role in the novel as a reflection of this philosophical position – as a stand-in for postmodern disillusionment.

However, I argue that this relativism does not represent the thesis of *The High Castle's* narrative. Wyndam-Matson's demonstration is supposed to discredit and invalidate the concept of historicity, and in actuality it inadvertently reinforces the model of reality proposed by Harman. The quality described in that scene correlates to the second principle of OOO which states that "Objects are not identical with their properties, but have a tense relationship with those properties, and this very tension is responsible for all of the change that occurs in the world" (*OOO* 11). Wyndam-Matson disregards that tension and believes the lighter is nothing but its external properties. Thus, what he fails to appreciate in his ironic detachment is that the object is not made out of its sensual qualities, but it produces them as a form of withdrawal of its reality.

However, where Wyndam-Matson is correct is that the words "authentic" and "fake," as applied to the lighters are not reflective of reality, regardless of historicity. Both objects equally are a part of the material world, yet the discursive regimen of the novel's society applies a different value to each. Marcus Boon explains that issue in an observation, which, while relating to a much later novel, *A Scanner Darkly,* is very

relevant here and perhaps signals how Dick continues to build upon his early concepts throughout his oeuvre. He assesses that for Dick,

> [t]hings – humans and nonhumans – are enslaved by their obligation to participate in a political-economic regime in which they must necessarily present themselves as counterfeit. Their suffering consists in the ontological gap between that which they are required to appear as and that which they are. (73)

The scene concerning the two lighters showcases this conflict between the object and the sensual qualities it projects. These properties change dynamically between being perceived as fake and as authentic depending on the observer, and the context in which they are displayed. Not unlike quantum particles, their status fluctuates depending on the circumstances of observation. However, in the novel, the forces influencing objects' qualities are not the physical environment but the shifting political viewpoints. Whether or not either of the two Zippos has been in the place and time of Roosevelt's assassination, they are both real things: different but equal with regard to the status of ontological reality. In the hierarchical power regime however, one is given the arbitrary status of more authentic – more real – than the other. In the novel's social order, owning authentic artifacts is a status symbol – however, it is a self-delusion at best and a discursive tool of oppression at worst. To claim that a political ideology may authoritatively designate a taxonomy of real/fake is an extension of the anthropocentric arrogance that claims the privilege to be able to observe and objectively describe an essential reality.

The enslavement described by Boon occurs when the lighter B is compelled by a piece of paper to display the sensual quality of inauthenticity – to present itself as somehow lesser than the lighter A. This point becomes much more poignant, if we consider that the dominant cultural narrative depicted in *The High Castle* is Nazism. The regime pays attention to the idea of the "real" – Dick shows that fascism's dangerous power lies in the discursive ability to enforce upon living and inanimate

entities such superficial taxonomies as the essential truths. Under this paradigm, people – Jews, people of color, homosexuals – are subjected to systemic prosecution and extermination based on being designated as lesser than human, somehow less real in the eyes of their oppressors. As a result, in the world of Dick's novel, under the fascist and imperialistic rulers slavery is reinstated in the former United States. The critique undertaken by the author gives us a glimpse of the initial stages of Dick's movement towards the framework of posthumanism. Specifically, one can view the novel's sentiment as correlating with Rosi Braidotti's criticism of Eurocentric universal Humanism. As she notices:

> Central to this universalistic posture and its binary logic is the notion of 'difference' as perjoration … In so far as difference spells inferiority, it acquires both essentialist and lethal connotations for people who get branded as 'others'. These are the sexualized, racialized, and naturalized others, who are reduced to the less than human status of disposable bodies. (*The Posthuman* 15)

Additionally, by bringing attention to the gap between what is real and what is perceived, Dick unravels here the artifice of the humanistic, constructed and politicized reality and thus aligns himself with the core of the new materialist philosophies. Diana Coole and Samantha Frost contend that "For critical materialists, society is simultaneously materially real and socially constructed: our material lives are always culturally mediated … the challenge here is to give materiality its due while recognizing its plural dimensions and its complex, contingent modes of appearing" (27). By acknowledging the inaccessibility of a direct objective reality, while at the same time calling attention to the fallacies of solipsistic relativism, Dick straddles the same line.

If we follow the assumption that nonhuman things can exist as autonomous agents, and outside of bounds of relativism, then we should be also able to identify within the novel the instances of sensual qualities that are produced against the dominant modes of signification or at least engendering something other than the

perspective of the oppressive social hierarchy. The indirect access to reality through power-related system of signification demonstrated between the lighters and Wyndam-Matson can be considered flawed or incomplete. It is steeped in humanistic biases and the arbitrary duality of fake vs authentic. This taxonomy, used by the totalitarian regime in the novel is based in their essentialist approach to the reality and truth of objects: a fascist proclaims an intellectual, rationalized insight into the true nature of things, whereupon he constructs a justification for the superiority of his ideology. The new materialist philosophy on the other hand rejects the claims of objectivity of human epistemological mechanisms[24] and of the ability to *know* the essence of objects. Matter actively participates in meaning-making, in that the sensual qualities it produces determine one's perception of the world, not the real object. The object's agency is precisely in its refusal to be qualified in human terms. Is there then any way of initiating a connection with the real object? As we shall see in the next section, for Dick and the new materialist philosophers alike, the answer seems to be affirmative and realized through indirect aesthetic interaction.

1.3. Vibrancy and causality

To identify a thing's agency is to recognize its ability to transform other things with which it interacts, to alter their qualities. To describe this process we may once again turn to Harman and his concept of vicarious causation through aesthetic experience. As Peter Wolfendale states:

> [vicarious causation] attempts to reconcile the thesis that objects withdraw from one another with their obvious ability to interact with and thereby change one another, by

24 Harman conveys that point by arguing against Husserl's claim that humans possess an "intuition of the essence" that allows us to mitigate the limits of sensual perception with intellectual inquiry. Conversely, "OOO counters Husserl by denying that intellectual intuition can grasp things as they are any better than sensual intuition does. This is a rationalist fallacy that arises when Husserl denies the gap between real and sensual objects" (*OOO* 133).

> explaining how their sensual facades mediate between them (Harman 2007). Harman does this by modelling causation on the deliberately indirect allusion to an object provided by metaphor ... He holds that in such encounters the allure of the sensual object grants us indirect access to the real object, insofar as it enables the latter to affect us. (298)

In other words, the transformative power of an object lies in relating to another by displacing its qualities onto a proxy. As Harman claims: “when two objects give rise to a new one through vicarious connections, they create a new unified whole that is not only inexhaustible from the outside, but also filled on the inside with a real object sincerely absorbed with sensual ones” (“On Vicarious Causation” 208). This kind of aesthetic interaction is special, insofar as it does not make claim to any knowledge of reality (as opposed to the previous example of the lighter's historicity), but instead embraces the material incompleteness of sensuality. Two or more objects can approach each other through a mediation of a third one, which serves as the basis for the metaphor. This proxy shares the qualities of the object without requiring the observer to come in direct contact with the underlying reality. The sensual object therefore closes the distance to the real object and its ontology, which, despite still being withdrawn, can therefore be experienced vicariously by appearing as or in aesthetic relation to some other entity. Vicarious causation is the moment of transformation which unveils the object's agency: a thing modifies the observer’s perception of itself when they come in contact through aesthetic mediation[25].

This model of interaction may serve as an analytical framework for identifying the nonhuman agency in *High Castle,* and therefore bring us closer to a posthumanist reading. However, Francesca Ferrando notices that while Harman shares the post-anthropocentric sensitivities, he “skips a crucial contribution [of philosophical

25 Harman provides an example of a metaphor with which he illustrates that procedure: “When the poet writes ‘my heart is a furnace,’ the sensual object known as a heart captures vaguely defined furnace qualities and draws them haltingly into its orbit. The inability of the heart to fuse easily with furnace-traits ... achieves allusion to a ghostly heart-object lying beneath the overly familiar sensual heart of everyday acquaintance” (“On Vicarious Causation” 216).

posthumanism]: the studies of the differences … within the postmodern frame. This omission comes with some serious consequences: the notion of the human in OOO is still based on the assumption of a 'neutral' and generalized human subject" (*Philosophical Posthumanism* 164). Therefore, the OOO's reliance on the principle of flat ontology does not exhaust the issue of ethics under a materialist reality. The hierarchies and dualities of the regime, and the violence enacted based on them, as discussed in the previous section, are allowed to fester unexamined when heterogeneity of beings is not taken into account.

Therefore, for a more complete posthumanist reading of *The Man in the High Castle*, I expand the OOO with Jane Bennett's philosophy of vital materialism and Francesca Ferrando's thought experiment of the posthuman multiverse, which both argue that when organized into contingent assemblages(chemical, physical, biological and so on), individual material objects have a capacity to spontaneously generate agency. For Bennett, each object possesses "Thing-Power: the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle" (6). It is the elusive movement or animation of things, often perceived as static by a conscious observer, that put into motion entire assemblages of entities. Subsequently, these assemblages generate a certain "vibrancy", through the interaction of its elements, that may manifest as agency, despite the lack of conscious thought or a common trajectory of action in the entirety of the assemblage. As Bannett explains:

> The effects generated by an assemblage are … emergent properties, emergent in that their ability to make something happen is distinct from the sum of the vital force of each materiality considered alone. Each member and proto-member of the assemblage has a certain vital force, but there is also an effectivity proper to the grouping as such: an agency of the assemblage. (24)

This vitality, and subsequent vibrancy, of matter may be physical – on an atomic or cosmic scale – or metaphysical – manifesting as a degree of independence of objects

from human social sphere. It is, thus, an example of one of many autopoietic configurations or systems so characteristic for posthumanist philosophy in general. The purpose of this section is to identify how objects in *The Man in the High Castle* may enter heterogeneous assemblages and manifest effects that transform others, both humans and objects in the process of aesthetic experience.

For Dick, that particular phenomenon may be produced by the works of art. Frank Frink is an artisan craftsman and a Jew, hiding his heritage to avoid persecution and death from the hands of the Nazi regime. In the course of the novel he is fired from Wyndam-Matson's workshop and decides to start his own business with a partner. However, instead of continuing to produce replicas of antiques for the Japanese, Frink undertakes a risky enterprise of creating hand-made, original jewelry. Instead of reproducing the traditional artifacts of prewar America, his pieces are geometrical shapes that forgo the representation of any historical identity and as such are outside of the signification based on the authentic/fake duality.

Frink's pieces eventually find their way into Robert Childan's antique shop, where their unique design catches attention of Paul Kasuora – one of the Japanese collectors. He is the first to express the transformative allure of the objects. In a conversation with Childan, Kasuora tries to convince him that a pin created by Frink possesses some kind of quality that cannot be replicated. Kasuora claims that some yet unnamed feature of the artifact has been unveiled to him precisely because the object lacks historicity:

> "For no logical reason I feel a certain emotional fondness. Why is that? ... I still see no shapes or forms. But it somehow partakes of Tao. You see?" He motioned Childan over. "It is balanced. The forces within this piece are stabilized ..."
> …
> "Robert, this object has *wu*."
> "I believe you are right," Childan said, trying to recall what *wu* was; it was not a Japanese word — it was Chinese. Wisdom, he decided. Or comprehension. Anyhow, it was highly good.

> "The hands of the artificer," Paul said, "had *wu*, and allowed that *wu* to flow into this piece. Possibly he himself knows only that this piece satisfies. It is complete, Robert. By contemplating it, we gain more *wu* ourselves. We experience the tranquility associated not with art but with holy things. I recall a shrine in Hiroshima wherein a shinbone of some medieval saint could be examined. However, this is an artifact and that was a relic. This is alive in the now, whereas that merely remained. By this meditation, conducted by myself at great length since you were last here, I have come to identify the value which this has in opposition to historicity. I am deeply moved, as you may see." (170-1, ch.11)

The elaborate description that Paul provides to Childan gives us some clues about Dick's understanding of the world of objects. The underlying reality is, for the author, as indeed for the new materialists, unknowable in a direct, epistemological sense; we, as human beings, are constrained to *idios kosmos*. There is however a trace, or a signal of the material reality, that is spontaneously broadcast from one object to another through some causal medium – the proxy object. It transforms the observer, which here manifests as emotional fondness and a broadening of their perspective. In Kasuora's account, that conduit is twofold. The first stage is the metaphor of the spiritual experience in a shrine. This juxtaposition satisfies Harman's requirements for the proxy object: the pin and the shrine are related in their sensual qualities, but only marginally. The second quality, emerging from the first, is more conceptual and refers to eastern philosophy. Dick uses the Taoist notion of *wu* to encapsulate the essence of the object. The narration of the novel describes Tao as "that which first lets the light, then the dark" (106, ch.7) – a quality of universal balance. While ostensibly symbols of good and evil, the light could be also read as the manifestation of sensual qualities, and the dark which follows as the withdrawal of the real object.

Paul seems unsure about the importance of aesthetic value for the intense effect that the pin has on him. He claims "The name for it is neither art, for it has no form, nor religion … We evidently lack the word for an object like this ... It is authentically a new thing on the face of the world" (171, ch.11). To reconcile the idea of indirect causation with this statement, one has to consider that *wu*, the essence Paul speaks about, is not a

quality of the real object but indeed the medium of a metaphor. The concept itself, taken from eastern Taoist philosophy, is an object, however intangible. It is the medium or proxy that facilitates the vicarious interaction between two other objects – the jewelry and Paul. Therefore, for him the piece itself is not the sole originator of the effect. It is the transference of qualities from the concept of *wu* to the jewelry that produces an aesthetic experience. Kasuora's meditation over the pin through the conceptual medium of the *wu* can therefore possibly be described as the real object's causal agency facilitated by aesthetic experience, but also as an instance of a vibrant assemblage which produces effects distinct from the qualities of its member-entities.

If that is the case, then what exactly does this causation entail? In what way does the real object transform the perception of the observer? To answer this question one may compare the idea of *wu* presented in the novel with Bennett's vital materiality and Ferrando's concept of posthuman multiverse. Robert Childan, during the conversation with Paul, assumes that the word means "wisdom" and therefore relates to some epistemological certainty. However, a more accurate translation of *wu* is "awareness" as a spiritual realization of one's place in the world that "ignites a more responsible attitude in life" (Lizhu, Chen 571). In the posthuman framework this idea can be understood as the ability to see oneself as a part of a broader autopoietic system, embodied and vibrant. To demonstrate how this awareness transfers from one object to another, Dick stages in the narrative of the novel a radically intense aesthetic experience involving Frink's silver pin and Mr Tagomi.

Eventually, one of the jewelry pieces made by Frink makes its way into the hands of Tagomi, who at this point of the novel has gone through a number of tribulations, including a shootout with Nazi spies in an effort to deescalate the cold war. He is assured by Childan of the unique qualities of the silver pin and finds himself in a

moment of respite, on a park bench, attempting to access those qualities. He first tries a direct, empirical access to the real object, which fails for the reasons already discussed -- the object's reality withdraws beneath the layer of superficial qualities. However, a breakthrough happens at the moment when the observer relinquishes his scrutiny. Tagomi lifts the pin to the light and in that moment:

> in the sunlight, the silver triangle glittered. It reflected light. Fire, Mr. Tagomi thought. Not dank or dark object at all. Not heavy, weary, but pulsing with life. The high realm, aspect of yang: empyrean, ethereal. As befits work of art. Yes, that is artist's job: takes mineral rock from dark silent earth transforms it into shining light-reflecting form from sky…
> Body of yin, soul of yang. Metal and fire unified. The outer and inner; microcosmos in my palm. (221, ch.14)

Tagomi finally finds access to the real object through the metaphor of fire, which opens up to him a vector of vicarious causation. The piece of jewelry interacts with the observer on an aesthetic plane, as a work of art. However, an attentive reader may notice that the pin, Mr Tagomi and the metaphor of fire are not the only participants of this moment. There is of course Frank Frink – the artist – but also the sunlight, which enters this seemingly closed system just at the right moment to engage a transformation of the sensual qualities of the pin. We may find this description comparable to Bennett's model of an assemblage in which things form a "contingent tableau" of dynamic material qualities. The surprising phenomenon that arises from such a seemingly static configuration is vibrant, in that it spontaneously produces effects that are not originating in any component elements but serves as an exercise of agency of the whole assemblage. Bennett uses the example of a gutter filled with plastic debris and animal remains which presented itself to her as a collection of inert material objects until – as was the case in *The Man in the High Castle* – "[they] started to shimmer and spark" (Bennett 5) when hit by direct beam of light, at which point they produced perceptible effects not ascribable to any individual elements of the assemblage. This interaction unveiled them "as vivid entities not entirely reducible to the contexts in which (human)

subjects set them, never entirely exhausted by their semiotics" (*Vibrant Matter* 5). In other words, once the pin has entered into the interaction with the sunlight, it produces a sensual quality corresponding to its real self that is then read as a metaphor and thus vicariously experienced by Tagomi, transforming his perspective.

The shift in Tagomi's perception is quite radical. As he lifts his eyes off the object, he momentarily finds himself in another world. He partakes in a vivid vision of history in which the axis lost the Second World War – presumably the same kind of world that the reader of *The Man in the High Castle* experiences. The world is unarguably different from Tagomi's hitherto experience, eliciting in him terror and disbelief: "Mad dream, Mr. Tagomi thought. Must wake up. Where are the pedecabs today? He began to walk faster. Whole vista has dull, smoky, tomb-world cast. Smell of burning. Dim gray buildings, sidewalk, peculiar harsh tempo in people" (223, ch.14). The new arrangement of reality overwhelms him despite it being made up of the same material components. Yet, what Tagomi finds the most incomprehensible is the sudden inversion of social hierarchies and prejudices he is drawn into. He enters a diner, wherein he becomes confused and startled by the hostile reactions of white Americans who now hold his former privileged status:

> Ahead, a dingy lunch counter. Only whites within, all supping. Mr. Tagomi pushed open the wooden swinging doors. Smell of coffee. Grotesque jukebox in corner blaring out he winced and made his way to the counter. All stools taken by whites. Mr. Tagomi exclaimed. Several whites looked up. But none departed their places. None yielded their stools to him. They merely resumed supping.
> 'I insist!' Mr. Tagomi said loudly to the first white; he shouted in the man's ear.
> The man put down his coffee mug and said, 'Watch it, Tojo.'
> Mr. Tagomi looked to the other whites; all watched with hostile expressions. And none stirred. *Bardo Thodol* existence, Mr. Tagomi thought. Hot winds blowing me who knows where. This is vision — of what? Can the animus endure this? (223, ch.14)

Tagomi expects the citizens' obedience to a Japanese occupant; therefore, when his authority is not recognized, and he is subjected to racist remarks, his instinct is to reject the newfound reality as a delusion. Yet, he is forced to confront the fact that there is a

symmetry, and thus a similarity between the mechanisms of prejudice active in that moment and those enforced by the regime in his own timeline. Tagomi tries to convince himself that what he experiences is impossible, and therefore an illusion, but he cannot dismiss that this 'nightmare' reality is made up of the same material components, and the differences are solely the result of a shift in the political paradigm.

Dick engages here not only in a generalized commentary on the unstable foundations of all ideology, but also issues a dire warning about the possible outcomes of unchecked fascist and racial supremacist tendencies of his own 50s' America. As Umberto Rossi comments: "The destructive madness of Nazism could easily destroy the 'mad' alternate reality conjured up by Dick, but also the 'real' world where he and his readers lived in 1962. Though Nazism has been defeated, its cosmic death drive is still active, still threatening to wipe out humankind" (93). One can therefore argue that in the world of Dick's novel all political circumstances and alternative political realities are equally possible, since those realities, and people within them, just as the Zippo lighters, are equally subject to the same exercises of power. If we consider each of the worlds described in the novel as Bennett's vibrant, contingent assemblages, encompassing all matter within them, Mr Tagomi's teleportation or vision tells us that our timeline may, under different political pressures, exhibit the same properties as the one from the novel. Both worlds have the same material parameters; they bifurcate based on a random chance that puts one ideology over another as the dominant cultural paradigm. The postmodern crisis of the truth-value of historical narratives and the hierarchical understanding of life based on the dichotomy between the human and the nonhuman both result in relativistic ethics easily exploited by the systems of power. The true horror of *The Man in The High Castle* is not the vision of a fictional world run by Nazis, but

the fact that our variant of reality has the same potential to be distorted by fascistic ideologies.

What kind of alternative framework of ethics can then emerge from that newfound awareness? For an answer we may again turn to Bennett. Her model of vitality comes into play when we establish that the newly experienced reality does not originate either in the pin or in Tagomi but in a heterogeneous assemblage mediated by aesthetics. Moreover, this reading also corresponds to N. Katherine Hayles's model of the posthuman ontology in which "[w]e do not see a world 'out there' that exists apart from us. Rather, we see only what our systemic organization allows us to see. The environment merely *triggers* changes determined by the system's own structural properties" (*How We Became Posthuman* 11). The element of the system which enables change in this instance is the jewelry pin. It is this object that causes a familiar reality, with its familiar arrangement of the material, the cultural, and the political layers, to unravel before Mr. Tagomi. The agency exhibited by the object lies in bringing attention to the limitations of the individual human consciousness in the face of the complexities – material and social – of the world. By transporting Tagomi to a different configuration of the same material reality, the pin allows him to see what other potentialities are possessed by matter, if we think of matter as a self-organizing entity. The object is at once a part of and a representation of a greater whole, or what Tagomi describes as "The outer and inner; microcosmos in my palm" (221, ch.14). It is exactly this kind configuration that informs the starting point of ethics according to Bennett, in that it relies on "the recognition of human participation in a shared, vital materiality ... The ethical task at hand here is to cultivate the ability to discern nonhuman vitality, to become perceptually open to it" (14).

Tagomi achieves that openness as he takes in the exhibited mutability of matter as the vision of an alternative historico-political timeline. The vibrant matter grants him access to a broader perspective wherein the universe may be seen as a set of possible worlds, a multiverse in Ferrando's posthuman sense, united by the same initial circumstances but different in the temporary assemblages configured within each of them. In her terminology, these parallel dimensions share the same materiality but are arranged into different frequencies. As she describes the concept, “it entails that matter, while constituting this universe, would also be actualizing an indefinite number of other universes, in a process of both relationality and autonomy … the notion of the multiverse greatly expands a speculative perception of the self, by relating the individual to other realms of existence” (“Multiverse” 266). Ferrando uses this framework as a thought experiment designed to illustrate how the material relations inform a posthuman perspective based on the deconstruction of the Self/Others paradigm, in that "every dimension can be seen as an autopoietic mode of existence which, even though it may perceive itself as autonomous, is intrinsically connected to many other modes of existences" (*Philosophical Posthumanism* 179). By presenting reality as "generative nets of material possibilities simultaneously happening and coexisting, in a material dissolution of the strict dualism one/many" (“Multiverse” 267), we can describe each dimension as a vibrant and contingent assemblage that we perceive only in its effects and the phenomena emergent from the interactions of its parts. The pin’s influence on Tagomi points toward this new materialist and posthumanist inter-active model and forces the observer to acknowledge the mutability of the social and physical world, and thus the responsibility of any participant of that reality to contribute ethically to the organization of this autopoietic system. Dick unveils to the reader, as does the silver pin to Tagomi, a frame of ethics encompassing the

multiverse – the differing variants of the same reality, all of them contingent on the coexistent human and nonhuman agencies working within. Thus, he aligns himself to a certain degree with Ferrando's sentiments. Her multiverse is crucially non-anthropocentric, and while the most obvious difference between the dimensions witnessed by Tagomi lies in disparate cultural and political regimes, we have also seen that nonhuman objects are actively involved in these politics.

The newfound perspective on ethics is put into practice in the novel once Mr Tagomi's perception returns to his original timeline. With his sense of stable points of reference upended, he is more careful when exercising his power, with a new understanding that "our space and our time [are] creations of our own psyche" (225, ch.14), distorted by societal biases, as opposed to the underlying material reality. As a result, he protests the dominant cultural narrative when a form requesting the extradition of Frank Frink to Germany, after he has been revealed to be a Jew, arrives at his desk. Tagomi refuses to give the prisoner over to the Reich and orders him to be released from arrest. The vibrancy of the pin echoes further, starting a chain reaction: Tagomi, after the radical change of perspective, protests against the instrumentalizing regime and protects Frink from extradition to Nazi Europe. The fates of those two people become entangled despite the fact that the two of them never met, the pin mediating their interaction within the assemblage of material reality.

That an object that Frink created as a form of rebellion against dominant cultural signifiers saves him through vicarious interactions emerging among human and nonhuman agents proves that for Dick, as well as for Bennett, "bodies enhance their power in or as a heterogeneous assemblage" and that agency "becomes distributed across an ontologically heterogeneous field, rather than being a capacity localized in a human body" (*Vibrant Matter* 23). The intricate network of vibrant objects remains

unseen by the individual nodes of the system, but the effects of their thing-power reverberate throughout the organization. The pin, by transforming the Japanese official's perspective has simultaneously saved its creator from possible execution.

The novel's open ending keeps it ambiguous whether Tagomi's efforts under his new outlook on ethics will have a broader impact on the Nazi-dominated world, but the moment of Frink's pardon gives the reader a subtle indication that for Dick any sincere interaction with material reality may have far reaching effects not only for the individual, human observer, but for the broader political paradigms they are involved in. In the broader context of my work, this scene from *The Man in the High Castle* showcases Dick's burgeoning idea of a system of agency, or indeed an ontological mechanism of interacting with reality which extends beyond the scope of individual human cognition. Mr Tagomi glimpses another world, through an expanded network of subjects, objects and texts, which shows him the feasibility of different cultural paradigms imposed on the same material reality, revealed through a complex interplay of individual perception (Mr Tagomi's disillusionment with fascism), physicality of the object (the silver pin that catalyzes the paradigm shift), and the spontaneous pattern emerging from the universal vibrancy (the branching posthuman multiverse).

This sort of complexity may be seen as a preliminary outline for the model of the posthuman assemblage. Indeed, a posthumanist scholar Robert Pepperell supposes that cubist artistic expressions of Picasso or Braque produce a radical perspective on materiality in which "[a]ny object … is not *absolutely* there, but *possibly* there … The world of seemingly stable reality then, rather than being composed of fixed things, becomes a cluster of probabilities that mutate over time and which are dependent on the viewer for their perception" (166). The undefinable shape of the pin, a "blob," as Kasuora calls it, shares this quality and as such affirms the model of non-hierarchical

and non-anthropocentric perspectives found in the scholarship of critical posthumanism. However, the pin is not the only example of an aesthetic object influencing the actions of people and shaping their reality that can be found in the novel. Arguably, the most pronounced instances of emergent object agency are two literary texts propelling the narrative of the novel: *I Ching* and *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*.

1.4. "The inner truth" – literary texts as actors of political reality

Almost every named character in Dick's novel, both the occupants and the occupied, at one point encounters the fictional text *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy,* written by the reclusive, mysterious author, Hawthorne Abendsen, who earns himself the eponymous moniker of "the Man in the High Castle." His sought out, polarizing and banned throughout the Nazi-controlled territory novel-within-the-novel contains a narrative depiction of the world where the Allies have won the war. However, the setting imagined by Abendsen is not the same version of reality that the reader of *The High Castle* experiences and Tagomi sees in his vision (named the "zero text" by Rossi[26], in contrast to the *High Castle* text and *Grasshopper* text (*Twisted Worlds* 61)), but yet another speculative vision of the present. In Abendsen's novel, the events leading to the end of the Second World War, as in the zero text, still result in the defeat of the Nazis in 1945, but the details of the conflict do not match. For example, President Roosevelt, although not assassinated, is succeeded by Rexford Tugwell; Hitler is tried for war

26 I consider Rossi's terminology slightly misleading, as it signals that each subsequent reality described in the novel occupies a lower place in hierarchy of authenticity compared to ours. He, as well as some other critics, conclude that the metafictive elements of the novel signal that by juxtaposing realities Dick deems the narrative setting an illusion or abstraction in opposition to the authentic "zero" reality. Hayles argues for example that "the characters within High Castle are forced to confront their fictionality" (qtd in Rieder 215). Indeed, by the end of the novel, the character of Juliana Frink becomes shortly convinced that her experienced world is somehow fake. However, as I argue throughout this chapter, the reader may arrive at the opposite conclusion, according to which that three versions of the present are equally valid and possible, and ontologically feasible, arrangements of reality.

crimes in Munich; and the subsequent cold war involves the United States and the British Empire instead of the Soviet Union.

The encounters with Abendsen's piece of speculative fiction always elicit strong reactions – both positive and negative – from the readers. For those supporting the regime, the novel seems a threat, a brazen undermining of the Reich's power; while the oppressed see in it either an escapist fantasy or a hopeful manifesto against fascism. Interestingly, there are specific instances wherein the initial approach to *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* results in the characters projecting their own ideological biases onto the novel, without having read it. For example, Joe Cinnadella, an undercover Nazi sent to assassinate Abendsen, and a self-proclaimed "true Fascist," after glancing at an excerpt declares that the author has "taken the best about Nazism, the socialist part, the Todt Organization … and who's he giving the credit to? The New Deal. And he's left out the bad part, the SS part, the racial extermination" (155, ch.10). In the absence of any other point of reference, Joe sees the alternate timeline of *The_Grasshopper* only as a distortion of his ideology.

Similarly, Robert Childan, a white supremacist with a deeply rooted prejudice against other races, after hearing the premise of *The Grasshopper*, considers it an expression of nationalism, unaware that in the novel, the British Empire conquers America. He reflects: "Would have crushed them out of existence. No Japan today, and the U.S.A. gleaming great sole power in the entire wide world … I must read that *Grasshopper* book. Patriotic duty, from the sound of it" (113, ch.7). Despite it ostensibly depicting the failure of the Nazi doctrine, characters such as Childan or Joe, whose outlooks are deeply rooted in ideology, still perform a (mis)reading of *The Grasshopper* that reaffirms their biases. Dick evokes here the trope of literature as a mirror – the fictional book reflects, and thus exposes, the socio-political persuasions of

his novel's characters who are also readers. These internal, that is produced by the characters, interpretations of *The Grasshopper* are the result of the same process of signification that obscured the material reality of the lighters scrutinized by Wyndam-Matson. In that way, an act of reading is comparable to the process in which the sense of historicity is attached to physical objects, as described in section 2. It may be flawed, based on preconceived notions and preceding significatory habits, wherein it produces a misreading. In other words, we are confronted with the question if there is another way of reading *The Grasshopper*, one that would not be a "misreading," without falling back on the traditional hermeneutic notions of literary interpretation. In the context of this problem, the above-discussed motif of the pin becomes an important clue. It implies the possibility of a more profound, sensual interaction with the literary piece as a proxy object, not unlike the one that occurred between the pin and Mr Tagomi.

A new materialist approach to a text may be conducted by opening oneself up to other perspectives and ontological frameworks by the way of interacting with alternate assemblages of reality through the medium of literature. Therefore, a literary text may be placed at the same position as the aesthetic proxy object – to return to Harman's terminology – in an interaction of vicarious causation. Indeed, as Ridvan Askin assesses, following Shklovsky:

> Works of literature are … quintessential *aesthetic objects:* the literary object, qua tool, pries open any object whatsoever by virtue of being a tool of *aisthesis* – of feeling, perception, sensation … From a posthumanist perspective, what is interesting in this conception of literature is [presenting it] as the very *human* means of going *beyond the human.* It gives us access to the essence of things, for example, the stoniness of stones, because it bypasses conceptual thought and operates directly via sensation. The literary work is an object of sensation created by humans for the purpose of getting out of themselves and into things. (171-172)

This bypassing is nothing less than Harman's concept of the vicarious connection to a real object provided by metaphor, outlined in section 3 of this chapter. If we follow this assertion, we can therefore treat the reoccurring mentions of *The Grasshopper* by the

characters in the novel as instances of emergent object-oriented ontology, wherein the observer (a reader) accesses a potential configuration of a withdrawn reality (the alternate history depicted in *The Grasshopper*) through the sensual qualities of an aesthetic proxy object producing vicarious causation (the literary text). In this section, we shall look at some instances where the readers of the fictional novel, mainly Juliana Frink and Tagomi, come close to assuming that posthuman perspective with the support of yet another literary object: a divination text *I Ching*.

Nobusuke Tagomi reads through *The Grasshopper* just before his interaction with Frink's pin, which makes possible the vision, described in the previous section, by priming the observer to the idea of alternate timelines, even if only in the realm of literary fiction. Only after that does the multiversal structure of reality enter into and expand Tagomi's perception. As Rieder observes, "the structure of *High Castle*'s world can best be understood not as an alternative history constructed by reversing the roles of conquerors and conquered in World War II, but rather as a complex set of metafictional possibilities concretized by objects and texts within the novel" (217). Therefore, literature serves an important role in the material assemblage, as the ultimate proxy object that brings us closer to concretizing reality, by pulling the observer away from the perspective rooted in ideology and power structures and providing itself as the metaphor (which is for OOO the means of approaching the real) for different configurations of the world. Literature becomes a conduit between assemblages helping us to breach the divide between matter and human conceptualization of it. Understood as such, Dick's narrative in *High Castle* lines up with the foundations of critical posthumanism proposed by Braidotti, who states that "matter, including the specific slice of matter that is human embodiment, is intelligent and self-organizing … Matter is not dialectically opposed to culture, nor to technological mediation, but continuous with

them" (*The Posthuman* 35). Just as *The Man in The High Castle* demonstrates to the subject living in "text zero" the prospect of other cultural assemblages within the frame of the same material reality, so does *The Grasshopper* text breach the gap between the material and the cultural by providing that revelation for the characters of *The High Castle* narrative.

To more thoroughly examine this idea of literature as a conduit between the material and the cultural, one has to also take into consideration the other text recurring throughout the novel: an ancient Chinese divination book, *I Ching,* or *Book of Changes.* It is a cosmological text whose origins date back to 10th century BC, composed of 64 hexagrams – figures representing metaphysical concepts – and a collection of philosophical commentaries interpreting the combinations of the hexagrams. The user of *I Ching* throws yarrow stalks to produce a sequence of random numbers corresponding to the figures that supposedly provide instructions or predictions of future events. In *The High Castle*, *I Ching,* brought to America by the Japanese, becomes a highly popular element of culture and spirituality. Many characters in the novel, such as Tagomi and Frank Fink, search for guidance and direction for their decisions by consulting the text for its randomized prophecies. This practice may be seen as a further confirmation of the existence, within the structure of *The High Castle,* of the model of the multiverse as outlined in the previous section. Indeed, as Everett and Halpern notice: "By employing casting, the process is based on randomness. Because the reliance on the *I Ching* introduces an element of chance, it suggests that alternative possibilities always exist, perhaps in different realities where other hexagrams were cast" (49). We can therefore position this literary text as a mechanism comparable to the pin: an object engaging in a mediation between a human observer and a particular configuration of political and physical reality. Moreover, the oracle seems to go a step

further as it not only brings attention to the contingency of reality but also serves as a non-conscious actant by enforcing a particular self-organization on the assemblage by steering the actions of the people who interact with it. Nowhere in the novel is that more clear than in the final scene, where the vicarious causation between alternate reality of *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy,* the *I Ching* acting as the proxy object, and Hawthorne Abendsen, is brought into light.

When the previously introduced assassin, Joe Cinnadella, journeys towards Hawthorne Abendsen's home to kill him under the orders of the Nazi command, he recruits a travel companion, Juliana, who is incidentally Frank Frink's ex-wife. Joe chooses her hoping that her attractiveness will entice Abendsen into inviting them to his "High Castle." On the way there, Juliana starts reading and becomes fascinated by *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy,* still under the impression that Joe just wants to converse with its author. When she discovers the true purpose of their journey, in a moment of drug-induced confusion Juliana kills the would-be assassin. She decides to flee and find the elusive Abendsen on her own to warn him of danger. But when Juliana arrives and meets not a recluse in hiding but an author with a stoic attitude, enjoying his life free of fear, the focus of their encounter shifts. She surmises that his relaxed attitude of general acceptance must stem from some fundamental revelation about the nature of reality, and, additionally, that his novel is its expression. In a conversation between her, Abendsen, and his wife, Juliana realizes that the author did not imagine the alternative reality on his own:

> Juliana said, 'The oracle wrote your book. Didn't it?'
> …
> 'Tell her,' Caroline said. 'She's right; she's entitled to know, for what she did on your behalf.' To Juliana she said, 'I'll tell you, then, Mrs. Frink. One by one Hawth made the choices. Thousands of them. By means of the lines. Historic period. Subject. Characters. Plot. It took years. Hawth even asked the oracle what sort of success it would be. It told him that it would be a very great success, the first real one of his career. So you were right. You must use the oracle quite a lot yourself, to have known.'

> …
> 'It and I,' Hawthorne said at last, 'long ago arrived at an agreement regarding royalties. If I ask it why it wrote *Grasshopper*, I'll wind up turning my share over to it. (245-6, ch.15)

Through this declaration Abendsen reluctantly reveals the source of his inspiration, but also signals a possible agency of the aesthetic object. Moreover, the chain of vicarious causation now extends between two objects – *I Ching* and *The Grasshopper* – with the human undertaking the role of a mediator, bringing forth the alternate perception of reality into the social sphere. The perspective that Abendsen exhibits towards his relation to *I Ching*[27] runs the risk of anthropomorphizing matter in his attempt to elucidate the manifestations of its agency. However, as Bennett argues: "Maybe it is worth running the risk associated with anthropomorphising (superstition, the divination of nature, romanticism) because it, oddly enough, works against anthropocentrism: a chord is struck between person and thing, and I am no longer above or outside a nonhuman »environment«" (120). Indeed, for Abendsen, the "agreement regarding royalties" with *I Ching* seems to be a humbling experience: embracing the role that an external, nonhuman, material agency plays in the creative process of art production. Crucially, the impact of the text's prophecies on the events in *The High Castle* is never attributed to the anonymous, human authors of *I Ching* but to the assemblage of the text itself and the yarrow stalks. This is perhaps the clearest example of Bennett's vibrant matter: an ad hoc grouping of materials, each containing energy, that together generate new properties and effects reverberating farther than the material boundary of the assemblage.

Juliana, dissatisfied with Abendsen's answers, decides to ask the oracle of the true meaning of *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy,* and, by extension, of the nature of her

27 It is worth noting that Dick himself shared this attitude towards *I Ching*, at least while writing *The Man in The High Castle*, as he consulted the oracle for plot elements in the novel. When denouncing it at a later point (the reasons of which are outside the scope of this dissertation) he also anthropomorphised the text, calling it "a malicious spirit" (qtd in Mountfort 304).

world. She receives the reading called “The Inner Truth,” seemingly affirming her belief that her perception of reality is false, and Abendsen’s novel presents the authentic one. But the metafictional play that Dick indulges in *The High Castle* may suggest that Juliana’s interpretation may be only partially true. Evidently, as we recall, the reality of *The Grasshopper* is not identical to that experienced by the readers of *The High Castle*. It would be easy to fall back on the postmodern reading of the novel and claim that Dick assesses our world – text zero – as just as fake as *The High Castle* universe. However, in the materialist perspective, it may also signal that all these universes are congruent possibilities of different frequencies of the same vibrant matter. I concur with Paul Mountfort’s conclusion that

> the *I Ching* is the device that both literally and figuratively unifies the stylistic and philosophical dimensions of *The Man in the High Castle.* Its twelve[28] key oracular consultations … may be read as suggesting the possibility not just of real world/fake world binaries … but of a vast continuum of infinitely varied worlds. (306)

The human is a part of this multiversal assemblage, manifesting their influence in the social sphere, be it politics, systems of signification, art or spirituality. Human choices and ethics shape the dominant cultural paradigm in each instance of possible realities. Therefore, rather than a nihilistic vision of randomness of evil, Dick's message may be one of a call for responsibility, and ethical understanding of our part in the process of the collective autopoiesis. Once again the novel issues a warning: every individual is connected to the present assemblage, and every action (or, for that matter, inaction) may push us towards a world where the fascists win. Coincidentally, the oracle presented the same reading to Tagomi, after he had killed two Nazi agents in an effort to prevent an escalation of the cold war. Shaken by the event, he interprets the message as an expression of the unknowability of the universe within the range of human experience. This interpretation is also partially in line with the scope of new materialist positions

28 In his essay, Mountfort analyzes each instance of the characters’ use of *I Ching* in the novel, of which there are twelve in total.

discussed in this chapter. In both cases Dick seems to address the failure of epistemological inquiries into the nature of reality.

However, I would argue that while epistemology is indeed dethroned, Dick proposes an alternative: sensual or instinctual connection to reality facilitated by the mediation of aesthetic objects, including literature. In the face of a political system wherein epistemological certainty is not achievable, where hierarchical systems of signification (aiming at essentialist certainty) have victimized people and objects alike, Juliana circumvents the postmodern confusion by rejecting knowledge as the primary tool of scrutinizing reality – faulty for the reasons outlined by object-oriented ontology and demonstrated by Wyndam-Matson's lighters. Instead, Nidhi Srinivas posits: "Represented by Juliana and *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy,* intuition offers moral hope … She eschews the abstract for the concrete. She responds to those around her, preferring their social interaction to isolated introspection" (614). Juliana's reliance on *I Ching*, and more precisely, on the random, sensual, and metaphorical configurations the yarrow stalks produce, is an expression of the human willingly opening themselves to the self-organizing assemblage of matter. She is no longer an observer attempting to discern the authentic world from a detached, isolated position, but a participant in that vibrant network; *sensing*, intuiting the reality that composes it. This characterization of Juliana is affirmed in the novel by Abendsen, who comments that "[s]he's doing what's instinctive to her, simply expressing her being" (247, ch.15). It is this subjective perspective of sensual, non-dialectic interaction with the world that allows her the revelation of the dynamic contingency of the assemblage she is a part of. It may be seen as analogous to the kind of sensual approach that allowed Frank Frink's pin to communicate the same revelation to Tagomi.

Perhaps this is "The Inner Truth" that both Tagomi and Juliana draw as their final readings from *I Ching*: an awareness of the autopoietic potential of reality that one is already a part of, and not outside looking in. Ferrando asserts that:

> in order to become posthuman, we need to reflect on our location in this material, dynamic, and responsive process, that is, existence. In so doing, a key move is becoming aware of our implicit and explicit biases and privileges, as they can only limit our existential perception. To reassess our location as open networks requires undergoing a radical deconstruction of closed identities, including the human identity. (*Philosophical Posthumanism* 186)

In *The Man in the High Castle,* Dick plants the seeds for this praxis. These are further developed in his later novels, where, as I will attempt to demonstrate, the characters undergo radical transformations of their subjective perceptions of reality, and connect, on an ontological level, to non-anthropocentric systems of organization. Here, Dick engages with this idea when Abendsen gives credit for co-writing his novel to *I Ching.* He acknowledges the networked patterns mediated by the manifestations of the vibrant matter in the form of *I Ching* prophesies, as the foundation of his reality. This posthuman network, deconstructing the primacy of human individual perspective, is conveyed in *High Castle* as spiritual revelation: Juliana's and Abendsen's communion with the multiverse through the metaphorical medium of a divinatory text. As we shall see in the following chapters, the motif of the posthuman coded as the spiritual will be reoccurring and developing further throughout Dick's works: Ubik presenting itself as god, Mercerism in *Electric Sheep,* and Palmer Eldritch's eponymous stigmata.

2. *Différance* and a search for god: *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* as a failed transcendental posthuman

2.1. Introduction.

In *The Man in The High Castle,* Dick utilizes the frame of alternate history to scrutinize the subjective construction of reality under fascism. In his later works, the author experiments with the possible modes of subjectivity as operating under or against the capitalist system. As we shall see throughout the following chapters, the author advances and expands upon this theme, presenting capital- and commodity-dominated worlds extrapolated into science-fiction versions of the future. These often appear as dystopias filled with hallucinatory visions, deceptive simulations and forgeries, where the search for a stable reality becomes increasingly more desperate and at times more futile than in the case of *High Castle.*

One of such narratives is the 1965 novel *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch.* Focused on the themes of epistemological uncertainty, the condition of consumerist society and the subject's reification within it, *The Three Stigmata* is sometimes cited

(along with *Ubik* and *VALIS)* as one of the foremost instances of evidence for Dick's postmodern inclinations. For example, philosopher Fredric Jameson evokes the novel to argue that "Dick's world of hallucination and drug-induced vision, or the claustrophobia of his post-historical landscapes" (*Archeologies* 96) stands as a departure from the idealistic, Utopian depictions of the future of the Golden Age science-fiction. Jameson's reading finds in the novel "a parody of Utopian collectivity if there ever was one" and a postmodern disillusionment for "Dick's protagonists, who can also know the inverse state of a nightmarish solipsism" (96). Christopher Palmer as well, while arguing for a humanist reading of Dick's fiction, stresses that the sixties' novels (*Ubik* and *The Three Stigmata* among them) signal that the author intuits the shift from the modern to the postmodern in his society (*"*Philip K. Dick" 394). The critic continues to argue that Dick subsequently arrives in his narratives at "concerns and values which he will not abandon and … the result is a kind of conflict between the radical, postmodern reality-dissolves, and the ethics that the main characters try to live by" (396). While these aspects of *The Three Stigmata* do indeed signal, as the aforementioned critics notice, a certain convergence between Dick's literary endeavors and postmodernism, the novel simultaneously brings attention to some of the issues which anticipate the concerns typical of the later posthumanist developments in philosophy, e.g. the importance of embodiment as a means for inscription in a virtual medium, and the dynamics of community building through information technology.

In this chapter I assert that in *The Three Stigmata*, Dick imagines the mechanisms of the construction of social reality in congruence with Jacques Derrida's deconstructionist approach*,* as well as the subject positions that may emerge in this environment. The comparison between the virtual realities that constitute the main territory of the *The Three Stigmata's* conflict and the textual space of *différance* will

allow me to argue that the drug-induced communal generation of text depicted in the novel corresponds to the process of social autopoiesis. Therefore, the subjectivities emergent under these circumstances may exhibit the qualities of the posthuman, as proposed by scholars such as N. Katherine Hayles – embodied, dynamic systems mediated by virtual technologies – but may just as well fall victim to the hierarchies of liberal humanism. Hayles's work will provide the basis for a comparison between the philosophy of posthumanism and certain aspects of Derridean deconstruction. Additionally, I will refer to the concept of social autopoiesis, as described by Niklas Luhmann, and expanded upon by Cary Wolfe, to outline a progression of thought from deconstruction to posthumanism in the matter of communication-based systems. My aim is to present how Dick in *The Three Stigmata* explores possible modes of transition from a humanist subject into the posthuman operating within such a social system, against the backdrop of a late-stage capitalist reality. The chapter will highlight the possible traps and hurdles jeopardizing such transformations.

2.2. Terms

It would be difficult to discuss critical posthumanism as a form of critical thought without first acknowledging the ideas of poststructuralists aimed towards dissolving the dualistic oppositions inherent in modernity. It is these critiques that laid the foundations for the general posthumanist formation. Arguably the most impactful among those is the deconstructionist approach established by Jacques Derrida To analyze the virtual environments present in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, I will be utilizing the concept of *différance,* which Derrida outlines as part of his critique of the metaphysics of presence, in order to illustrate that no one meaning of a text is static or originating

from transcendental signified[29]. I use this idea to showcase how the virtual worlds in the novel may be understood as textual spaces in which the participants organize a system based on communication. I will argue that the characters in the novel co-create a differentiated textual space in which each participant is involved in a process of social autopoiesis – as understood by Luhmann and Wolfe. However, Dick presents a vision in which such networks are vulnerable to forces attempting to usurp their organization, and thus turn them into allopoietic systems. Allopoietic systems, as opposed to autopoietic ones, are those that operate towards the production of something other than their own organization. In a process of allopoiesis, the generative power of a subordinate system's components is transferred to serve the organization of the primary system (Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman* 141).

a) *différance*

Derrida defines *différance* as "the structured and differing origin of differences … the movement by which language, or any code, any system of reference in general, becomes 'historically' constituted as a fabric of differences" (*Speech and Phenomena,* 141). It is the condition of language that makes possible the comprehension of the world, by structuring our shared signs, ideas, contexts, into an economy of meanings[30]. Thus, the philosopher puts forward a notion of an imperceptible medium of differentiation, which is the area governed by *différance* in "a simultaneous process of deferment in time and difference in space" (Rivkin and Ryan 258). The temporal element of *différance* refers to the shifting distances between signs, as they are compared to their past and possible

29 As argued by Derrida in *Of Grammatology,* rather than being "an entity created or at any rate first thought and spoken, thinkable and speakable, in the eternal present of the divine logos," the signified is "originarily and essentially (and not only for a finite and created spirit) trace [and] it is *always already in the position of the signifier"* (73).

30 Additionally, the spelling of the word – its "a," indistinguishable from the French "*différence"* in a spoken utterance, points at the necessity for equating speech and writing in supplementary roles. It illustrates that *différance* operates in both of those linguistic media and moreover "it takes place… *between* speech and writing and beyond the tranquil familiarity that binds us to one and to the other" (134). This idea is also present in Derrida's "Plato's Pharmacy," to which I shall be referring further on in this chapter.

future positions. The proposed structure is a dynamic network in that it "would allow the different threads and different lines of sense or force to separate again, as well as being ready to bind others together" (*Speech and Phenomena* 132). Meaning is therefore contingent on the historical contexts, and any shift in the societal perception of any given sign contributes to the reading and to the entirety of the network. The spatial aspect denotes the fact that a sign evokes a meaning that consists of the distance residual in the synchronous connections between it and the other signs. In the scope of traditional metaphysics, a sign denotes a deferred presence of any *real* object or event (a signified), while Derrida argues that there is no original referent, only the inscribed expressions of signs: the signifiers. Instead, meaning is a matter of chains of freely floating signifiers; it's a dynamic structure in which meaning arises in the process of a signifier remaining in supplementary relations to other signifiers regulated by distance and deferral.

b) trace

It follows that *différance* too is never presentable in itself, but only through its *traces.* A trace is "not a presence but is rather the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself. The trace has, properly speaking, no place, for effacement belongs to the very structure of the trace" (*Speech and Phenomena* 156); and elsewhere:

> this trace is the opening of the first exteriority in general, the enigmatic relationship of the living to its other and of an inside to an outside: spacing. The outside, "spatial" and "objective" exteriority which we believe we know as the most familiar thing in the world, as familiarity itself, would not appear without the gramme, without différance as temporalization, without the nonpresense of the other inscribed within the sense of the present (*Of Grammatology* 70-1).

In other words, the meaning of every sign is shaped by the identifiable, familiar absence of other signs; their traces constitute the negative space which defines boundaries of the sign and thus the difference between it and other signs. Traces facilitate the orientation

of signs based on the degree of *différance.* This is one of the core tenets of Derrida's critique of metaphysics of presence: if the basis on which humans construct their epistemology is in itself not *present* at any given moment, manifesting itself only as the difference between sensible units (signifiers, signifieds or signs), then there is no prior meaning-making force – a transcendental signified – outside of differentiation; for each sign, there are points of reference – other signs – but no point of origin.

c) social autopoiesis

In this chapter, I will emphasize the continuity between the concepts from Derridean philosophy and the field of posthumanism, as articulated by Cary Wolfe. He argues that *différance* is the guiding principle of social autopoietic systems proposed by sociologist Niklas Luhmann. Luhmann applies system theory to analyze the self-organizing structuring of societies:

> social systems use communication as their particular mode of autopoietic reproduction. Their elements are communications that are recursively produced and reproduced by a network of communications, not by some kind of inherent power of consciousness, nor by the inherent quality of information. Information, utterance and understanding are aspects that for the system cannot exist independently of the system; they are co-created within the process of communication. (Luhmann, *Essays* 3)

For Luhmann, meaning is therefore "a highly involved strategy of processing input from the environment" (67). For a system operating on language, the only way of comprehending these inputs is in the form of signs. We are pushed to infer that what Luhmann calls "identifying the premises of experience processing," an activity that is necessary for a system to function, is the equivalent of what Derrida identified as the structuring of differences. Therefore, one could say that *différance* is an operationally closed but structurally open[31] system of meaning-production. Both of those processes, in

31 This clarification – *operationally* closed – is crucial, since Derrida's philosophical outlook is critical of the idea of closure typical of metaphysics – an assumption that modernity is theoretically exhausted and therefore any text has a formalized and logocentric origins traceable to *pre-linguistic* knowledge. As critic Simon Critchley comments: "At the moment of historical and philosophical closure, deconstructive thinking occurs as the disruption and interruption of the limit that divides the inside from the outside of the [logocentric] tradition" (20). Therefore, Derridean framework opens the reading to intertextual connections and differences independent of any presupposed transcendental

their relevant frames, result in meaning-making. Luhmann posits that through autopoiesis, "everything that is used as a unit by the system is produced as a unit by the system itself" (3). In the case of a system in which *différance* is the operating mechanism, these units are signs generated by the processes of differing. For Cary Wolfe, because of this correspondence,

> Derrida and Luhmann emerge as exemplary posthumanist theorists … because both refuse to locate meaning in the realm of either the human or, for that matter, the biological … For both, the form of meaning is the true substrate of the coevolution of psychic systems and social systems, and this means that the human is, at its core and in its very constitution, radically ahuman and constitutively prosthetic. (*What Is Posthumanism* XXVI)

As Wolfe notices, while Derrida focuses on deconstructing logocentrism, Luhmann outlines a construction of social autopoiesis that deals with the complexity of environment by organizing a network of communication. Nevertheless, they both converge on the concept of *différance* as the mechanism of generating meaning, thus rejecting the idea of an individual consciousness as the transcendental, extra-linguistic origin of meaning[32]. These ideas may prove useful in a posthumanist reading of the novel, in which Dick scrupulously questions the distinctions humans have established between the individual and the community, between the human and the divine, and between reality and illusion. As David Golumbia suggests: “what Derrida calls

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truth. As Audronė Žukauskaitė comments, in the autopoiesis theory,

> Maturana and Varela argue that every living system interacts with the environment through “structural coupling.” However, even after undergoing some structural changes, the model of organization of the system does not change. This is why autopoietic entities are said to be *closed* on the level of organization but *open* at the level of structure… The term “structure” means the actual relationships between physical components: a given organization can be embodied in different physical structures. (382 – 383)

Analogically, for a social system – as construed by Luhmann -- where the medium of autopoiesis is communication, the idea of operational closure concurs with Derridean philosophy: it means that there is no transcendental order prior to the system that determines its organization (which is *différance* in the model proposed in this chapter). At the same time, the “structural openness” of an autopoietic social system denotes its ability to adapt and restructure dynamically, depending on a given textual context (as opposed to physical circumstances in the case of biological systems), wherein the new, modified structure is still based in the same organizational mechanism. I shall return to the notion of closure/ openness of autopoiesis, as understood by Luhmann, later in this chapter.

32 Wolfe describes Luhmann’s framing of communication as deconstructing and reconstructing operations of an autopoietic system as “systems theory’s version of what Derrida calls the dynamic force of *différance”* (16).

'presence,' and what ... Dick and the anti-realist philosophers [call] 'Reality"…, informs and supports the large-scale power structures of the West … It is in this critical spirit that Dick's writings present their sustained attack on the very idea of Reality" (88). As we will see, in the figure of the eponymous antagonist the author does indeed contain a critique of this issue of self-serving agents imposing a logocentric framework to exercise control over others. Supplementing the reading of the novel with Derrida's *différance* will help to illustrate how *The Three Stigmata* problematizes certain logocentric hierarchies and expresses anxieties over the fate of humans who, troubled by the forces of capitalism as they are, nevertheless attempt to negotiate a world for themselves through autopoiesis.

2.3. The world of Perky Pat as a differentiated textual space

At first glance, *Three Stigmata* is a story of corporate warfare. The novel takes place in a distant future and ostensibly centers around two entrepreneurs, Leo Bulero and Palmer Eldritch, who produce and distribute two hallucinogenic substances, Can-D and Chew-Z respectively, to the colonized solar system. They invent schemes to sabotage each other while simultaneously lobbying a governmental body, the United Nations, to legalize their own product. The protagonist, Barney Mayerson, is caught in the middle of that conflict as an advisor for Bulero and his company – Perky Pat Layouts, Inc.. He is endowed with precognition – a supernatural ability to glimpse into possible futures[33],

33 The idea of "precogs" – people who can see into the future – returns multiple times throughout Dick's oeuvre, notably in *The World Jones Made, Ubik* and as a central plot device in the short story "The Minority Report" (1956). In many of these cases precognition is described as a perception of a number of possible futures contingent on human behavior. For example, the protagonist of *Ubik* explains that "The precog sees a variety of futures, laid out side by side like cells in a beehive. For him one has greater luminosity, and this he picks" (*Ubik* 25, ch. 3). The prevalence of this concept in Dick's prose may serve as a reaffirmation of my assessment from the previous chapter that Dick's realities are not deterministic but a multiplicity of probabilities dependent on the actant's interaction with the living network of their environment.

which he utilizes to predict which of PPL's products will be the most successful ones. It is those products – miniature accessories for dollhouses or dioramas – that shall serve us to illustrate the idea of subjective reality as a differentiated textual space, once their purpose in the narrative becomes clear.

Halfway through the novel, Barney is recruited by the UN to become a member of a newly established human colony on Mars, in an effort to preserve humankind in the face of an ongoing environmental disaster on Earth. As the rising temperatures doom the world to become uninhabitable, the colonizing project forces people to abandon the relatively comfortable lives in a dying world (in climate-controlled buildings and clothing) and face the harsh conditions on neighboring planets and moons. When he arrives at the Martian colony of Chickenpox Prospects, Barney witnesses how the colonists use the products he helped put onto the market. They indulge in Can-D in order to cope with their dreary reality of being uprooted from a post-industrial society and placed into an agricultural outpost.

The drug, when taken in a group setting, immerses the users in a trance, in which their consciousnesses merge into a collectively shared vision. In this hallucination, they occupy and control the bodies of two characters: Perky Pat and her friend Walt – dolls reminiscent of Mattel's Barbie and Ken[34] – and act out an idyllic day of a bygone era on Earth. The communal mental simulation is based upon miniature layouts, filled with the two dolls as well as shrunken versions of mundane objects from Earth's society. The users construct and arrange these miniatures into scenes of domestic life before partaking in Can-D. As the narration discloses: "For settlers … huddled at the bottom of a hovel against frozen methane crystals and things, it was something else again; Perky Pat and her layout were an entree back to the world they had been born to" (24, ch.2).

34 In Dick's own words: "It was the Barbie-Doll craze which induced this story, needless to say. Barbie always seemed unnecessarily real to me." (qtd. In Levack 9)

This is the true purpose of the miniature layouts produced by PPL: they are not dollhouses or dioramas, but conceptual, symbolic aids that facilitate the construction of an imaginary world. By entering the assemblage of Perky Pat – a narcotic-induced simulation – the characters in the novel momentarily abandon individuality to experience a Utopian, commodified illusion of suburban life.

In the chapter on *The High Castle*, I have proposed a reading based partially on object-oriented ontology, where, for a conscious agent, the material reality is only approachable through indirect means of metaphor. In *The Three Stigmata,* Dick adds more complexity to the subject's task of generating a (perception of) reality – their *idios kosmos*. At least from the moment when the colonists first partake in the communal drug, the hallucinatory visions lose their connections to their material counterparts:

> Anne Hawthorne said, "Those hovelists in the other room at their layout. Suppose we lifted Perky Pat entirely from the board and smashed it to bits? What would become of them?"
> "They'd go on with their fantasy." It was established, now; the props were no longer necessary as foci. (142, Ch.8)

In other words, what is necessary for the virtual world to emerge from the network of human communication is not the actual presence of the miniature diorama sets and dolls but a collective conceptualization of the *subjective ideas* of those objects, thanks to which the illusion can be maintained. As Leo Bulero, the drug's designer, claims: "the reaction you get to Can-D depends – varies with – your imaginative-type creative powers" (23, ch.2).

At this point, I would like to argue that the mechanism of signification at work in Dick's novel can be elucidated through reference to Jacques Derrida's idea of *différance.* The world experienced by the users of Can-D could be described as mediated purely by sign-objects, established by the ritualistic act of setting up the dollhouse layouts, and realized through the communal trance. Thus, the participants

engage in a process of creating a dynamic, textual space: they arrange a narrative of a day in a life of Pat and Walt and replay it, session after session, each time re-contextualizing, reconstructing the text. This process begins before the citizens of Chicken Pox Prospects engage in consumption of Can-D, as they prepare the layouts, onto which they project their personalities. They set up miniature versions of everyday items and tiny electronics, so that each of the objects within the layout becomes a commodified signifier, connected to, but deferred from the product it denotes. The referent is ostensibly absent, but still manifests in the communal *reading* as a trace. In the next section, I will look closely at the source that supplies these objects, and its consequences to the power dynamics of this specific system, but for now, let us consider the miniature props as "neutral" signifiers – without the insidious implications that reveal themselves when one places these objects within the economic context. It may be said that the entire ritual enacts the parameters of the space of writing with its major component being *différance:* the drug-induced collective visions produce signifiers of objects and places that are neither platonic forms, nor are they in direct correspondence to the miniature layouts – their supposed originals. Instead, the resulting illusion is a kind of "consensus reality" emergent as a product of what clearly is a communal textual play: the subjective readings of the original props intersect and a space of textual differentiation emerges, offering signifiers that are meaningful, while being separate from their signifieds.

In his seminal text, "Plato's Pharmacy," Derrida famously argued against Plato's putting speech above writing and instead reconceived the relation between them by using the logic of supplementarity. He asserts writing as the medium in which the process of differentiation operates, stating that "writing has no essence or value of its own, whether positive or negative, it plays within the simulacrum. It is in its type the

mime of memory, of knowledge, of truth, etc." (*Dissemination* 105). For Luhmann as well "memory, and then writing, have their function in preserving – not the events, but their structure-generating power" (*Essays* 9). Now, it can be argued that the simulation or hallucination presented in the novel operates on a similar principle. It serves as a medium of writing or memory, through which the colonists invoke a mimicry of the past in the present. Thus their ritual structures a textual, shared world made up of a play of signifiers which sustain meaning with no recourse to any ultimate signifieds.

Through that play, the colonists strive to obtain a sort of supplement to their Martian lives that could inscribe them with an identity, partially in response to the fact that the authoritarian force – the UN – has stripped them of their former lives in the process of mandatory relocation. The textual network they (re)create serves as what Chris Rudge, commenting on Dick's novel, describes as a reclamation of subjectivity:

> The users' exposure to an alternative, and relatively depoliticized ontological world that is 'psychoactivated' by Can-D's biochemical operations, leads them to reconceptualize the political structures that disempower them and allows for the construction of new subject positions fortified by a knowledge of the arbitrariness of their sociopolitical context. (37)

Indeed, in the novel, this process of collective political self-organization seems impossible outside of the hallucinatory state. The colonists communicate with each other between their sessions of consuming Can-D, but arguably this does not meaningfully contribute to any community-building: their farming equipment decays unused, the crops fail and even marriages are shown as largely inconsequential, as evidenced by spouses neglecting or outright ignoring their relationships. The inhabitants of the Martian hovels forego any attempts to establish a functioning society, since their network of support is tenuous at best, deteriorated by the seemingly hopeless conditions of their compulsory resettlement on one hand, and by the escapism into the drug use on the other. If the traditional paradigm of metaphysics, as refuted by Derrida, puts the

onus of affirming one's existence on speech in the present, then the colonists would denote a failure of such a hierarchy. The privileging of speech, and in extension of community-building in the *present,* is therefore not sufficient in the conditions on the planet. Subsequently, the autopoiesis of the Perky Pat Layouts offers a survival measure unachievable in the material reality on Mars.

N. Katherine Hayles, in her reading of *Three Stigmata* goes so far as to put forward an assessment that more than a drug, Can-D can be interpreted as a communication technology: "In sharp contrast to the regime of scarcity that the colonists inhabit in mundane reality, the drug creates a space of promise and infinite expansion characteristic to the realm of information" (*My Mother Was a Computer* 71). Therefore, it can be understood as an alternative, or a supplement for the traditional channels of interpersonal relations. However, as she goes on to argue,

> the drug, despite its hallucinogenic properties, preserves intact fundamental aspects of the liberal subject, including agency and a sense of individual identity based on possession, for it is primarily through the display and consumption of commodities that the Perky Pat world is made to seem real … [t]he dream of information promises an escape it cannot deliver. (72)

I agree on this point with Hayles: Can-D translation can be, up to a point, understood as a collaborative creative process. It substitutes real-life speech: the connected drug users recognize the signifiers in a communication network to invent a momentary utopia. But it is also the quality of Perky Pat's world that reveals its problematic foundations. It may look as a stable, operationally autonomic social system. However, it is built upon a collective delusion fed by the capitalistic desire for a perfect suburban life. The following section expands upon the issues mentioned by Hayles, those related to the fact that Can-D perpetuates the liberal subject and as such ultimately fails to provide a meaningful and constructive alternative.

2.4. Can-D – a failed technology of emancipation

Based on the evidence given thus far, we can assume that the mechanism of the Perky Pat simulacrum is comparable to the posthumanist idea of community as an autopoietic system: a self-organizing expression of an interconnected, virtual environment where the subject opens themselves up to become a part of a network of communication. The subject becomes a malleable organ of the system, with a porous membrane, as proposed by Hayles; "a posthuman collectivity, an 'I' transformed into the 'we' of autonomous agents operating together" (*How We Became Posthuman* 6)**.** For her, this sort of virtual environment "necessarily makes the subject into a cyborg, for the enacted and represented bodies are brought into conjunction through the technology that connects them" (xiii). For Braidotti as well, becoming-posthuman is to "[enact] the transformation of one's sensorial and perceptual co-ordinates, in order to acknowledge the collective nature and outward-bound direction of what we still call the self" (*The Posthuman,* 193). In some ways, the Can-D ritual and the experience of Perky Pat indeed overlaps with those ideas. The merging, communing minds gain a more direct connection with each other, and the control over the characters inside the dollhouse allows for a play of identities and embodiment.

To a degree, Dick, as do the more techno-enthusiastic posthumanists, sees the potential of virtual reality to be a viable environment for establishing alternative modes of human subjectivity. Moreover, an epistemology based on the activity of *différance* encourages the posthuman models of autopoietic systems. Cary Wolfe argues that "systems theory doesn't desire the reduction of difference and complexity," and continues: "[s]ince it is obviously impossible for any system to establish point-for-point correspondences between itself and its environment, systems thus handle the problem of … environmental complexity by reducing it in terms of the selectivity made available

by the system's self-referential code" (*What Is Posthumanism* 14). In other words, autopoiesis itself is possible thanks to the mediation of a differentiated sign structure. As Wolfe goes on to argue, this conceptualization of stimuli through selectivity and distinction in a social autopoietic system changes from moment to moment, since neither the organization of the system nor its environment are temporally static. Thus, a system based in communication has to deploy

> the dynamic force of *différance* as "temporization" and "spacing," … thus "constituting what is called the present by means of this very relation to what it is not." Or as Luhmann puts it, "One could say that meaning equips an actual experience or action with redundant possibilities" – namely, what *was* selected … and what could have been… – and this is crucial for any system's ability to respond to environmental complexity by building up its own complexity via the form of meaning" . (*What Is Posthumanism* 16-17, quoting Derrida, "Difference," and Luhmann, *Social Systems)*

Therefore, it is reasonable to say that within the simulation, the colonists establish a system of communication, where *différance* works as the medium of organization. If follows that such a collective could be an illustration of the posthuman conceptual sphere in that it decenters the individual human in the process of meaning-making, focusing instead on a play of heterogeneous perspectives coming together to organize a world for themselves through *différance.* Indeed, for Luhmann, a community "cannot avoid operating within a 'world' of its own. Societies constitute world. Observing themselves, that is communicating about themselves, they cannot avoid using distinctions that differentiate the observing system from something else" (*Essays* 7). Autopoietic systems create a perception of the world that is based in differentiation between the elements. Social systems specifically engage in this process in the medium of communication (through both speech and writing). Shifting our attention back to Dick's novel we could state that the virtual world of the colonists continues to exist because of what it compares itself against, and what it is not: a life on Earth. The textual space enables the participants to cooperate as a single system thanks to a common frame

of reference to what it attempts to replicate, yet without any insistence that it is identical to that reality.

However, Dick immediately complicates the matter by placing such a system in a broader social environment of late-stage capitalism, where this technology of communication is controlled by a monopoly, which makes any stimulus received by the system prone to manipulation. Leo Bulero's company is the sole provider of both Can-D and the miniatures that make up the Perky Pat layouts. If the world of Perky Pat is to be considered an expression of a self-generating textual system of human agents cooperating to form a kind of posthuman reality, then how does one account for the exploitation that Dick imagines in this space? The author is not uncritical of the mechanisms of the simulacrum, as certain aspects of this experience repeat and reinforce the tendencies of both capitalism and liberal humanism.

The main fault of Can-D lies in the very quality that facilitates its existence – the Earthly society the trace of whose organization resides within the simulated reality of Perky Pat. Jameson argues that the simulation in *The Three Stigmata* as well as all Utopian wish-fulfillments "have their own specific formal demands and constraints, which betray the realities of their context" (*Archeologies* 369). In other words, the commodities populating the simulation stand as a constant reminder of every aspect of the lost life on Earth. The Utopian immersive experience cannot be produced without also producing the contextual traces that accentuate its superficiality. As one of the colonists realizes in the latter half of the novel: "personally I'm tired of Perky Pat – it's too artificial, too superficial … Well, it's apartments, cars, sunbathing on the beach, ritzy clothes … we enjoyed it for a while, but it's not enough in some sort of unmatterialistality [sic] way" (131, ch.8). The idealized advertisement-like routines of Pat and Walt make the colonists fall into a vicious loop, as they attempt to fill those

voids with more items to expand their dollhouses. It is a mechanism through which Leo Bulero expands his market. If not for his monopoly over the signifiers – the miniature props – that make up Perky Pat's world, the translation experience could possibly stand as an example of a productive process of posthuman autopoiesis within a community, based around co-creation of a textual space. However, the commodification imposed on that system cannot be ignored as it incapacitates the colonists' autopoietic mechanism. Bulero and his PPL Inc. control the supply of the drug and, perhaps more importantly, decide what items are available for the miniature dioramas.

Luhmann describes the operation of an autopoietic system as "closure under the condition of openness" (13). This means that the system remains sovereign in its productive and operational capacities but reacts to and exchanges information with its environment, which in turn induces the system to reorganize. This may produce the kind of cooperation or coupling of multiple systems, advocated by posthumanist thinkers, within the given environment, but only if the autonomy of each network is allowed to operate unimpeded. In the case of the Perky Pat worlds, the organization is made of the signifiers, arranged and negotiated within the simulation. The procurement and arrangement of the miniatures before the drug is taken constitutes the environmental stimuli. What Leo Bulero is doing, by carefully selecting the products that are supposed to populate the miniature layouts, is sending directed stimuli towards the system that allow him to manipulate its organization without breaking its closure, with the ultimate goal of profiting off of the colonists, thus limiting the community and turning it into an allopoietic system. Therefore, Bulero and his corporation control what signs make up the narrative of the "text" written by the colonists. The same way that a body of a traditional drug's user develops a resistance after a prolonged exposure, forcing the user to take ever stronger doses to achieve the same effect, so do the colonists feel the need

to upgrade and modify their layouts with new products to find a momentary satisfaction. But Bulero's benefits do not amount only to the increased profits gained by amplifying the addiction. His monopolistic power to select the miniatures populating the layouts, gives him the ability to control the narrative of the text. He limits the capacity of the possible structuring of the community by crafting a set of signifiers that evoke the nostalgic, hauntological desire for a suburban life and affirmation of one's individuality. Thus he prevents or occludes the possibility of the colonists actualizing a community free of those desires, and subsequently, free of Bulero's influence.

If this is the case, Perky Pat Layouts may be considered the ultimate playground of capitalism, wherein each element becomes engulfed by the market relations which perpetually entangle the subject by providing the objects of desire, but is intentionally shallow so that the desire is never satisfied. This carrot-and-stick approach of postindustrial capitalism, which Dick identifies here, is the same process that Braidotti notices in what she calls a "manic-depressive condition" of the contemporary human: "a social climate dominated by a political economy of nostalgia and paranoia on one hand, and euphoria or exaltation on the other" (*The Posthuman* 9). *Three Stigmata* similarly calls attention to this self-perpetuating crisis of late capitalism by presenting a Dystopian vision of people escaping the dying world into a commercialized nostalgia.

Therefore, in imagining the Perky Pat's layouts and the colonists' dependency on the Can-D induced visions, Dick engages in a critique of the human predicament under capitalism. As one character dejectedly comments: "the doll … had conquered man as man at the same time had conquered the planets of the Sol system … What a commentary on colonial life" (10, ch.1). The colonists strive for a better life, a sense of community and self-organization extending beyond the present moment. However, the drug and Perky Pat – manifestations and signifiers of the market – usurp any discourse

generated by the colonists; they present an apparent solution, while only perpetuating the status quo. Both the conditions in the Martian hovels as well as the seduction of Can-D constrain or occlude the colonist's productive capacities. As Golumbia articulates the issue:

> if we locate the main coercive force in the book's set-up in the nexus between PP Layouts and the UN's colonization effort, then its purpose seems to be solely to get the consumers to consume: to put them in an environment where they have no choice, no purpose, other than to consume their sacrament. (91)

This point is made even more explicit in the novella "The Days of the Perky Pat" – a conceptual precursor to *The Three Stigmata* that Dick wrote and published two years prior. One of the survivors of a nuclear conflict has the following reflection about the Perky Pat layouts: "Playing this game … it's like being back there, back in the world before the war. That's why we play it, I suppose. He felt shame, but only fleetingly; the shame almost at once, was replaced by the desire to play a little longer" (*The Selected Stories* 269). In the short story, this attitude is directly juxtaposed with the conduct of the younger generation who rejects the addictive fantasy, and strives towards building a new society, rather than attempting to recreate the lost past. While the novella takes place in the post-apocalyptic future of the Earth, rather than in a Martian colony, and the process does not involve drugs, the basic idea of escapism from a hopeless reality through role-playing as Perky Pat remains the same. The space of commodified textual play imposes passivity on the infantilized survivors.

From this perspective, one can notice that the Perky Pat layout's model of reality is antithetical to the posthumanist models. The imposed structure of an idealized capitalist life aims at negating and smoothing out the differences inherent in the multiple subjective perspectives. It is also worth noting that another aspect of Can-D, which works against the merits of critical posthumanism, is the heavy reliance on the traditional duality of gender. While the trance unites the participants into a gestalt

consciousness, the subsequent vision again divides them into categories: the men from the colony control the character of Walt, while the women embody the female Pat[35].

Despite Bulero's aforementioned efforts and means to sustain the simulation's addictive fantasy through the homogenizing power of commodity, we see an instance of the simulation de-synchronizing. When two of the colonists attempt to act out a scene on a beach between Pat and Walt, they are interrupted by others joining in the trance. An argument erupts just as the two dolls kiss:

> [Walt] leaned over her, bent and kissed her on the mouth. Inside his mind a voice thought, "But I can do this any time." And, in the limbs of his body, an alien mastery asserted itself; he sat back, away from the girl. "After all," Norm Schein thought, "I'm married to her." He laughed, then.
> "Who said you could use my layout?" Sam Regan thought angrily. "Get out of my compartment. And I bet it's my Can-D, too."
> "You offered it to us," the co-inhabitant of his mindbody answered. "So I decided to take you up on it."
> "I'm here, too," Tod Morris thought. "And if you want my opinion–"
> "Nobody asked you for yours," Norm Schein thought angrily...
> Tod Morris thought calmly, "I'm with Sam. I don't get a chance to do this, except here."
> The power of his will combined with Sam's; once more Walt bent over the reclining girl; once again he kissed her on the mouth, and this time heavily, with increased agitation. (47, ch.3)

As the multitude of individual voices surface, the drug begins to wear off, turning the coherent vision into a farcical play, where squabbling puppeteers wrestle for control over the puppets; comically, a chorus of voices turns to cacophony. In that moment, the network of signification that composes Perky Pat reality falls apart.[36] This world sustained by communication fails exactly because, for Dick, in concurrence with Derrida, the human experience cannot be universalized by a hegemony of a singular,

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35 For example, Kim Toffoletti proposes a perspective on the Barbie doll – Perky Pat's progenitor – in which the image of the toy – a product – can be subverted to represent a certain figuration of the posthuman: plastic, malleable, that collapses any absolute value systems. As such it "embodies the potential for identity to be mutable and unfixed. In Barbie's plastic body, transformation becomes a contamination of forms; a rejection of a stable female identity through the disruption of oppositions such as self and Other, subject and object" (163-164). The critic sees in Barbie a roadmap of becoming a posthuman subject emergent from a commodified society. *The Three Stigmata* does not provide any example of "gender cross-play" in the virtual space, despite the narrative experimentation with identities and embodiment. So, unlike Toffoletti's figure of a Barbie doll as a manifestation of queer subjectivity, the gender categories in *Three Stigmata* are strictly enforced.

36 The theme of the epistemological instability of signification within a simulated environment returns in *Ubik* and will be further explored in the chapter on that novel.

signifying authority that strives to limit the possible structuring of that communication for their own gain. The presented experience of Perky Pat layouts showcases an irreducible difference between individual participants of a common network. Despite the fact that the colonists inhabit the same “communal” consciousness of Walt and Pat, sharing not only their simulated bodies but also memories, feelings and attitudes, there is still a possibility of going out of synchronization, of a communication breakdown.

Individual desires emerge from the collective, destabilizing and inhibiting the escapist vision. This fact, more than the apparent "togetherness" of the visions, attests to Dick's anticipation of the posthuman configurations of the subject, since as Ferrando argues: "Posthumanism [distances itself] from a singular and generalized approach to the human. This means that there is no one specific type of human who can impose their own experiences, views, and perspectives as absolute characteristics of the human species as a whole" (45). The signifiers provided by Bulero fall short of satisfactorily substituting reality precisely because the posthuman systems are polymorphous and differentiated. In *The Three Stigmata,* Dick concludes that capitalism is unsustainable as an environment for an expression of that heterogeneity. Even if the Can-D technology is in some ways aligned with posthumanism, it is a figuration of what Rosi Braidotti calls a “perverse” posthuman. In her words: “Advanced capitalism and its bio-genetic technologies engender a perverse form of the posthuman … all living species are caught in the spinning machine of the global economy” (*The Posthuman* 7). Her focus falls on the ethics of genetic engineering and animal testing, but the chemical and brain-altering aspects of technological experimentation can also be included in this description. The (post)human experience is irreducible to a subordinate, allopoietic role in the capitalist economy, even when its technologies promise an escape from the desolate colonial life. As we shall see in the following section, in an attempt to rectify that limitation, some of

the colonists graft an alternative structure onto their reading of the trance: that of spiritual belief.

2.5. Transubstantiation

For Derrida, writing is supplementary to the present and it does not claim access to any truth or transcendental signified. As was established, the simulacrum of Can-D possesses the same capacity: it is an environment, which does not assert itself as a "true" reality. It is a textual, malleable space of communal creation, and as such it seems to fulfill certain aspirations of the posthumanist thought, even though, as I have also argued, it ultimately fails as a satisfactory world-making apparatus. Dick uses the figure of this illusory world to shed light on the arbitrariness of any claim to ultimate truth in the subjective perception of reality, which, as we know thanks to Derrida, "can occur only because the system of signs is constituted by the differences between the terms, and not by their fullness" (*Speech and Phenomena* 139). However, as we have seen, the homogenizing pull of commodification looms over every element of the Perky Pat simulacrum, distorting and narrowing the potential self-organization of the subjects in that system. As Chris Rudge notices in his analysis of Dick's reoccurring theme of drugs:

> By virtue of the kind of pharmakonicity that Derrida attributes to speech-acts and writing, the drug as a literary psychotrope may be thought of as having been 'seductive' to Dick and his readership … Drugs always stand in for other operations or signifiers other than their own – religiosity, market capital, the socius in which drug use is normalized, proscribed or imposed … And yet, if the precise contours of such a structure are visible, these formations may represent only those ways in which the indeterminacy … of drug's power has already been colonized. (42-43)

In other words, Rudge argues that in Dick's writing, the figures of addiction and drug-use are never self-contained motifs, but are always symptoms – supplementary markers – of broader societal signifiers of the conditions of the market, religion or governmental

authority. The critic sees the drugs in Dick's literature as initially neutral or indeterminate agents (ends in themselves) that become co-opted, or colonized as tools in the power dynamics of late-stage capitalism.

Therefore, Can-D becomes a poison and a cure at once: its qualities as a medium of societal autopoiesis are outweighed by its homogenizing pull into the neoliberal, capitalist utopia. The resulting dissatisfaction of the participants compels them to search out for some anchoring entity, around which *the socius* may find a consensus, stable reality and a fulfilling purpose; a centrality which Derrida would call (and denounce) a transcendental signified. I argue that this need is expressed as the colonists' longing for a god. This section looks at the mechanisms of religious experience mediated by the drug and their consequences on the processes of self-organization.

On his way to the Martian colony, Barney meets Anne Hawthorne, his eventual love interest, a fellow expatriate and a devoted follower of Neo-American Christianity, who proposes an alternative understanding of the Can-D translation experience. For some of the colonists, the drug and the resulting visions have a spiritual dimension. While initially reluctant to partake, Anne expresses an idea that Can-D can be an analogue to certain religious practices on Earth, as a modified version of the Christian sacrament of Holy Communion. She argues thus in a conversation with Barney:

> "Christ specified that we observe two sacraments," Anne Hawthorne explained patiently. "Baptism–by water–and Holy Communion. The latter in memory of Him … it was inaugurated at the Last Supper."
> "Oh. You mean the bread and the wine."
> "You know how the eating of Can-D translates – as they call it – the partaker to another world. It's secular, however, in that it's temporary and only a physical world. The bread and the wine–"
> "I'm sorry, Miss Hawthorne," Barney said, "but I'm afraid I can't believe in that, the body and blood business. It's too mystical for me." Too much based on unproved premises, he said to himself. But she was right; sacral religion had, because of Can-D, become common in the colony moons and planets, and he would be encountering it, as Anne said.
> "Are you going to try Can-D?" Anne asked.
> "Sure."
> Anne said, "You have faith in that. And yet you know that the Earth it takes you to isn't the real one." (126, ch.7)

In other words, the act of consuming the drug that merges the colonists' minds, bears resemblance to partaking in the body of Christ in order to become connected to god and the rest of the congregation. The comparison to the sacrament of Eucharist and the belief in transubstantiation – bread and wine turning into the body and blood of Christ – is crucial to this worldview: the communion wafer *becomes* the body of Christ for the parishioners, connecting them to him. In Anne's argument, Can-D as a communication technology and a medium for a virtual world operates on the same principle: precisely because of their belief, the drug users are united and transported to the layouts, despite their bodies sitting still in Martian hovels. Or, as Dick's scholar, Peter Fitting puts it: "we must recognize that the novel's staring point lies with the characters' *need for illusion"* (227). Once again we see here that for Dick the world perceived by humans is based upon a certain consensus, or a collective self-deception. While asserting that "Reality is that which does not go away when we stop believing in it" ("How to Build…" 261), the author imagines circumstances in which a particular belief may be so powerful that it "overrides" the material world. In the previous sections we have seen how the Perky Pat's world is founded upon commodified signifiers. An alternative, sacral reading of that virtual reality conducted by some colonists is an attempt to establish a new paradigm in response to the dissatisfaction with the former. As such, it is vulnerable to the same shortcomings.

In light of this, the comparison of Can-D translation to communion with Christ can be read as a reaffirmation of the argument mentioned in the previous section, that the drug engenders a perverse form of techno-Utopian posthumanism. Myra J. Seaman juxtaposes the posthumanist theory with the dogma of medieval Christianity in order to bring attention to the possible transhumanist tendencies (the conceptual separation of

mind and body, and subsequently the idea of a disembodied transcendence) that some varieties of posthumanism are at risk of repeating. She concludes that:

> For medieval Christians, the promise of participation in Christ's human-divine hybridity, in which the body could be exceeded yet not entirely left behind, would have offered a seemingly liberating image of the posthuman. Similarly, the contemporary techno-scientific posthuman offers another kind of emancipation, promising the self—typically conceptualized in the form of the brain or mind— freedom from the limitations of the body. (258)

In *The Three Stigmata,* Dick skillfully combines these two ideas of transcendence – the technological and the religious one – and arrives at a figure of the subject that conceptualizes the human aspiration to overcome their physical constraints (to escape the austerity of the Martian life and "travel" to Earth) as a sacred act of communion, one in which Perky Pat takes on the role of Christ. Ironically, the process that involves the consumption of the consecrated *body* leads to a *disembodied* union. That is to say that in this configuration, the virtual self-creation is exactly the kind of delusion of "uploadable," disconnected human consciousness that the posthuman subject, especially as envisioned by N. Katherine Hayles, should reject. Instead, she proposes to embark on a path towards a form of "embodied virtuality" in which one is mindful of preserving a continuity between informational patterns and the body. The aim is not to privilege virtual communication over the body but to establish them both as supplementary media of autopoiesis and thus "recover the sense of virtual that fully recognizes the importance of the embodied processes constituting the lifeworld of human beings" (*How we became posthuman* 20). It is not only the case that without bodies the differences of individual perspectives and lived experiences are erased, but also that the consciousness itself is a product, an epiphenomenon of environmental stimuli upon the nervous system, which would not function without the material, biological processes. Stefan Herbrechter comments on Hayles's model of embodied virtuality by pointing out that in experimentation with new modes of subjectivity one has to be cautious not to become

seduced by these dangers of disembodiment. The critic advises that "[t]he yardstick to be used … is the resistance to the erasure of embodiment, which can be seen at work both in the universalist tendencies of liberal humanism and in the transhumanist techno-Utopian scenarios" (102). Herbrechter stresses here Hayles's overarching point that the humans need to exercise responsibility while engaging in informational technologies (or biotechnologies, as is the case with Can-D) lest they inscribe the same universalizing tendencies onto the new subject formations, disguised as utopian visions of pure consciousness, or, as in the novel, an immortal soul.

We see that process unraveling in the latter part of the novel, where after a time, as Anne Hawthorne is confronted with the harsh reality of colonial life, her religious conviction wanes. Desperately holding onto her fleeting faith, and overwhelmed by the living conditions on Mars, Anne Hawthorne abandons her abstinence. She partakes in the Can-D trance in hopes of reaffirming the spiritual anchor point that informs her identity. Alas, the experience does not deliver on its transcendental promise. Consequently, she deems it "[j]ust pointless"; an empty promise of rebirth, in her words, "with new bodies not of flesh but incorruptible … *Being translated is the only hint we can have of it this side of death*" (149, ch.9). Anne realizes that the virtual transcendence based on the universalizing, religious reading is out of reach: an unfulfilled promise of an afterlife. We can read this endeavor to ascribe a religious quality to an otherwise secular communal activity, undertaken by Anne, as a failed attempt to reintroduce a transcendental signified to the life affected by the postmodern condition. For Derrida, a "transcendental signified" – a conceptual origin, or locus presiding outside of language, thanks to which all signs are endowed with meaning – is only a seductive illusion, because any center serves only as "the organizing principle of the structure [that] would limit what we might call the *play* of the structure" (*Writing and Difference,* 352), which

it could only do if it were placed outside of discourse – and this is precisely what Derrida's effort to theorize difference (and *différance*) rules out. Because of this, any decoding, or inquiry into the meaning of things or texts is done only as an encoding of another sign[37]. The novel's irony is that in their pursuit of a transcendental signified, the colonists disregard or simply do not appreciate the possibilities of self-actualization that their social system affords. Instead of experimenting with the embodied space of inscription that is their communal organization, in order to disengage it from the corporate drug-product, they seek immaterial liberation – that would reside outside of the play of the structure – *through* the drug.

Therefore, in this conceptualization, the virtual technology becomes more an obstacle and less a path for a formation of posthuman subjectivity, since it focuses the human efforts on a futile goal, unobtainable at least on "this side of death." Hayles argues that in the cybernetic environments of the new media,

> [d]ifferent technologies of text production suggest different models of signification; changes in signification are linked with shifts in consumption; shifting patterns of consumption initiate new experiences of embodiment; and embodied experience

37 This by now well-established critique of structuralism bears some resemblance to Harman's framework of vicarious causation through a proxy object as described in the chapter on *The High Castle,* but there are some key discrepancies. The process of transubstantiation as discussed by Anne in *The Three Stigmata* supports the previously made argument that for Dick the human perception cannot *know* the essential qualities of reality, but only a certain contingent conceptualization of it. Derrida articulates the idea of "a central presence which has never been itself, has always already been exiled from itself into its own substitute" (*Writing and Difference* 354). A metaphorical transformation of the communal bread and wine changes their qualities in the minds of the believers, despite the physical properties of the objects remaining unchanged. However, as Derrida puts it "[t]he substitute does not substitute itself for anything which has somehow existed before it" (354*).* Therefore he altogether denies a central presence underneath the superficial or constructed qualities. In opposition to this, Harman claims that "What Derrida never considers is the OOO option: that signs do have an ultimate signified whose nature is precisely *not* to become present" (*OOO* 174). But what the users of Can-D in the novel attempt, and fail at, is gaining a direct access to such a signified through their translations by framing it as union with god. The deconstructionist analysis which I attempt here, supported with Hayles's posthumanist idea of embodied virtuality, illustrates why this failure occurs, while not dismissing the idea of material reality. Therefore, as in the previous chapter, I maintain that there is merit in supplementing the postmodernist framework with new materialist approaches and integrating them into the posthumanist readings of Dick's works. The reason for this methodology is to illustrate that Dick is conscious of the social and cultural structures (represented in *The Three Stigmata* as media of virtual reality) that inform our perception; subsequently, with increasing precision throughout his oeuvre, he navigates them in order to uncover both embodied and social modes of subjectivity beyond the human.

> interacts with codes of representation to generate new kinds of textual worlds (*How We Became Posthuman* 28).

In the previous sections, we have seen how the colonists' layouts engage in this sort of feedback loop: Can-D and the dollhouse commodities open a new avenue of experimentation with one's embodiment that generates the Perky Pat reality and entices further consumption. However, the religiously motivated users want to break out of the loop and use the bodies of Pat and Walt not as media for expression but a way towards transcendence. They hope for a communion with a divinity, or a transcendental reality in what the narration describes as "the near-sacred moment in which the miniature artifacts of the layout no longer represented Earth but *became* Earth" (37, ch.3).

However, Hayles stresses that the kind of mode of inscription that defers the sign from its material components/equivalents through information technology (e.g. a virtual reality or a computer network), should still be considered in relation to embodiment. Otherwise, we risk exactly the above-mentioned delusion: the erasure of material interfaces and media, including the human body, that make possible the generation of those new modes of subjective experience. She further draws a parallel between textuality and embodiment, claiming that

> [b]ecause they have bodies, books and humans have something to lose if they are regarded solely as informational patterns, namely the resistant materiality that has traditionally marked the durable inscription of books no less than it has marked our experiences of living as embodied creatures. (*How We Became Posthuman* 29)

Both the textual space of *différance* and the subjective consciousness are therefore contingent on a medium, be it a computer screen, pages of a book, or a body. To sever that connection is to erase the writing or to kill the subject. I argue that this is why Anne Hawthorne describes the Can-D translation as "a hint of death." The seemingly transcendent, disembodied self achieved in a virtual setting does not reside "outside," nor is it self-sustaining. It still contains the trace of the missing embodiment, distancing itself, but never quite able to become independent from materiality, because it is the

material inscription that produces the experience in the first place. After all, when the drug wears off, the colonists wake up back in their Martian bodies.

Thus, the transcendental signified is unmasked as a limiting framework and eventually rejected by people such as Anne who had attempted and were unsuccessful in forcing any ultimate referent – residing outside of embodied communication systems – onto their interpretation of reality. The belief in Can-D's power to bound an immortal soul in a momentary union with a traditionally metaphysical divinity perpetuates the false dichotomy between human consciousness and the body, whereas as Hayles puts forward: "The body's dematerialization depends in complex and highly specific ways on the *embodied* circumstances that an ideology of dematerialization would obscure" (*How We Became Posthuman* 193). The colonists' attempts at structuring the virtual world of Perky Pat around an essence – a signified understood still in terms of the metaphysics of purely immaterial presence – display this myopic ideology. The simulation is seemingly an ideal environment for the emergence of posthuman sensibilities: a virtual, creative space in which the human has an unprecedented capacity for openness and flow of communication with others. However, the insistence on disembodiment and immortality becomes a self-imposed barrier from any new subject formations. Nevertheless, some of the inhabitants realize and subsequently try to reject this limiting structure. Unfortunately, in their frustration they turn to another drug: Chew-Z.

2.6. Eldritch – the god-capitalist and his posthuman stigmata

The repeated failures of Can-D and Perky Pat Layouts to provide the means of self-actualization and community-building pave the way in the market for a competition.

This is where the eponymous Palmer Eldritch enters the novel's narrative. Ostensibly an antagonist of the story, he is introduced as a capitalist entrepreneur who had undergone cybernetic enhancement giving him unique features, his metallic eyes, teeth and arm becoming distinct markers of his appearance. After a decade spent on a journey to and from a neighboring planetary system, Prox, Eldritch returns to the Solar System just as the plot of the novel begins.

He brings with him a psychoactive form of lichen, which when ingested, induces an experience similar but distinct from Can-D. He christens the discovery "Chew-Z" and with the help of his daughter, Eldritch begins to market the product all over the colonies, while at the same time working to ensure its legalization by the United Nations' interplanetary government. At first, it appears that Chew-Z trance allows for unlimited creativity, and is not bound by the same temporality as Can-D; the user can experience entire lifetimes in seconds of real time. However, later in the novel it is revealed that somewhere along his way home, Eldritch has been either replaced or possessed by an alien life-form: a body-snatcher or doppelganger. The entire simulated reality of Chew-Z is designed to propagate this being's consciousness through the space of the users' minds. In this section, I analyze the figure of Palmer Eldritch as a kind of predatory form of the posthuman, which exploits the logocentric structures of humanism to encroach on the autonomy of others.

The Three Stigmata depicts a peculiar ecosystem made of the colonists, the simulated world of Perky Pat, and the forces of capitalism perpetuating it. Two primary, logocentric interpretations of this reality – the attempts at finding a transcendental signified in either a god or a commodity – stand in tension in a classically postmodern predicament: neither narrative seems fully capable of encapsulating the whole of this differentiated system of communication. Under these circumstances, the capitalist/alien

Palmer Eldritch enters the picture; he disrupts the impasse between the two epistemologies by proposing a solution, which seemingly consolidates these paradigms. As the marketing slogan of Chew-Z proclaims: "God promises eternal life, we can deliver it" (150, ch.9). His product offers reproducible experience of transcendence as a consumable commodity. Crucially, this time, in contrast to the mechanisms analyzed in the previous sections, it is not a self-imposed delusion, but a deception engineered by Eldritch. Initially, he allows the users to believe that any new construct or reality is, in his words, a projection of "a fraction of your essence; it'll take material form on its own. What you supply is the *logos*" (88, ch.6, emphasis mine). The users can imagine themselves in any time and place and interact with those worlds as ephemeral ghosts, or "phantasms," conjuring objects with a mere thought. Therefore, Eldritch quite explicitly markets his product as a way for constituting a reality anchored in the ideas of *presence* and essentionality of consciousness. When he proposes that the user provides "logos" or a fundamental meaning to the world that emerges, he contests the idea of *différance*, which would be a model based on the "syntheses and referrals which forbid at any moment, or in any sense, that simple element be *present* in and of itself, referring only to itself" ("Semiology and Grammatology" 246). As has been shown, Can-D's illusory reality still utilized contextual points of reference: the dollhouse layouts, and the plurality of voices of the users embodying Perky Pat. By contrast, in order to function in Eldritch's world, the user may apparently only create meaning in a vacuum. By "providing the logos" – conceptualizing an idea – the user makes it present, or more precisely, Eldritch's world provides presence to the figment's of one's imagination (which process, as we shall see, is only a trick orchestrated by the antagonist).

Moreover, by Eldritch's own admission, in the Chew-Z's world the user is alone, with no one to communicate or co-write the simulated experience. The entire premise of

this structure is circular, solipsistic and shot through with closure: it relies heavily on the idea of enclosed and strictly individualistic power of creation. In this, the concept goes against both Hayles's and Braidotti's models of the self. As was previously mentioned, the former considers consciousness as a product of embodied processes of a broader autopoietic system. In the same vain, Braidotti sees it as "an assemblage of forces, or flows, intensities and passions that solidify in space, and consolidate in time within the singular configuration commonly known as an 'individual' self" ("Posthuman, All Too Human" 201). Therefore, Eldritch, by advocating such a construction of the subject, disregards both the material environment and the discursive differentiation that constitute the assemblages, which in turn create us. This promise is so attractive to the colonists not only because it offers a taste of disembodied immortality, but also a kind of omnipotence, seemingly unconstrained by the structural limits imposed on Can-D's world.

After Eldritch drugs Leo Bulero in order to demonstrate this supposed superiority of the alien narcotic, Bulero points that "the worst aspect of Chew-Z is the *solipsistic* quality" (94, ch.6, emphasis mine). While his own product is no less problematic, he rightfully points that his competitor establishes a paradigm of virtual experience, in which interpersonal relations are severed and the individual mind projects a reality in a vacuum. Therefore, the characterization of a self-reliant, and very much self-enclosed subject within Chew-Z visions can be framed as the ultimate form of the kind of myth of individuality that posthumanism denounces. If we follow the hitherto outlined models of posthuman selfhood, it can be stated that it is the involvement with other conscious and nonconscious agents that shapes the subject and not the other way around. What is considered by Eldritch a limitation of Can-D translation – the need for

differentiated communication as a medium of meaning-making – is in fact a prerequisite for any subjective experience to exist at all.

These issues with Eldritch's virtual reality soon become apparent, as the characters learn the true purpose of Chew-Z. The drug distributed across the solar system is a kind of Trojan Horse through which the alien being possessing Eldritch enters and takes over the consciousnesses of the users. The eponymous capitalist was its first victim, and after returning from outer space the alien now known as Palmer Eldritch aims to infect and take over the bodies of humanity. It is "not an invasion by the legions of a pseudo human race. No. It's Palmer Eldritch who's everywhere, growing and growing like a mad weed" (184, ch.11).

By ostensibly working as a tool for creating worlds governed solely by the power of individual minds, Chew-Z seduces the subject into solipsism and therefore isolates them from their environment, embodiment and social connections. In actuality, its users, ironically nicknamed "choosers," are again under the illusion of creative control within this new virtual space, while in fact it is Eldritch himself who usurps the position of the sole authority over the imaginary worlds. He starts by indulging their fantasies, covertly conjuring whatever the choosers desire in a virtual world, but not all at once, and not effortlessly. After taking Chew-Z, Barney conveys to Anne that

> "It's an illusory world in which Eldritch holds the key positions as god; he gives you a chance to do what you can't really do – reconstruct the past as it ought to have been. But even for him it's hard. Takes time." He was silent, then; he sat rubbing his aching forehead.
> "You mean he can't – and you can't – just wave your arms and get what you want? As you can in a dream?"
> "It's absolutely not like a dream." It was worse, he realized. More like being in hell, he thought. Yes, that's the way hell must be: recurrent and unyielding. (176, ch.10)

The difficulty in conjuring the fantasies, expressed by Barney, can be read as a mechanism of addiction similar to what has been described in section 4 – an inducement of desire that remains unsatisfied, just out of reach. The need for repetition instilled by

Chew-Z is more insidious than in the case of Can-D, because it insinuates that the fulfillment is dependent only on the user's resilience, so that no failure can be attributed to the flaws of the simulation; instead, each failure is immediately attributed to the lack of effort on the user's part. Therefore the disappointment in the experience, rather than turning the victim away from the drug, may prompt them to redouble their efforts, giving more and more of themselves away to Eldritch. As Hayles expertly puts it: "Posing as a dream of information that can satisfy the deepest desires of humans, the Chew-Z world reveals itself not as a refuge but as a rapacious dynamic that preys on the autonomy of the liberal subject" (*My Mother Was a Computer* 74). Eldritch orchestrates this charade as a way to prime the colonists for assimilation. As soon as the victim loses themselves in the illusion of authority, the predator infects their perception of reality.

Once more, let us recall Derrida's dismantling of the metaphysics of western subjective solipsism. Since, as he claimed, "[The subject] depends upon the system of differences and the movement of *différance* ... the subject is not present, nor above all present to itself before *différance,...* [and thus] the subject is constituted only in being divided from itself" (Derrida, "Semiology and Grammatology" 248), then, by embracing the solipsistic simulation and disassociating from their autopoietic social system, the "choosers" surrender the ability to be constituted by the relations of difference between themselves and others within the system. Subsequently, the subject is at risk of disappearing. Therefore, when Eldritch surrounds those under the influence of Chew-Z, he is free to dictate their construction of identity, turning autopoietic systems into allopoietic subordinates of his own organization.

As an alien intelligence, more viral than conscious, Eldritch epitomizes the drive for self-proliferation: an enactment of a monopoly over reality with disregard or ignorance of human autonomy. Eldritch propagates himself through an infectious

mechanism that positions him simultaneously as the product and the salesman. The result is that, as Rudge explains: "Unlike the 'unified' atavistic images of human life augured by Can-D, Chew-Z's imaginal realms feature a fully rebuilt human, defined by mechanization and phantasm: … identities criss-cross and coalesce, as the socius collectively transforms into a singular, mechanized identity" (39-40). Therefore, the enterprise is deeply exploitative, as each of his consumers not only becomes dependent on the drug, but also undergoes a radical reification; the users' bodies gradually turn into vessels for Eldritch, as the former identities merge and homogenize with his. If he is a deity, then it is the same conceptualization of God which Derrida critiques, when he argues that in the metaphysics of logos, "[o]nly infinite being can reduce the difference in presence. In that sense, the name of God, at least as it is pronounced within classical rationalism, is the name of indifference itself" (*Of Grammatology* 71).

Because of those qualities of Chew-Z, as some critics notice, the alien form of Eldritch can also be seen as the personification of late-stage capitalism. Kim Stanley Robinson makes the argument that "Eldritch is clearly a 'mad capitalist'…, and it could be said that the alien that invaded him during his voyages represents the spirit of capitalism, just as his product Chew-Z could be thought of as the ultimate consumer item" (61). Darko Suvin goes further, claiming that "The Palmer Eldritch type of super-corporative capitalism is in fact a new religion, stronger and more pervasive than the classical transcendental ones … What it delivers, though, is not only a new thing under the Sun but also false, activating the bestial or alien inhumanity within man" (14). Considering both of these perspectives, it could be said that Eldritch forces his consciousness onto the participants of the trance through a two-pronged assault. On one hand, it is the "spirit of capitalism," as Robinson calls it: the users of Chew-Z, in contrast to Can-D, experience realities that rather than being constructed from a

collaborative effort (albeit limited by Bulero's miniatures), are dictated by a single will. Through Chew-Z, the process of homogenizing all elements of the system under a single authority extends to the conscious subjects, whose minds and bodies become overwritten by Eldritch. On the other hand, following Suvin, those seeking religious experience do not achieve unity with their congregation or their god, but an assimilation by, and in, so to speak, Eldritch.

These religious connotations are explicitly signaled by the eponymous "Stigmata." Traditionally, this word refers to the wounds, corresponding to those inflicted upon Jesus Christ, that miraculously manifest on the bodies of saints. In a theological interpretation "a subject receives stigmata when he enters a state of perfect union with suffering Jesus by divine grace, until he physically identifies with Him" (Gianfaldoni et al., 49). However, in the novel, the word "stigmata" designates the phenomenon of Eldritch's mechanical implants appearing on other people's bodies. Even before venturing out to outer space, Eldritch has undergone enhancement surgeries, replacing parts of his body with cybernetic prostheses. After Barney escapes the world of Chew-Z, his perception of reality remains haunted by the afterimages of those implants:

> He became silent; he stared at Anne Hawthorne. There is something wrong, he thought. Because–
> Anne had one artificial arm and hand; the plastic and metal fingers were only inches from him and he could discern them clearly. And when he looked up into her face he saw hollowness, the emptiness as vast as the intersystem space out of which Eldritch had emerged. The dead eyes, filled with space beyond the known, visited worlds. (176-177, ch.10)

If the appearance of the stigmata denotes an embodied merger of a saint with god, then this manifestation of Eldritch's cybernetic implants outside of his simulated world may be read as him achieving dominion over the colonists. In a grotesque parody of a union with Christ, the alien capitalist displaces his congregation's selfhoods.

Thus, Eldritch's bodily modifications code the character as a cyborg, but it is a transhumanist figure striving for immortality or godhood, as advocated by "the mostly white, affluent, male prophets of perfectibility [who] put their faith in technology to save humanity by transubstantiating the organic body" (Dinello 19). His stigmata are not prostheses compensating for bodily damage, but enhancements meant to elevate him above humanity: "enormous steel teeth," artificial right arm "superior in that it provided a specialized variety of interchangeable hands," and eyes with "a panoramic vision … supplied by a wide-angle lens" (161-162, ch.10). If the figure of the cyborg marks the transformation of human into posthuman, in this case Eldritch becomes what Haraway anticipates in her "A Cyborg Manifesto" as the ultimate goal of western liberal humanism. In her words, "the cyborg is also the awful apocalyptic *telos* of the 'West's' escalating dominations of abstract individuation, an ultimate self untied at last from all dependency, a man in space" (71). In that capacity, the stigmata are not symbols of suffering, but of the false ego of the capitalist individual, striving for mastery over others. And indeed, Eldritch exercises that authority in his virtual world. While the novel's narrative provides multiple, sometimes contradictory explanations for the exact mechanisms of the Chew-Z visions (sometimes depicted as phantasmagorical fantasies, and at other times as transpositions of consciousness into the future or the past), their one constant is the ubiquitous presence of Palmer Eldritch. Unlike Can-D, which was at least communal in the sense that multiple participants contributed to the "writing" process, the visions experienced through Chew-Z seem to be genuinely determined by a single master, who encapsulates everything within the virtual reality. Eldritch makes the colonists part of a private power fantasy playing out inside his head. Once "infected" with this vision, the colonists who have used Chew-Z begin seeing the cyborg visage of

Palmer Eldritch even in the waking world, superimposed over the faces of other people as the stigmata his of possessive individualism.

2.7. Conclusions

It can be concluded that *The Three Stigmata* warns that social autopoietic systems can become appropriated by hyper-egotistical, capitalistic forces, represented here by the eponymous antagonist. Eldritch utilizes the reality-altering qualities of his designer drugs to impose his own identity upon the participants of the collective. The disembodied version of cybernetic subjectivity with ambitions for eternal life and endless self-proliferation is depicted as a kind of "dark" posthuman configuration – a nonhuman consciousness with the capacity to destabilize and assimilate whatever system they interact with. It is a tumor upon the posthuman consciousness-as-assemblage, which instead of facilitating cooperation between the autonomous nodes of the autopoietic system, assumes control over the collective, stifling the creative process of *différance*. Hayles postulates that

> If my nightmare is a culture inhabited by posthumans who regard their bodies as fashion accessories rather than the ground of being, my dream is a version of the posthuman that embraces the possibilities of information technologies without being seduced by fantasies of unlimited power and disembodied immortality. (*How we Became Posthuman* 5)

While largely misguided and unsuccessful in the long run, the Can-D experience hints at those positive possibilities of technology by promoting social interconnectedness, whereas the cyborgized Palmer Eldritch represents the "nightmare" scenario[38]. His

38 It should be noted that while Eldritch is depicted as a villain for the most part of the narrative, critics such as Christopher Palmer, Frederic Jameson and Umberto Rossi describe the novel's cyborg as an "ambiguous" figure (Jameson, *Archeologies* 370; Palmer, *Exhilaration and Terror* 142, Rossi 181). They argue that while Eldritch is an alien invader, bent on replacing humanity, he nevertheless offers those who encounter him (and survive) some sort of revelation stemming from his ability to unveil "the sterility of the world he threatens, which already depends on illusion nested in fakes" (Palmer 142). If one can witness Eldritch's stigmata outside of his simulation – after they escape the vision induced by Chew-Z, then the epistemological certainty of their perception falters. Without the assurance that the world they experience is a reliable metric of reality, the subject is mobilized to

transformation disconnects him from the species and from his embodiment, which is evidenced in how he wants to spread onto and inhabit the bodies of other people as expendable prostheses. Moreover, the supposed salvation he offers to the colonists is not an escape from the human condition, but a redeployment of the totalizing economic and religious forces masquerading as transcendental afterlife.

In the context of his body of work, *The Three Stigmata* signals the emerging doubts and fears which Dick acknowledges in his literary exploration of technologically mediated human societies. There is a sense of danger associated with entering the posthuman mode of being. The author seems to warn that alteration of the autonomous human may collapse the perceived reality into a homogeneity of an authoritarian signifying force. The technologies, be they biochemical, cybernetic or informational, are not in themselves the root cause of the issue; it is rather the use they are put to that needs to be carefully thought through. If one utilizes virtual technology without the consideration for how it informs their interactions with the broader environment, they risk compromising the social and material bonds which provide the ground of the social system.

Furthermore, it is important to stress that Eldritch is not the only character in the novel who may potentially qualify as a cyborg in the framework of critical posthumanism. The colonists who mediate their embodied lives through narcotics and virtual realities are just as involved in navigating the digital and biotechnological

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search for alternative modes of constructing their perspective on the world. Within the novel as well, after helping Bulero in defeating the invader, Barney expresses the villain's moral ambiguity and admits to Anne that he does not consider Eldritch evil: “It’s just trying to live, like the rest of us are” (213, ch.12). Framed thus, Eldritch cannot be encompassed by the binary ethical categories of good and evil; rather he represents another form of life, one driven by the imperative to survive. Therefore, Eldritch’s influence may be considered partly positive in that he manifests the kind of radical shift of perception that forces the human to consider the arbitrariness – what Palmer calls “illusion” – of one’s own anthropocentric structuring of the concepts of ethics and reality. Nevertheless, this quality does not outweigh nor compensate for the detrimental impact that he has on the social assemblages in the novel.

economies, as they strive to form sustainable, autopoietic social systems. However, the lack of economic power and their life circumstances put them in a disadvantaged position, vulnerable to be subjugated and absorbed by the predatory powers of late capitalism, represented by Palmer Eldritch. Therefore the implication of *The Three Stigmata's* narrative is that to realize Hayles's "dream version of the posthuman," one has to be mindful to implement virtual technologies in a responsible way, and to work towards egalitarian structuring of the realities they create. Or, in Haraway's words, "a cyborg world might be about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints" ("A Cyborg Manifesto" 74). But perhaps the most quintessential instance of Dick's literary engagement with the concept of this kind of posthuman cyborg is the subject of the next chapter in this dissertation: the novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep.*

3. Phrases of empathy in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* – towards posthuman inter-subjective perspective

3.1. Introduction.

First published in 1968, the novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* continues Dick's exploration of the nature of reality and artificiality of the world immersed in technology, humanity's relationship to that landscape and the possible modes of nonhuman agency. In this case, the author considers a cognitive paradigm different than human: that of sentient machines – the eponymous androids. By juxtaposing it with the anthropocentric perspective, he arrives at a nuanced understanding of empathy as the foundation for meaningful, open interaction with reality.

In science-fiction terminology, the word "android" denotes a wholly manufactured being whose outward appearance is designed to resemble a human in its physicality and behavior. As such, as is the case with Dick's novel, the figure of an android can often serve as a narrative vessel for engaging in a philosophical discourse on the construction of human subjectivity. As Eric Wilson proposes:

> The androids emerging from human imagination constitute psychic projections as much as physical collections ... Virtual humanoids ... are subtle phantoms of their makers' interiors, revelations of conscious as well as unconscious reveries. The androids haunting the edifices of the imagination serve as especially luminous unveilings of hidden psychologies concerning the machine. These fantastical mechanisms bring to light what might well be true of all relationships between human beings and artificial doubles. (2-3)

As I will attempt to prove in the following analysis, the figure of the android imagined by Dick, as the above quote rightly predicts, prompts the reader to question both the human position in the technological environment as well as humanity's interaction with nonhuman beings and cognitive assemblages. Dick wrote *Do Androids Dream* during his most prolific period of mid-sixties[39], but he returned to the theme of the android several times in essays and speeches, where he continued his exploration of the human nature in a technological environment. In one of those essays, based on a 1972 speech in Vancouver, "The Android and the Human," the author upholds a dichotomy between the man and the android, but at the same time stresses that some humans may have an "android" quality – that is obedience and passivity, and accordingly that some machines may be more human. While he operates under those contrasting categories, Dick admits that for him, the android is no longer an instance of simple mimicry:

> I have, in some of my stories and novels, written about androids … what is meant is artificial constructs masquerading as humans … Now, to me, that theme seems obsolete. The constructs do not mimic humans; they are, in many deep ways, actually human already. They are not trying to fool us, for a purpose of any sort; they merely follow lines we follow, in order that they, too, may overcome such common problems as the breakdown of vital parts, loss of power source, attack by such foes as storms, short circuits. ("The Android and the Human" 185)

As I will attempt to showcase, this is a reflection that he seems to already form in the course of *Do Androids Dream*'s narrative. There is an inevitable mixing of categories, whether in the form of apathetic human characters or in the independent agency granted to the rogue androids. As we shall see, the androids in the novel are anything but machine-like or obedient: they exercise their wills and work towards emancipation against the state in surprising and highly disruptive ways. And while Dick calls those

39 15 out of 36 of his novels published before his death were released between 1964 and 1969.

qualities "human" in his essay, I still argue that in actuality, the theme indicates the author's intuition of a *post*humanist perspective that merely lacked a proper theoretical lexicon at the time he wrote about it. That would arrive over a decade later, as Donna Haraway's "cyborg."

While a "cyborg" traditionally denotes a human modified by cybernetic prostheses, I would nevertheless argue that Dickian androids have much in common with Haraway's feminist, posthumanist definition of the term. For her, "[t]he cyborg is a creature in a post-gender world; it has no truck with bisexuality, pre-oedipal symbiosis, unalienated labour, or other seductions to organic wholeness through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity" ("A Cyborg Manifesto" 71). Although, in her later works Haraway significantly expands her lexicon of philosophical figures – most famously with "companion species," which she considers a more apt representation of an inter-subjective, productive model of mutually dependent human and nonhuman relationships for the 21st century nature-culture landscape (*When Species Meet*) – the cyborg remains an important feminist blueprint for empowering minority identities. As she describes in a later essay, despite their differences: "These figures are hardly opposites. Cyborgs and companion species each brings together the human and non-human, the organic and technological … the state and the subject, diversity and depletion, modernity and postmodernity, and nature and culture in unexpected ways" ("Cyborgs to Companion Species" 297).

In a technologically immersed world of 20th and 21st century, all of us qualify as cyborgs, yet the humanist, often hetero-normative or patriarchal frameworks that pervade western societies create exclusionary taxonomies that serve to affirm one's "organic wholeness." In contrast, the cyborg revels in their categorical (or discursive) indeterminacy. Indeed, as we shall see, for the androids in the novel, such as Rachael,

the performance of gender or for that matter of any cultural identity is a dynamic process, contingent on circumstances, and only applicable in relation to another subject. The android represents a subjectivity occupying a liminal position between the machine and the human, but not identifying with either of those categories. It is a form of affective camouflage, allowing the cyborg Other to blend in with humanity on equal terms: a survival strategy not unfamiliar to marginalized and persecuted groups throughout history.

In the previous chapter, I have considered how communication and technology may generate cooperative social systems. However, in *In The Three Stigmata* these networks were exclusive to human subjects, while here we shall discuss the possibility of cooperative processes encompassing the technological and nonhuman Others. In the analysis of *Do Androids Dream*, I will also scrutinize the negative aspects of a subjective perspective embedded in, and thus dependent, on language, such as the aforementioned exclusion of those who do not operate within the same mode of communication. More specifically, in this reading I will at points refer to the postmodern crisis of incompatible discourses, formulated by Jean-François Lyotard under the term "differend."

In *The Postmodern Condition* Lyotard asserts that no one issue should be able to reach an ultimate conclusion, since a discourse consists of modifying and morphing of readings and perspectives. Asserting a truth is then only an exercise of power, not an insight into the ultimate version of reality. Knowledge produced by an assertion of authority, be it scientific or political, serves only to legitimize and further the productive capacities of the state apparatus. The philosopher elaborates on these ideas in *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, where he asserts that “a differend would be a case of conflict, between (at least) two parties, that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a

rule of judgment applicable to both arguments" (xi). This impasse does not necessarily imply that one of the parties is in the wrong or that their position is illegitimate, but rather that both parties operate under different "phrases" – all of them being a matter of utterances or discursive acts based in heterogeneous and thus incommensurate epistemological regimens[40]. Phrases made in different regimes can be linked to each other, which results in a creation of a new phrase, but not translated: that is, an existing discursive perspective cannot fully encompass another. A conflict may arise when one party imposes authority over another by claiming that their perspective is a more accurate measure of truth or when an assertion of a given reality is evident under one regimen but not another[41]. When a particular discourse becomes hegemonic within a society, it risks invalidating the experiences and the suffering of those marginalized parties who do not conform to that discursive perspective.

From a posthumanist point of view of Rosi Braidotti, "the man" of classical humanism can be seen as such an exclusionary discursive phrase. She critiques it as a highly regulatory historical convention, which by modernity has become a tool for practices of exclusion and discrimination. Braidotti contends that

> The human norm … functions by transposing a specific mode of being human into a generalized standard, which acquires transcendent values as *the* human: from male to masculine and onto human as the universalized format of humanity. This standard is posited as categorically and qualitatively distinct from the sexualized, racialized, naturalized others and also in opposition to the technological artefact. (*The Posthuman* 26).

Dick's android occupies a unique position on this spectrum of otherness, as it represents both a technological artefact threatening the categorical uniqueness of human

40 Lyotard previously referred to phrases as "language games" but substituted the term in *The Differend* to disambiguate the idea. One cannot disengage from a phrase, as they would from a game, since "to doubt that one phrases is still to phrase, one's silence makes a phrase" (xi).

41 Lyotard famously provides an example of a holocaust denier who asserts: "in order for a place to be identified as a gas chamber, the only eyewitness I will accept would be a victim of this gas chamber; now, according to my opponent, there is no victim that is not dead;… There is, therefore, no gas chamber" (3-4). The consequence of this differend is profound: a discursive erasure of the genocide in question and dispossession of the validity of suffering for the victims and the survivors.

consciousness, and a dispossessed, persecuted less-than-human. I argue that we can see a reflection of this criticism all throughout the novel. Moreover, Dick proposes a way out this negative dialectical process by highlighting possible acts of transformation for the human subject. One may be able to distinguish shifts of perspective, or of the modes of discourse that the protagonist experiences, which subsequently provoke a reevaluation of his position in relation to the Other. The aim of such shifts is to do away, as Braidotti suggests, with oppositional or negative discourses and instead engender subjectivity as "a process of auto-poiesis or self-styling, which involves complex and continuous negotiations with dominant norms and values" (35). Accordingly, in the course of the novel, the distinction between people and androids is constantly questioned and many of the protagonist's (and humanity's) core values are exposed as fallacies of the humanistic worldview.

In this chapter, I identify how in *Do Androids Dream* the dominant anthropocentric subject position creates a phrase regimen which legitimizes violence towards the nonhuman Others, while simultaneously delegitimizing their agency. Subsequently, I analyze those beings in comparison to Donna Haraway's figure of a cyborg as well as Rosi Braidotti's outlook on posthumanism. Ultimately, I attempt to showcase how an encounter between the human and a technological Other may lead to overcoming the hierarchizing forces of the dominant discourse by establishing a new phrase: that of posthuman subjectivity and its consequences for the nonhuman actors.

3.2. The human condition

Do Androids Dream takes place in the post-apocalyptic future of 1992 in San Francisco. After a global nuclear conflict called World War Terminus, during which the planet

became dangerously irradiated, most of the animals have died in the wake of the subsequent ecological disaster. Similarly to *The Three Stigmata,* the surviving humanity is in the process of migrating to other planets and moons within the Solar System, while those who stay either cling to the pre-war notions of normalcy or become social outcasts on behalf of their genetic mutations. However, unlike in the previously discussed novel, here the hard labor is relegated to vat-grown androids – bio-engineered replicas of humans, with significantly shortened lifespans. These replicants are supposed to be docile, obedient slaves, but the advances in the technology of their manufacture result in models who are increasingly more independent, intelligent and crucially more aware of their circumstances. The consequence is a number of androids mutinying against their slave labor and going into hiding among human populations, as they are externally identical to regular people.

Among those humans who still live on Earth there is a bounty hunter Rick Deckard. He specializes in "retiring," that is killing or destroying, rogue androids, that have escaped from the Solar colonies. A bounty hunter's job is to identify fugitive androids by subjecting the suspects to a complex test for the presence of empathy in their behavior – a supposedly exclusively human quality that the replicants are unable to imitate. As a consequence of this assumption, empathy becomes a revered and sought after aspect of one's living experience, to the point that it becomes a center focus of social discourse and an overt marker of one's humanity. The first step of my analysis is to establish the methods through which the human society justifies their hegemonic position and entrenches it through performative displays of empathy.

3.2.1 the Voight-Kampff test and Mercerism

Rick Deckard and other bounty hunters rely on the so-called Voigt-Kampff Test as a method for identifying the fugitive androids hiding amidst the general population. The test consists of asking the suspect a number of questions in order to detect an empathetic response by measuring various bodily reactions in a similar manner to that of a polygraph. Lack of thereof indicates to the bounty hunter that the interviewee is either an android or a sociopath. The assumption postulated at the beginning of the novel, upon which the social order is based, is that "Empathy, evidently, existed only within the human community, whereas intelligence to some degree could be found throughout every phylum" (24, ch. 3). This worldview, facilitated by the standardized tests, serves to create an apparatus of power over the nonhuman subjects. Commenting on the novel, Christopher Sims observed: "The only way to ensure the conformity of the android to traditional power systems and technical paradigms is to insist on maintaining a difference (through the realignment of social values) and on creating a means to measure and identify that difference" (70). In other words, the hierarchy can be preserved by way of establishing a taxonomy of exclusion. Moreover, the adherence to the norm is enforced by a policing body – the bounty hunters, and any deviation is met with lethal force.

The fallacy inherent in this method of determining one's humanity is perhaps best expressed by Lyotard in his analysis of the instances of the judicial rhetoric wherein the burden of evidence is shifted onto the defendant for political or ideological reasons. He argues that

> if everyone accused is presumed guilty, the defense has the task of establishing innocence while the prosecution has only to refute the argumentation and to impugn the proofs advanced by the defense. Now, it may be impossible to establish that the referent of a phrase does not have a given property, unless we have the right to resort to a refutation of the phrase in which the referent does have that property. … This inversion

> of the tasks … may suffice to transform the accused into a victim, if he or she does not have the right to criticize the prosecution. (*Differend* 9)

Accordingly, the Voigt-Kampff test becomes a tool of the dominant ideology that serves to enforce this exact scenario in the treatment of the androids. The procedure is designed to search for specific, normalized signs of empathy, and therefore the judgment – the accusation of androidism – is based on negative evidence. In other words, the test does not determine if the subject of inquiry is an android, only that they have not provided sufficient evidence that they are human. It is a subtle and insidious rhetorical sleight of hand on the part of the human society. It permits people to ignore any phrases asserting subjectivity or conscious existence on the part of the defendants, as those assertions do not fulfill the requirements of evidence as set out by the hegemonic discourse.

The fallibility of this tool in determining humanity is confirmed in the novel by the fact that not only androids are prone to failing the Voigt-Kampff test. As Deckard's supervisor reveals "a small class of human beings could not pass the Voigt-Kampff scale. If you tested them in line with police work you'd assess them as humanoid robots. You'd be wrong, but they'd be dead" (30, ch.4). When subjected to the test, a neurodivergent person may present the same results as an android, which would confirm that the dominant regimen uses techniques that do not persecute specifically the mechanical Other, but any deviation from the standardized norm.

This approach is perhaps best articulated by the term "a human error" as proposed by posthumanist scholar Dominic Pettman. Continuing Haraway's deliberations on the cyborg and animal Others, he offers a succinct critique of humanism, warning:

> We should strive to avoid conflating sentience and sensitivity with human. Intelligence, compassion, comprehension … and all those many traits with which we self-identify are not always exclusive to our species … Considering ourselves as the source of that-

> which-we-call-human, and viewing animals or technics as mere conduits – as means to that end – is a fallacy. It is to see mastery where a vital, complex, ahuman dynamic reigns. It is to mistake the anthropological machine for an objective verification of status and thus to succumb to the parochialism of all conspicuous consumption.
> It is, in short, a human error. (127)

The humans in *Do Androids Dream* exhibit all of these symptoms. The Voigt-Kampff test deems human only those who display an arbitrarily "appropriate" levels of sentience and sensitivity. Those beings – the neurodivergent persons and the androids – that may express themselves differently are barred from public life. The self-identification of compassion and empathy within humans leads them to an erroneous leap of logic: an assumption that this human perspective is the only mode of constituting subjectivity, and therefore that those who deviate from that pattern are not to be considered subjects. As a result, the agency of nonhuman and technological Others is disregarded so that they may be exploited as a means to an end of further affirming human exceptionalism. Therefore, Dick, through his futuristic setting, scrutinizes the same mistake that Pettman sees in the modern society: that of equating anthropocentric perspective with an objective measurement of what constitutes a meaningful life. Moreover, as the next sections will demonstrate, the authenticity or meaningfulness of the human empathy is not indisputable either.

As a further way of affirming empathy as exclusively human, linked to the empathy test, the characters in the novel participate in a technologically enhanced religious experience of Mercerism. It is a new and widespread, religiously inflected belief, or a substitute of traditional religion, spread among humans in Dick's narrative, based on the teachings and life of Wilbur Mercer: a mysterious martyr, who appeared after the apocalyptic event of *World War Terminus.* Staying in line with the values of the rest of the presented society, it preaches the virtue of human empathy and openness of one's feelings towards the Other. Mercerism differs however from a traditional religion

in that its dogma, like many other ideas in *Do Androids Dream,* is actualized through technology. The followers of Mercerism have access to a device called the empathy box, which serves to connect and share emotions between its users all over the world while also allowing them to relive Mercer's supposed martyrdom from his perspective. The narration describes the process as follows:

> physical merging — accompanied by mental and spiritual identification — with Wilbur Mercer had reoccurred. As it did for everyone who at this moment clutched the handles, either here on Earth or on one of the colony planets. He experienced them, the others, incorporated the babble of their thoughts, heard in his own brain the noise of their many individual existences. (17, ch. 2)

This communal experience of someone else's emotions is supposed to form a closer connection among people, and help them cultivate their affective sensitivities. Crucially, this human interconnectivity is simultaneously a tool for further segregation, since "An android, no matter how gifted as to pure intellectual capacity, could make no sense out of the fusion which took place routinely among the followers of Mercerism" (23, ch.3). Not unlike the Can-D translation in *The Three Stigmata,* the technologically mediated communion of empathy boxes is constructed by individual voices, forming a heterogeneous collective that moves towards the same goal: participating in Mercer's ascension. However, while the machine promises a formation of a unifying collective, it is inherently exclusive to nonhuman subjectivities, which, as we shall see further in this chapter, operate under a different mode of community-building. Mercerism becomes a way of reinstating and affirming the exceptionalism of the human social system, even though, paradoxically, it its core experience is enabled by a machine. Further on in this chapter, we shall return to Mercerism in order to showcase how the regimen of spirituality may be subverted to destabilize rather than fortify the humanist hierarchy.

3.2.2 The mood organ

The novel opens with the main protagonist waking up and conversing with his wife, Iran. The initial dialogue reveals that the couple, as well as the majority of the Earth's human community, regularly subject themselves to the influence of a device called "Penfield mood organ." The invention allows them to choose consciously whatever emotional state the characters want to experience at any given time:

> "If you set the surge up high enough, you'll be glad you're awake; that's the whole point."...
> "My schedule for today lists a six-hour self-accusatory depression," Iran said.
> "What? Why did you schedule that?" It defeated the whole purpose of the mood organ.
> "I didn't even know you could set it for that," he said gloomily. (2, ch.1)

While the operating principle of the device is never explained, the above exchange illustrates its effect: the complete authority over one's own feelings, detached from the circumstances of the moment, one's bodily chemistry and any other inner or outside stimuli that inform one's mental well-being. Instead of allowing the interaction of the body (which includes the pre-conscious mind processes) with the environmental stimulus to autopoietically generate a spontaneous emotional reaction, the humans in the novel utilize technology to preemptively decide on what affective state is the most appropriate to them at the given moment.

Because the humans in the novel are so much in control of their emotions, they deprive themselves of the broader, dynamic spectrum of sensations and moods that their embodiment affords them. The interplay of outside stimuli, biochemical reactions within the brain, and all of the bodily elements of the cognitive autopoiesis that constitute traditional subjective experience may be removed from their functioning. The simulated emotions are perceived in the same way as those originating in the above-mentioned material processes, but they nevertheless create a barrier between the subject, their body and the world they inhabit: the technologically enabled, fully calculated

control over one's feelings, instead of resulting in a heightened awareness, instills ignorance of the others' emotional depth; additionally, it seriously questions the concept of depth as one's own characteristic. At one point, Deckard notices the machine's effect on his relationship with Iran when he attempts to get her advice, but she is too preoccupied with the mood-organ-induced self-pity to acknowledge him: "No support, he informed himself. Most androids I've known have more vitality and desire to live than my wife. She has nothing to give me" (75-76, ch. 8). Iran's attitude described here can be described as apathy; despite widespread socio-cultural glorification, or even beatification, through Mercerism, of empathy, the machine makes humans such as Iran numb to the affective states and needs of other people.

To experience empathy, one has to be able to internalize and evoke the emotions expressed by the subject of the interaction, or to put it simply, to feel their pain. For those using the Penfield mood organ the simulated, consciously selected mood overrides the intuitive sensitivity towards another. Dick, in *Do Androids Dream,* imagines a society in which the attribute of human emotion is elevated, even fetishized as a grounding mechanism, developed against the overwhelming entropy of the postapocaliptic world and the rising prevalence of artificial beings that appear to threaten the idea of human exceptionalism. However, this rationalized, controlled approach to affective states may have the opposite effect: the Penfield mood organ gives people limitless control over their feelings, but it subsequently renders those feelings mechanical, since they are not emergent in an interaction with their material environment, but produced in a vacuum. The reader can see this discursive regimentation of human experience in the following monologue by Iran:

> "Athough I heard the emptiness intellectually, I didn't feel it. My first reaction consisted of being grateful that we could afford a Penfield mood organ. But then I read how unhealthy it was, sensing the absence of life … and not reacting – do you see?… And I

> finally found a setting for despair … So I put it on my schedule for twice a month: I think that's a reasonable amount of time to feel hopeless about everything" (3, ch.1).

In this deeply ironic moment, Iran is close to realizing her condition – the diminishing of appropriate emotional responses – however, even then she quickly falls back on the normative paradigm of behavior, proclaiming that even the feelings of despair and loneliness should be experienced on a regulated schedule. Paradoxically, the entire sphere of human interactions, the sense of self and awareness of the Other are becoming simulated or performative because of a technology which is supposed to elevate and preserve these values. Humanity in *Do Androids Dream* is therefore defined by their self-inflicted shallowness. Humans' anthropocentric belief in the uniqueness and monolithic nature of their conscious, empathetic experience ultimately leads to the devaluation and gradual erasure of the inter-subjective network. In these circumstances, empathy becomes an empty phrase serving only to uphold the normative exclusionary discourse. As a bulwark against this crisis, the society turns to a different way of enunciating – phrasing – their empathy: raising animals.

3.2.3. Treatment of animals

In Deckard's society, there is an extreme emphasis put on the value of ownership of an animal. However, as is the case with the mood organ, the need to own an animal is not so much to the benefit of this creature, as it is a social signifier of one's supposed humanity and humaneness. While Deckard stands on the roof of his apartment complex, taking care of his electric sheep, his neighbor points out: "You know how people are about not taking care of an animal; they consider it immoral and anti-empathic" (9, ch. 1). In the world of *Do Androids Dream* owning an animal is a status symbol, however not so much of the material wealth, but as a way of signaling one's empathy towards a

nonhuman creature. As such, the entire practice serves to perpetuate the idea of humans as beings who have the exclusive capacity to care for *lesser* creatures (which in itself subsequently positions humanity at the apex of this arbitrary hierarchy of life). This sentiment comes to light when it is revealed to the reader that most of the animals owned by the characters in the novel are artificial creations, such as the eponymous *electric sheep.* Therefore, the characters acquire these substitutes to use them as recipients of the performative displays of empathy. However, as the narration reveals, this practice has a profoundly detrimental effect on the protagonist's self-worth.

At the beginning of the novel, Deckard himself takes care of an electric sheep, and in his interaction with the neighbor he simultaneously feels envious for his genuine horse, and shame for having a "fake" animal himself: "Owning and maintaining a fraud had a way of gradually demoralizing one. And yet from a social standpoint it had to be done, given the absence of the real article. He had therefore no choice except to continue. Even were he not to care himself" (6, ch. 1). Here, it can be seen that this ostentatious social sentiment is so strong that it exerts pressure on Deckard, who feels guilty[42] about having an electric animal instead of a real one, as it prevents him from exercising his empathy, and therefore affirming his humanity.

More importantly for a posthumanist reading, the animals are deeply instrumentalized as no more than markers of the humanity of their owners, patronized and deeply entrapped within the anthropocentric scheme. Each nonhuman creature – living or artificial – has a designated monetary value attached to it. Deckard, whenever he encounters, or even thinks about a specific animal, immediately consults his "much-studied copy of Sidney's Animal & Fowl Catalogue" (7, ch.1) to find the market price of

42 Although it is not made clear whether Deckard is at that moment out of reach of his apartment's Penfield mood organ, or if the demoralizing effect is simply so intense that it overrides his chosen emotional preset.

a given species. The scarcity of life, and the human anxiety about its extinction become subsumed by the neo-liberal market forces. Thus, the animals become embroiled as assets in humans' ego-driven phrases of displaying empathy. Dick seems to make a poignant observation: if one's expression of care for living beings is contingent on their spending power, then empathy itself becomes a commodity, a vanity purchase. Similarly, for Braidotti, subjectivity based on possessive individualism is vulnerable to "the opportunistic political ideology of biogenetic capitalism [that] turns Life/*zoe* – that is to say human and non-human intelligent matter – into a commodity for trade and profit" (*The Posthuman* 61).

Therefore, the relationship between the novel's human society and animals, rather than empathetic, could be more accurately described as a means to an end of upholding a normative framework of the human as the caregiver. The mechanism of exploitation is the same as the contemporary treatment of livestock, only the product, rather than being meat or dairy, is social currency – an affirmation of humanity and its virtues for the characters in the novel. Arguably, in this setting the only connection that humans and animals actually achieve are the shared vulnerabilities to the prospect of extinction following the ecological disaster and the reification under the market economy. In a world where the exceptionalism of human consciousness is threatened by intelligent machines – the androids – those privileged in the anthropocentric hierarchy entrench their position through the notion of performative protection of those *less-than*. Thus, Dick displays here an image of capitalist society concurrent with Braidotti's outlook on the post-anthropocentric critique of humanist discourse: "no animal is more equal than any other, because they are all equally inscribed in a market economy … that commodifies them to a comparable degree and therefore makes them equally disposable" (*The Posthuman* 71). As we shall see, this standard of disposability extends

to nonhuman agents other than animals: the electric animals, the androids and the "specials[43]" hold the same dispossessed, subservient position in the hierarchy. It is a negative, unproductive kind of connection based in equal vulnerability to the market forces.

This dependence of the construction of the human society on the commodification of the nonhuman Other is perhaps most explicitly shown in the moments where an animal dies. In a scene, where a woman is informed by a team of repairmen that her pet cat Horace died, the character is shown to be distraught, but she quickly accepts an offered substitute:

> "Maybe I ought to commission an electric replacement of Horace but without Ed ever knowing; could it be so faithful a reproduction that my husband wouldn't be able to tell? …
> I think I would like to try a false animal, and if it didn't work then you could find us a real cat to replace Horace" . (65, ch,7)

The mourning period for the deceased pets is short if present at all, and is quickly overshadowed by the owner's concern for replacing the damaged property with a replica. As Tony M. Vinci argues, Dick places the animal as "a dual symbol of humanity's essentialized nature as well as its emptiness. This semiotic dynamic creates an exploitative relationship that allows humans to defer the pain of losing animals and replace it with the simulacral experience of being-with the animal" (100). To develop on that thought, it is not only the loss of a singular animal that can be substituted with a replica, but the entire lost ecosystem. People seem to be haunted by the fact that their actions – World War Terminus – had initiated the mass extinction of animals. Therefore, in addition to the aforementioned affirmation of their humanity, this simulacral experience is an act of self-absolution of the collective guilt.

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43 In the setting of the novel "specials" or, pejoratively, "chickenheads" are a group of people who suffer genetic defects caused by radiation, and have diminished mental capacities. They are ostracized by the broader society and barred from migrating from Earth, on account of their disability.

Once again the animals are not treated as autonomous agents, but as instruments affirming a worldview in which one's humanity is an intrinsically positive quality. The discursive regime which strips the nonhuman Other of their agency is also pointed out by Lyotard as an instance of a differend that makes it impossible to present a wrong that has been inflicted upon an animal: "the animal is deprived of the possibility of bearing witness according to the human rules for establishing damages, and as a consequence, every damage is like a wrong and turns it into a victim *ipso facto*" (*Differend* 28). For this reason, the animal is for Lyotard a paradigm of the victim: one who has no language with which to defend itself against the hegemonic narrative, and in the case of *Do Androids Dream,* against its reification. But according to Braidotti, the animal-human interactions based on vulnerability and protectionism, such as those undertaken by the novel's society, are highly problematic from a posthumanist standpoint. She argues that the compensation of the animal suffering that the humans undertake is still "on behalf" on the nonhuman Others, and thus it does not reinstate their autonomy. For Braidotti, "It is at best an ambivalent phenomenon, in that it combines a negative sense of cross-spieces bonding with classical and rather high-minded humanist moral claims" (*The Posthuman* 79). This kind of performative penance of humankind for the environmental collapse under the auspice of caring for the animals serves only their self-interest and reinforces Humanism as the moral authority. For a posthuman inter-subjective connection to be productive, this negativity has to be substituted with positive, vital forces.

Dick imagines a crisis of authenticity looming over humanity in an environment of technological intervention into one's subjective experience, of the emergence of intelligent machines, and of the global extinction of species. All of these aspects of human condition are precisely the areas of inquiry for the critical posthumanism. The

distinctions between the man and animal, the man and the android, a healthy human and a disabled special create a paradigm of identity wherein any perceived divergence from the norm, be it mental or biological is deemed inhuman. In this way, the society presented in the novel encapsulates what Rosi Braidotti calls "the cultural logic of universal Humanism" in which "[s]ubjectivity is equated with consciousness, universal rationality, and self-regulating ethical behaviour, whereas Otherness is defined as its negative and specular counterpart. In so far as difference spells inferiority, it acquires both essentialist and lethal connotations for people who get branded as 'others'" (*The Posthuman* 11). In *Do Androids Dream*, the "normative man" exercises his self-proclaimed superiority in a variety of ways, always to the detriment of those lower in the hierarchy. At best, this involves patronizing, egocentric treatment of animals; at worst, it leads to a total social exclusion (in the case of the specials) or – for the androids – outright persecution.

For scholars such as Braidotti, a remedy for such a crisis lies in a posthuman approach to ethics, which

> promotes an ethical bond of an altogether different sort from the self-interests of an individual subject, as defined along the canonical lines of classical Humanism. A posthuman ethics for a non-unitary subject proposes an enlarged sense of inter-connection between self and others, including the non-human … others, by removing the obstacle of self-centered individualism. (*The Posthuman* 49-50)

The aim for the posthuman is therefore to celebrate the differences between the living elements of its environment (be it biological, technological or cultural), and engage in cooperation, rather than hostility or co-dependence, with the Other. In the following section I aim to showcase that Dick anticipates such a transformative movement for a human subject, accomplished through a connection with nonhuman Other, but crucially a connection on the Other's terms – with the acknowledgment of their phrase regimen.

3.3. Rachael/Pris: an encounter with the android Other

The first indication that the protagonist's humanist social paradigm is no longer a stable determinant of reality appears when Deckard is ordered to find and retire a group of six Nexus-6 androids. In order to better understand their capabilities, he travels to the company building of the models' manufacturer. The Nexus-6 line are creations which apparently "surpassed several classes of human specials in terms of intelligence" (23, ch. 3). It causes him much difficulty to detect that his guide for the manufacturer's plant, Rachael, is in fact one of them. Only the final question of the Voigt-Kampff test betrays that she is a manufactured humanoid. However, even with this knowledge, the protagonist cannot help but develop a fascination with Rachael, which in turn fills him with doubt over the validity of his work. During one of the android retirement missions, he observes that: "So much for the distinction between authentic living humans and humanoid constructs. In that elevator... I rode down with two creatures, one human, the other android … and my feelings were the reverse of those intended. Of those I'm accustomed to feel — am required to feel" (113-114, ch. 12). The influence of an android who is able to affect him in that way seems to counter his internalized perception of the superiority of human emotional capabilities. The matter is complicated by the fact that Rachael looks exactly like one of the androids he is ordered to kill: one named Pris.

This hesitation culminates in a sexual encounter with Rachael. Deckard believes that having sex with the android will help him objectify her in his mind and let him return to his old conduct. Instead, in a moment of intimacy, Rachael confides in him, revealing that she does possess unrealized (and hitherto unphrased) potential for emotional depth: "I have no way to tell. How does it feel to have a child? How does it feel to be born, for that matter? We're not born; we don't grow up; instead of dying from

illness or old age we wear out like ants" (152, ch. 16). Her longing for these experiences is depicted as evidence for a capacity to feel emotions no less authentic than those of a human. Or, more accurately, the distinction between the true and fake stops being applicable – a motif that will be expanded upon in the next section.

However, an even more profound revelation follows immediately after. Rachael discloses that forcing Deckard into a state of uncertainty through an intimate interaction was her plan from the beginning:

> "You look so sad," Rachael said.
> Putting his hand out he touched her cheek.
> "You're not going to be able to hunt androids any longer," she said calmly. "So don't look sad. Please."
> He stared at her.
> "No bounty hunter ever has gone on," Rachael said. "After being with me." (155-156, ch. 17)

In a noir-easque plot twist, what Deckard thought was an expression of sympathy, or sexual attraction, from the android towards him, is revealed as – at least partial – manipulation. For a moment, Rachael becomes a *femme fatale*, weaponizing her seductiveness – or rather a skillful performance of femininity – to psychologically disarm the protagonist. When disclosing her motives for that action, Rachael exhibits a certain compassion directed specifically at one of the fugitive androids, Pris. She confesses to Deckard:

> "You know what I have? Toward this Pris android? "
> "Empathy," he said.
> "Something like that. Identification; there goes I. My god; maybe that's what'll happen. In the confusion you'll retire me, not her. ... never felt this way before. We are machines, stamped out like bottle caps. It's an illusion that I — I — personally — really exist; I'm just representative of a type." (149, ch. 16)

This utterance may be indicative of an existential crisis born out of a realization of a perceived disposability for a self-conscious being. However, it is also an effect of a positive social bond: not between Deckard and Rachael, but between two androids of the same model: Rachael and Pris. In that moment Rachael acts upon the feeling of recognition of the self in another, in other words: empathy, or more specifically,

"something like [empathy]." The uncertainty in that utterance stems from the incompatibility of that experience not with the feeling of compassion for another, but with the socially dominant, anthropocentric phrasing of the term. As Vinci articulates the issue:

> Despite the fact that, according to the humans, she does not know what empathy as such feels like, she is resigned to articulate this strange, impossible sentence. Rachael's struggle to express herself in the language of a dominant culture that does not legitimize her status as a person allows her what most human characters avoid; the possibility of a non-essentialized existence. (98)

In other words, Rachael traverses across the differend between the discourses and appropriates the hegemonic linguistic code to affirm her subjectivity. She establishes a new mode of discourse by appropriating a phrase – "empathy" – from the dominant discourse into a hitherto linguistically unexpressed subjective perspective.

Rachael breaks the silence imposed onto the androids by the human society, and crucially, she finds a witness to her phrase: Deckard. Thus, she empowers her community by making the protagonist unable to ignore the violence inherent in his social order. Through the intimate encounter he is forced to internalize the meaning of her phrasing, based in intuitive embodied feeling, and therefore can no longer reconcile his own experience of the world with the logic of the anthropocentric regimen. His hitherto followed normative phrase "the androids are incapable of feeling" is contrasted with his personal emotional investment with an android. The linkage of those events cannot be encompassed within the rules of the hegemonic discourse. Therefore a new subjective frame needs to emerge, for, as Lyotard argues:

> To give differend its due is to institute new addressees, new addressors, new significations, and new referents in order for the wrong to find an expression and for the plaintiff to cease being a victim. This requires new rules for the formation and linking of phrases. (*Differend* 13)

Turning to the posthuman perspective may generate those new subject configurations and resolve that crisis of this particular differend. Under the old discursive regimen, the

animals and androids alike are rendered voiceless: the (lack of) value of their subjectivity and agency is decided for them. For Lyotard, silencing the testimony of both the victim and the witness makes for the "perfect crime" (8). He asserts that "in the *differend,* something 'asks' to be put into phrases, and suffers from the wrong of not being able to be put into phrases right away" (13). *Do Androids Dream's* narrative showcases how this crime can be inflicted not only upon people but also on nonhuman actants. By establishing the very narrow definition of empathy as the sole marker of meaningful existence, the human society creates a differend that delegitimizes other possible configurations of life and thus silences them. The human exceptionalism is therefore accomplished at the price of suffering of the animal and technological Others.

Moreover, Rachael and Pris share a body and this in itself generates a bond between them, but the connection between the two androids extends beyond the physical sameness. Rachael takes deliberate action – the seduction of Deckard – in order to save the other's life. By virtue of their shared or reproduced embodiment, the androids engage in a mode comparable to that of Haraway's cyborg. For her "bodies are maps of power and identity"[44] and the cyborg body especially "does not seek unitary identity [nor does it] generate antagonistic dualisms without end" ("A Cyborg Manifesto" 83). For the relationship between Rachael and Pris, it means that their boundaries as unitary subjects become permeable. Thanks to the cybernetic, replicated body there is a co-mingling or extension of identities from one to the other. It is not to say that the two androids are exchangeable, but that they constitute two nodes in the same embodied system.

The same non-unitary quality of posthuman embodiment is also realized in Rachael's relationship with Deckard, although in a different way. For Haraway's

44 This idea will be the focus of the chapter on *A Scanner Darkly*, further in this dissertation.

cyborg, any aspect of the embodiment, biological or mechanical, may be enacted for pleasure, utility, or identity formation with disregard to the patriarchal, humanistic taboos. Therefore, the gender identity is also more dynamic, as it is not constrained by the socially constructed limits placed on the body by the paradigm which essentializes gender as equal to biological sex. Androids and cyborgs alike are technological creatures, removed from any genealogical origin, and subsequently divorced from this naturalistic prerogative of reproduction. As Haraway stresses, "Up till now … female embodiment seemed to be given, organic, necessary; [it] seemed to mean skill in mothering and its metaphoric extensions … Cyborgs might consider more seriously the partial, fluid, sometimes aspect of sex and sexual embodiment" (83). When she seduces Deckard and sleeps with him, Rachael engages in a momentary performance of femininity without the burden of the patriarchal notions attached to it. N. Katherine Hayles already notices *Do Androids Dream's* involvement with gender politics through the figure of an android, claiming that "Dick … understands that cybernetics radically destabilizes the ontological foundations of what counts as human. The gender politics he writes into his novels illustrate the potent connections between cybernetics and contemporary understandings of race, gender, and sexuality" (*How We Became Posthuman* 24). However, Hayles sees in Deckard's involvement with Rachael, and other such relationships in Dick's novels, a dynamic in which the male protagonist "reacts to the androidism in her personality by experiencing a radical instability in the boundaries that define him and his world" (162). While I agree with reading the act as the inciting point of Deckard's ontological paradigm shift, I also stress the deliberateness and fluidity of the android's own transformations.

The androids, like the artificial animals, are posthuman mergers of material life and cybernetic culture. The eponymous electric sheep is akin to Dolly, the first cloned

mammal, invoked by Braidotti as a nature-cultural icon of the posthuman condition, representing "heterogeneous mix of organism and machine … simultaneously orphan and mother of her/itself" (*The Posthuman* 74). Because of being cloned, rather than conceived sexually, Dolly was free of the burden of "natural order," thus exposing its arbitrariness as well as the arbitrariness of conventions – of gender, species, originality – that stem from thereof. Likewise, the androids – anthropomorphic or otherwise – may be read as representing an emancipatory potential of deconstructing humanism. Without natural parents, their familiar structures form around mutual benefit (as an autopoietic system), rather than oedipal codependency. As such, they embody the origin-less quality of Haraway's cyborg, who

> does not dream of a community on the model of the organic family, this time without the oedipal project. The cyborg would not recognize the Garden of Eden. ... [Cyborgs] are wary of holism, but needy for connection – they seem to have a natural feel for united front politics, but without the vanguard party ("A Cyborg Manifesto" 71).

Dick's androids' and Haraway's cyborgs' bodies alike are divorced from reproductive purposes that constrain gender identity. In lieu of that they form relationships free of patriarchal or naturalistic hierarchies. Rachael's oscillation between the female and machine identities is not a passive quality. Instead, due to her cyborg embodiment, for Rachael the posthuman hybridity itself is a praxis. By virtue of this transverse identity, the android strategically employs gender as practice deconstructing the rigid discourse of her society. Rachael accomplishes it with great success with regards to Deckard, seeding in him doubt and confusion about the foundations of his ethics, as afterwards he finds himself unsure of the morality of his profession. Despite being ostensibly detrimental to Deckard's stability – and the ability to continue his work – the intimate, physical encounter connects him to the cyborg Other. He cannot neatly place this act as an expression of the male/female or human/machine dualities.

Therefore, Deckard is forced to confront the artificiality of those distinctions and the hegemonic discourse that bred them. The psychological effect – the inability to kill androids – is the result of this confusion of boundaries and identities. Braidotti posits that a subject under such circumstances is "shot through with relational linkages of the contaminating/viral kind which inter-connect it to a variety of others, starting from the environmental or eco-other and include the technological apparatus" (*The Posthuman* 193). All at once, Deckard becomes immersed into the network of embodied posthuman entities. Rachael enacts this virality through a sexual, therefore embodied closeness between the man and the female/machine-Other, which is divorced from reproductive function. What is left is the force of life as *zoe*: understood by Braidotti as a positive and transformative "life itself as a relentlessly generative force including and going beyond death" (121) in opposition to Gorgio Agamben's *zoe* as a predominately negative result of the radical intervention of biopower[45]. It is a type of material life that is not contained within any given subject or in the oedipal bonds[46], but instead it permeates the entirety of living matter. *Zoe* could be therefore conceptualized as the medium in which the living system performs its autopoiesis: determining and modifying the organization of their elements to achieve the benefit of sustainability in spite of the finitude (death) of individual nodes thereof. This perspective on life shifts one's efforts from ego-driven

45 Braidotti points that Agamben "defines 'Life/*zoe*' [is] the result of the lethal intervention of sovereign power onto the embodied subject, who is reduced to 'bare life', that is to say a non-human status of extreme vulnerability bordering on extinction" (*The Posthuman* 120). She critiques Agamben's negative depiction of *zoe* as indicative of "over-emphasis on the horizons of mortality and perishability … characteristic of the 'forensic turn' in contemporary social and cultural theory, haunted by the spectre of extinction and by the limitations of the project of western modernity. I find the over-emphasis on death as the basic term of reference inadequate to the vital politics of our era" (121). She continues to argue that the focus on death as the limit of life is only applicable to the narcissism of an individual human subject. Instead, her framework of *zoe* reconceptualizes death as an intrinsic part of the generative force of life: "proximity to death is a close and intimate friendship that calls for endurance, in the double sense of temporal duration or continuity and spatial suffering or sustainability" (132). In other words, the awareness of mortality of an individual allows the subject to form a more ethical and compassionate connection to the autopoietic system of living matter.

46 Braidotti considers Deleuzoguattarian concept of body-without-organs as one such configuration. This figure will be scrutinized more in-depth in the chapter on *A Scanner Darkly.*

self-preservation, to forming sustainable, vital relationships, beneficial to the entire network, as is the case when Rachael acts upon her compassion towards Pris, despite the danger to her safety inherent in her ruse.

Crucially, life as *zoe* is outside of the dialectics which put the human cognition as the central arbiter of what counts as a subject[47]. Therefore, what happens during the encounter between Rachael and Deckard is a formation of a new phrase regimen, which thus far went unexpressed. This regimen, articulated through embodiment is, as Braidotti continues: "impersonal and inhuman in the monstrous, animal sense of radical alterity: *zoe* in all its powers … *Zoe* is always too much for the specific slab of enfleshed existence that constitute single subjects" (*The Posthuman* 131). In other words, it extends beyond the perceptive scope of a rational individual. This is why Deckard's paradigm is destabilized in a moment of a physical and emotional openness between himself and the Other. The posthuman perspective, hitherto excluded from discourse, can be only expressed, and subsequently internalized by the protagonist through an inter-subjective, embodied network[48].

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47 Elsewhere, she comments: "*Zoe* stands for the mindless vitality of Life carrying on independently of and regardless of rational control. This is the dubious privilege attributed to the non-humans and to all the 'others' of Man, whereas *bios* refers to the specific social nexus of humans" (*Transpositions* 37). Braidotti aligns here with Lyotard's argument on the animal voices: *zoe* is the sphere of life that does not have a discursive capacity under the phrase regimen of Humanism.

48 in what Haraway would (in her later works) describe as *sympoiesis* (making-with or becoming-with) rather than autopoiesis; a recognition that "earthlings are *never alone*. That is the radical implication of sympoiesis. Sympoiesis is a word proper to complex, dynamic, responsive, situated, historical systems" (*Staying with the Trouble* 58). She utilizes the term to expand upon the posthumanist notion of autopoiesis and stress the interdependent, symbiotic relations of living and material systems which result in surprising, creative outcomes and increased complexity of the system. Similarly to Luhmann's social autopoiesis mentioned in the previous chapter, the notion expands the systems theory beyond individual entities, but while he was interested in human actors in a society, Haraway's systems extend to nonhuman animals and cyborgs in a material framework. As Vinci accurately notices, the narrative of *Do Androids Dream* "obliterates this power structure's central principle—i.e., 'the human.' Dick recasts subjectivity as a dynamic mode of *becoming-with* others that lacks clear demarcations of categories or boundaries, relegating the human as little more than a trace that haunts these new trans-subjects"(102, emphasis mine). This "haunting" is evident in the language that Rachael uses: still relating her sense of companionship to other androids through the concept of "empathy" hitherto appropriated by their oppressors.

However, to complicate the matter of nonhuman expressions of empathy, later in the novel the reader discovers that the androids – and Rachael especially – do not extend the same kinship towards the animals. The female android, ostensibly as an act of revenge against Deckard's retiring of her fellow replicants, kills the protagonist's treasured Nubian goat – a live animal that he bought with the bounty money in the course of the story. It may be the case that the act symbolizes her resentment of a broader societal paradigm, in which one category of life is valued over another. As suggested by Hayles, Rachael's action "hints at the ironic fact that humans revere animal life but feel free to kill intelligent android life" (*How We Became Posthuman* 173). But if that is the case, then Rachael's response is fatally myopic, and thus compounding the irony: instead of rejecting the athropo- and bio-centric hierarchies, she wants to reverse them, without addressing their inherent violence. Additionally, at one point, the group of androids that Deckard is searching for, vivisect a spider out of curiosity, seemingly without registering the creature's suffering. With these violent actions, the author demonstrates a possible shortcoming of the reflexive system that constitutes the androids' cooperation: for Dick, even the human error identified by Pettman is not uniquely human.

What is more, at least some of the androids have internalized the hegemonic discourse in their attempts to blend in, like Luba Luft who states: "Ever since I got here from Mars, my life has consisted of imitating the human … Imitating, as far as I'm concerned, a superior life form" (106, ch.12). In short, the androids present an alternative to the human mode of cooperating as a social system, but it is not yet sufficient to completely cast aside the hierarchies of humanism. Something more is needed, some other transgression of a regimen's boundaries, to achieve the kind of transversal, sustainable mode of subjectivity that would constitute the posthuman. As I

shall argue, it is possible that the character who is the closest to finding that mode in the course of the narrative is Deckard himself, but only after the hitherto analyzed encounters with the Other destroy the foundations of his humanist perspective.

3.3. Posthuman transformation coded as spiritual revelation

At the point of the novel where his worldview is shaken by Rachael, Deckard himself begins to doubt his humanity, as another Nexus-6, Luba Luft, suggested the possibility that the protagonist could be an android with manufactured memories:

> "An android," he said, "doesn't care what happens to any other android. That's one of the indications we look for."
> "Then," Miss Luft said, "you must be an android."
> That stopped him; he stared at her.
> "Because," she continued, "Your job is to kill them, isn't it?…"
> "But I'm not an android."
> "This test you want to give me." Her voice, now, had begun to return. "Have you taken it?"
> "Yes." He nodded. "A long, long time ago; when I first started with the department."
> "Maybe that's a false memory. Don't androids sometimes go around with false memories?" (80-81, ch. 9)

The uncertainty about his own cognition, in combination with the emotionally charged sexual encounter with Rachael, presents him, and the reader, with a complex query: if it is possible for an android to simulate consciousness so accurately that the human recipient cannot identify its artificiality, then does the distinction between the human and the artificial emotion exist at all? For the scholars of posthumanism, such as Robert Pepperell the answer is “no,” or more specifically, “it makes no difference.” He argues that for any sufficiently complex artificial intelligence, the question of subjectivity is indeterminable, since we can only ever judge it based on the outward interactions. Whatever motives and mechanisms generate those actions, they are unobservable[49],

49 Analogically to Graham Harman’s elusive “real object” considered in Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

regardless if they are made by a human or by a sophisticated computer[50]. Subsequently, Pepperell puts forward the following:

> It does not matter whether some object which I believe to be enjoying meaning actually is enjoying it or not. For as long as the appearance is maintained, as far as I am concerned, the object *is* enjoying a sense of meaning. In truth, there is no way of objectively verifying whether it has a sense of meaning, other than the impression it gives me. (150)

In his narrative, Dick seems to derive a similar conclusion, because despite society's reliance on the Voigt-Kampff test, we are shown that it is not possible to determine the essence behind one's affective states from a limited individual perspective. As Deckard's questioning of his own humanity shows, we have a limited grasp on the pre-conscious origins of our own thoughts and motives. And even if emotions are produced artificially – through the Penfield mood organ – the human characters experience them no differently than those evoked organically. Once someone is made aware of this perceptual gap, they can either fall into a solipsistic uncertainty about the "authenticity" of any interaction, or, like Pepperell, attempt to realign their perspective on reality so that their inter-subjective relations are not hierarchized by such essentialist notions. As I shall attempt to demonstrate, the latter option is what Deckard sets out to accomplish in the final chapters of the novel.

After his affair with Rachael, Deckard continues his investigation to find the fugitive Nexus-6 androids, however, it is still unsure whether he will be able to execute them in the midst of his crisis. Serendipitously, the decision is made for him, as the remaining androids, hiding in a dilapidated apartment of a special, John Isidore, ambush the protagonist. In the climactic scene, the bounty hunter kills the androids while avoiding their attack, warned beforehand by a supernatural or hallucinated vision of the

50 Pepperell presents this position as a counter to John Searle's "Chinese room" thought experiment, which is supposed to illustrate that no machine can develop subjectivity, since any output interaction is the result of an algorithmic processing of the input without the understanding of its meaning beyond syntax. Pepperell considers the opposite: since the human cognition is a result of material and biological processes, then we should be open to the possibility that artificial consciousness may similarly emerge from analogous technological processes.

religious figure: Wilbur Mercer. The experience seems to momentarily confirm to Deckard the authenticity of his faith. However, just as the event takes place, a mass-media personality, Buster friendly, presents evidence that Mercerism is fake, and its spiritual guru is an old Hollywood actor, whose martyrdom (co-experienced by humanity through the empathy boxes) was filmed in a studio. It is this revelation that, when compounded with his already conflicted feelings on the androids and his own ontological uncertainty, collapses Deckard's perception of the real/artificial duality.

To clear his head, the protagonist travels to a secluded spot in the desert. There Deckard experiences profound cognitive dissonance, as he finds himself detached from the regimen of ethics with which he used to justify his actions and beliefs. He thinks to himself: “what I’ve done… that’s become alien to me. In fact everything about me has become unnatural; I’ve become an unnatural self” (182, ch. 21). At the height of uncertainty, he starts climbing a hill, where he is subject to a recreation of Mercer’s martyrdom, available to other believers only through the empathy boxes’ simulation: “At that moment the first rock – and it was not rubber or soft foam plastic – struck him in the inguinal region. And the pain, the first knowledge of absolute isolation and suffering, touched him throughout in its undisguised actual form” (183, ch.21). Knowing that the object of his faith – Wilbur Mercer – is artificial, and feeling artificial, or “unnatural” himself, he nevertheless experiences the suffering and isolation of the hillside climb. It could be argued that in that moment he internalizes empathy towards Mercer as phrased by Rachael towards Pris: the recognition of self in another, unmediated by normative social constructs. Therefore, it is an immanent and open mode of connection that may establish a connective recognition not only between a man and his god, but also between the human and the nonhuman Other. As Deckard proclaims after his vision: “I'm Wilbur Mercer; I've permanently fused with him,” and later:

"Mercer isn't a fake… Unless reality is a fake" (186, ch. 21). The formulation of this belief can signify a final shift of the protagonist's politics.

Throughout the novel, Deckard is continuously put in the role of a deciding party (or an executioner of the hegemonic discourse's rule) of a conflict between two classes of life: the anthropocentric, individualized *bios* of the human society, and the silenced, nonhuman *zoe*. He is positioned as the Lyotardian judge, who may, as Simon Maltas describes it, "either ignore the differend between the two parties and continue to work within the legal genre … or respond to their differend and begin to search for new means of reaching a just resolution to their dispute" (67). When he experiences this collapse of identity and rebuilds it as a merger with another subject (the "permanent fusion"), Deckard transforms the phrasing of life, from individual and human, to transversal and dynamic – similar to Rachael's perspective which connected her to Pris. Moreover, in the second declaration, Deckard affirms the authenticity of Mercer, despite knowing that he had been played by an actor. This utterance may demonstrate that through the spiritual union with Mercer he expands his epistemological apparatus to accommodate the new perspective in which the real/artificial duality is no longer an applicable taxonomy of life. As Jill Galvan concludes in her analysis of the scene:

> the event takes place in a wasteland desert, miles away from the spurious empathy box, in a location where Rick may disavow the official empathy that has only abased and divided the human collective … as it refers to his own reconception of reality, Rick's statement is the most necessary of truths: the life of the planet depends upon Wilbur Mercer, as the preserver of a nonpartisan and all-englobing compassion. (427)

Thanks to the spiritual conceptualization of Mercer as a figure which encompasses both the "real" and "the artificial," Dick's protagonist transitions into the posthuman perspective, where he sees a way to participate in inter-subjectivity unbound by social norms and deprived of the notion of a singular, exceptional human *self*.

We see evidence of this new outlook immediately after Deckard's vision in the desert. While he contemplates his spiritual revelation, the protagonist notices a toad among the desert stones. He attributes the appearance of the animal – thought to be extinct – to Mercer, and brings it home with him, assuming the amphibian to be a sign of the supernatural. His enthusiasm is short-lived, as his wife discovers a control panel hidden on its body, which confirms that the animal is indeed an electronic simulacrum. Initially, the protagonist is disappointed, however, in an utterance demonstrating his gradual shift away from the real/artificial duality and a transformation of his approach to the technological Other, he decides: "it doesn't matter. The electric things have their lives, too. Paltry as those lives are" (191, ch. 22). Instead of attempting to externalize a semblance of the anthropocentric empathy towards a creature in order to conform to the social norms, he accepts it as it is. It is not yet a fully-fledged posthuman position but, as Vinci describes it: "[Deckard takes] the first tentative steps toward a posthuman ethics of becoming-with the android and the animal within a reality-space that is both multivalent and fluid" (102).

I argue that Deckard's existential crisis culminating in the quasi-religious revelation of becoming Mercer and the subsequent encounter with the toad brings forth, under the guise of a mystic experience, two interlocking aspects of a posthuman perspective which the protagonist has to internalize in order to complete his transformation. First, it affirms within him the collapse of the real/artificial taxonomy of life. Previously, the relationship with Rachael – intimate intertwining of biological and mechanical embodied subjects – has laid the foundation for the protagonist's spiritual envisioning of this new perspective through his fusion with the figure of Mercer. Secondly, it helps him overcome the negative vulnerability that hitherto defined his approach towards the nonhuman others: the fear of individual death and entropy.

For writer Kim Stanley Robinson, the breakdowns of reality experienced by the various protagonists of Dick's novels "reveal to [them] the reality of the law of entropy, the gradual falling apart of all form." He continues to argue that "[m]uch of our cultural activity could be called form building, and often is meant to disguise the effects of entropy" (36). Indeed, as we have seen throughout this chapter, Deckard's society established a code of values and prescribed behaviors as a collective self-deception against the crises of their reality: the man-made near extinction of life on Earth, and the threat to human exceptionalism embodied in intelligent machines. However, whereas Robinson reads this entropy as "Dick's tragic vision" (37) which is insurmountable and futile to struggle against, I argue that to characters such as Deckard[51], the reality breakdown brings different conclusions. As the protagonist retrieves the toad from the sand, he ponders: "So this is what Mercer sees… Life which we can no longer distinguish; life carefully buried up to its forehead in the carcass of a dead world. In every cinder of the universe Mercer probably perceives inconspicuous life" (188, ch.22). When Deckard comes out of the desolate landscape – named "tomb-world" in the Mercerian theology – with the toad, we can read it as him joining the vital assemblage of life beyond self-preservation. Critic Sherryl Vint argues that in that moment Deckard escapes the dualistic cognition split of human/android "only through embracing animal being, rejecting the speciesist discourse that attempts to construct hierarchies and divisions" (117). Indeed, even when the toad turns out to be electric, this newly found sentiment stays with him. Therefore, it can be argued that the protagonist's definition of life expands to encompass different organizations of matter – biological and cybernetic, whether or not they are seen as such within the anthropocentric regimen.

51 And Ella Runciter in *Ubik*, to whom I shall return in the next chapter.

Thus, Dick veils in language of spirituality some of the same ideas that guide Braidotti's arguments for the formation of sustainable modes of posthuman subjectivity. She defines sustainability as "a regrounding of the subject in a materially embedded sense of responsibility and ethical accountability for the environments she or he inhabits. What is at stake is the very possibility of the future" (*Transpositions* 137). Braidotti's primary concern here is eco-philosophical, in that such a subject strives for upholding the continuity of their environment, while at the same time accommodating the transformations thereof. However, this idea can be transposed onto the technological landscape of nature-culture continuum (as Braidotti does in *The Posthuman*), in which case Deckard initiates, at a personal level, a possibility of cooperation between human and nonhuman systems. Confronted with the entropy evoked by the desert environment, he sees in his encounter with an electric toad and his disillusionment with the work of a bounty hunter a way to reevaluate his impact on the world. At the beginning of the novel, Deckard is a defender of the anthropocentric paradigm: upholding the binary distinction between the natural and the artificial, as evidenced both by his dedication to work, as well as his desire for a live animal. By the end, he accepts the lives of electric animals and denounces his role of a bounty hunter. Therefore, it can be argued that in the final chapters Deckard abandons his role as a destructive force upholding the paradigm of humanism and finds a sustainable mode of subjectivity, as proposed by Braidotti.

Mercerism and its empathy boxes, not unlike the previously discussed constructions of spirituality – *I Ching* and Palmer Eldritch – refuse to be easily classified as either a positive or a negative posthuman force in *Do Androids Dream's* narrative. On the one hand, they serve as technologies and figures facilitating emotional connection between people. On the other hand, throughout most of the novel, with the

exception of the final revelation presented to Deckard, the cult of Mercer is exclusive to the privileged humans, in its focus on an anthropocentric interpretation of empathy. As Hayles rightfully points out, the dogmatic stipulation of owning an animal that Mercerism requests from its followers establishes a Puritan-esque "system in which the financially privileged merge seamlessly with the religiously sanctified" (*How We Became Posthuman* 175). Therefore, when seen as a systematized religion, the Merceric cult serves to reinforce and create an illusion of a deeper meaning for the commodified use of animals as markers of human exceptionalism. Those who cannot display – or adequately perform – the normative version of empathetic behavior are subsequently rejected from Mercer's unifying communion.

Elana Gomel posits that in the narrative schemata of science fiction religion can be presented as "a moving expression of the human hunger for the totally Other" (*Alien Encounters* 164) in a guise of God. Such a figure "defines the limit of the human and beckons us to overstep it through self-transformation … Paradoxically, if religion is what makes us human, it also provides us with a way to transcend humanity" (164). Mercerism seems to perfectly encapsulate this paradox. On one hand, its dogma strictly establishes and enforces the supposed qualities of the human: empathy towards the "lesser" beings and willingness to share one's affective states in a communion with others. On the other, in Deckard's case at least, the religious experiences catalyzes a shift of the subject position in relation to the nonhuman and technological Other.

To reconcile these contradictory qualities and account for the ambiguous depiction of the religion, one may consider Mercerism as a subject's guiding framework for organizing themselves in the living assemblage of their world. The posthuman potential of this spiritual belief lies in its ability to be transformed or extended beyond dogma. Deckard initiates one such transformation as a way to reconceptualize his

outlook on the artificial beings populating his world. His religion becomes a hermeneutic tool that facilitates the interpretation of one's position among human and nonhuman Others, but that process is still based on whatever phrases – to return to Lyotard's terminology – or preconceptions they bring with them. This is why, for those convinced of human exceptionalism, the Merceric "empathy" means patronizing the animals; for specials such as Isidore, it becomes a way of connecting to those he considers better[52], more human than himself; and, finally, for Deckard, Mercer himself appears to guide him from the collapse of his old worldview into the formulation of a new one.

3.4. Conclusions

In the posthuman ethics, as Braidotti contends, "the point now is to move towards a new mode of relation; animals are no longer the signifying system that props up the humans' self-projections and moral aspirations" (*The Posthuman* 70). Therefore, to move past the calcified order of Humanism, the affectation of care towards nonhuman Others has to give way to a more egalitarian co-existence that acknowledges them as agents in a shared environment. This is what would constitute actual empathy, to which the novel's human characters claim their devotion. Elsewhere, Braidotti describes this practice as "a cognitive brand of empathy, or intense affinity: it is the capacity for compassion, which combines the power of understanding with the force to endure in sympathy with … the planet and civilization as a whole" ("All Too Human" 205). Crucially, it is an extra-personal and affirmative approach to ethics, in which the subject has to abandon the

52 As critic Tony Vinci notices about J.R. Isidore, the only named special in the novel, who harbors the fugitive androids: "While J.R. may be said to be undone by both animals and androids, his attachment to anthropocentric humanism proves too strong for him to let go of the conceptual framework of the human" (102).

ego-driven self from the interaction with another as a form of asceticism. Thus "s/he transcends negativity, thereby generating and making room for more affirmative forces" (206). In *Do Androids Dream* those negative forms of empathy are illustrated by the pity and protectionism aimed towards the animals by the human society. Deckard actualizes the affirmative force of empathy, after working through his crisis of the ego, when he encounters the toad.

Jill Galvan discusses the final chapter of *Do Androids Dream* as a depiction of "an awakening of the posthuman subject" (414) in Rick Deckard, and his recognition of the changing parameters of what can be considered life in a world of intelligent machines. Deckard rejects the hierarchical boundaries between himself and the Other (both the androids and electric animals), if only after a violent enforcement of that hierarchy. In Galvan's opinion, the semantic shift in the meaning of empathy that has been ongoing throughout the narrative is crucial for this transformation:

> it is this notion of compassion – or empathy – that we should have in mind when we attempt to interpret Rick's changing perspectives on his mechanical environment. Not until he has forfeited a more doctrinal definition of empathy … can Rick countenance the possibility of a posthuman community, one in which humans and androids coexist and cooriginate. (426)

I would not go so far as to declare Deckard an ally of the androids. After all, even after his affair with Rachael, he ends up retiring the rogue group, albeit in self-defense. However, in the final chapter of the novel, the protagonist finally allows himself an openness to acknowledge and coexist with nonhuman forms of subjectivity. The reader is left without a concrete answer, whether this individual transformation is indicative of a prospective change of the understanding of empathy for the rest of his society. Nevertheless, the ending seems hopeful: through a change effected in his spiritual sphere, the protagonist acknowledges the validity of all life and its power to counteract the entropy or "the tomb world"; the posthuman autopoietic living matter does not fear

extinction, because no individual death invalidates the positive impact that the element had upon the system to that point.

Through these outcomes, Dick asserts that spirituality is at its most beneficial, not when seen as a strict religious dogma, but as a way of making sense of those aspects and living agencies in the world that cannot be adequately encompassed by an anthropocentric, individual perspective. Once again, just as it is the case with the vibrant agency of *I Ching* in *High Castle* and the shortcomings of Can-D as a way of communing with a higher power, in *Do Androids Dream* we see the representation of belief as a way for a human to connect to something larger than themselves. But for these perceptual shifts to be productive, one has to be open and receptive to alternative modes of subjectivity beyond human. Or, as Best and Kellner summarize Lyotard's message in *The Differend*: "One must judge without universal prescriptives, one should … listen for the silences that betoken differends; then one should seek to allow the mute voices to speak and to articulate the principles or positions that oppose the majority discourses" (167). Dick's characters in *Do Androids Dream* seem to strive for just such a goal. In a society which systematically and violently silences the voices of the Other, the affirmation of nonhuman subjectivity, of its capacity to feel and to live outside of the bounds of the hegemonic perspective, articulated by Rachael and later Deckard, is the important first step towards shifting the discourse and reclaiming those voices.

4. Negotiating subjectivity within simulation: the posthuman in *Ubik*

4.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I presented the character of Rick Deckard in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* as an instance of a human who undergoes a radical epistemological shift which allows him to enter a new mode of cohabitation with the technological and nonhuman Others. Here, I will attempt to determine if for Dick a similar transformation is possible in a completely virtual environment. *Ubik*'s (1969) protagonist, stuck in a simulated reality and trying to make sense of it, is at one point described as "an ineffectual moth, fluttering at the windowpane of reality, dimly seeing it from outside" (124, ch. 10). This metaphor accurately encapsulates one of the struggles central to Dick's works from that period, discernible both in the previously analyzed *The Three Stigmata* and *Do Androids Dream,* the struggle that he continues to develop in *Ubik*: to glimpse, or establish, a reality, always occluded by some seemingly insurmountable barrier, and sometimes revealed to be yet another illusion. The question then becomes: what are the means of crossing this boundary? The answer may lie in the creation of a new mode of subjectivity. If the *human* is a moth unable to reach a

perspective capable of perceiving a reality beyond simulacral constructs, then possibly a *posthuman* can – not a being that has abandoned humanity, but one that is able to extend themselves onto the vital, inter-subjective materiality, thus gaining more diverse perspectives.

N. Katherine Hayles in assessing the potential of Dick's novels to illustrate the involvement of cybernetics in the posthuman discourse notices in his oeuvre the themes of "an idiosyncratic connection between entropy and schizophrenic delusion, and a persistent suspicion that the objects surrounding us – and indeed reality itself – are fakes" (*How We Became Posthuman* 161). Previously, we have seen a glimpse of this idea in *The Man in the High Castle*, when the character of Juliana Frink considered if the world she lives in may be somehow fake. In *Ubik* the scrutinizing of the authentic/fake taxonomy becomes an important element throughout the novel's narrative; however, as I will argue, the authenticity of objects or reality is not the ultimate point of investigation in *Ubik*. Instead, it sets the stage for a broader question of what, if any, subjectivity may arise in this virtual world of commodified objects.

In this chapter, I embark on a posthumanist reading of Dick's *Ubik*, supplemented with Jean Baudrillard's works and models of posthuman subjectivity outlined by posthumanist thinkers such as Braidotti, Hayles, and Lykke. These frameworks help establish the mechanisms of the world imagined by Dick, as well as interrogate the presence and the characteristics of subjectivities which may arise in such a configuration. I will be referring to the idea of hyperreality outlined by Baudrillard in analyzing the construction of the simulation presented in the novel, as it may guide the analysis towards uncovering the circumstances facilitating the emergence of posthuman subjects in *Ubik.* It may be the case that in reading Dick's *Ubik* as a search for a posthuman subjectivity in a Baudrillardian simulation, one may find a representation of

a discourse poised between postmodernism and posthumanism. I will attempt to showcase that the novel's narrative, by employing a vital, materialist perspective within a virtual world formulates a posthuman subject against the backdrop of what might be described as hyperreality. Ultimately, I contend that Dick's novel depicts the emergence of sustainable modes of subjectivity in a process which is not so much obstructed, but, indeed, facilitated by the context of hyperreality.

The first step of the analysis will concern the virtual world experienced by the protagonist, Joe Chip. Certain characteristics of this reality are revealed in his interactions with the objects within it (most notably, the eponymous substance called Ubik). Moreover, his own transformation caused by the agents influencing his perception may reveal the shifting modes of subjectivity emerging from the virtual reality of the novel.

Following this line of inquiry, a closer attention will be given to the objects themselves, as experienced by Joe Chip. Their status as material or real is interrogated throughout the novel's narrative, and, as I will argue, they reveal themselves as a part of a broader phenomenon of simulation comparable to Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality. On this basis, I will try to identify modes of posthuman subjectivity emerging in this setting.

The final focus of my analysis will involve juxtaposing two other characters in *Ubik*, Ella Runciter and Jory Miller, in a posthumanist framework. They represent consciousnesses which attempt to establish new modes of subjectivity, unbound by the self-perpetuating artifice of the simulation. By comparing their enterprises and failure or success thereof, I hope to demonstrate how they may serve as attempts at constructing posthuman subjectivity represented in Dick's work.

4.2. Terms

a) Baudrillard's subject in hyperreality

From his earliest publications, Baudrillard's focus of inquiry lies in the critical analysis of capitalism. One of his central theses argues that Marx misattributes the power of capital to production. Baudrillard, in opposition, argues that it is consumption instead. The capital is not generated by utility of the product or the labor, but by "sign value" – a complex network of arbitrary social and political constructs inscribed onto the commodified objects that create an illusion of value. In turn, through a kind of semantic feedback loop, these commodities generate the desire and thus a consumer. In a perversion of Kantian principles, people have become the means for the goal of consumption. Baudrillard in *The System of Objects* describes the process in a theatrical metaphor: "objects are no longer surrounded by the theatre of gesture in which they are used to be simply the various roles; instead their emphatic goal-directedness has very nearly turned them into the actors in a global process in which *man* is merely the role, or the spectator" (56). Thus, Baudrillard positions the human subject as subordinate to the objects – products of a commodified world. People are seduced and manipulated by their manufactured value in a constructed web of meanings assigned to them. In this process "the individual is nothing but the subject thought in economic terms, rethought, simplified and abstracted by the economy" (*For a Critique...* 133). The system of objects signified by commodification reduces the subject itself to a sign.

In his later works, and especially in *Simulation and Simulacra,* Baudrillard extends this process of signification to the whole of reality. In the essay "Simulacra and Science Fiction" he positions it as the third order simulacra, or "simulation simulacra: based on information, the model, cybernetic play. Their aim is maximum operationality, hyperreality, total control" (309). In this scenario, the whole of reality experienced by

the subject and any object within it are saturated with the *sign value.* The network of signs can no longer refer to any materiality along its chain, but only to previous signs. The signs become self-referential and self-generating. The subject which becomes enveloped in this system experiences what Baudrillard calls *hyperreality*. In these circumstances, Baudrillard sees the futility of any attempts at obtaining knowledge or discerning reality. An objective material reality and freedom from the commodity are untraceable from the perspective of a human subject navigating through the network of signs.

Through the lenses of Baudrillard's understanding of hyperreality, a parallel can be drawn between his ontological model and the world depicted by Dick in *Ubik.* A significant portion of the novel takes place in a technologically induced virtual reality experienced by the inhabitants of the cold-pacs – machines designed to prolong the brain functions of the recently deceased. However, these individuals, upon their revitalization do not retain the awareness of the nature of their situation. They have to gradually come to the realization that what they perceive is not the physical reality but a replicated substitute, organized as a continuous, self-perpetuating chain of references and signs. As such, the world depicted in the novel is comparable to the idea of simulation and, as I will be arguing further, it bears the characteristics of Baudrillardian hyperreality.

In fact, Baudrillard himself mentions Dick's works from a critical standpoint, commenting that "perhaps science fiction from the cybernetic and hyperreal era can only exhaust itself in its artificial resurrection of 'historical' worlds, can only try to reconstruct in vitro … the ideologies of the past, emptied of meaning, of their original process, but hallucinatory with retrospective truth" (*Simulacra*… 123). The philosopher argues that the imagination central to the genre has been invalidated by hyperreality.

The visions of the future extrapolated from the real have become depleted, since they can no longer be built upon the present. Baudrillard concludes that in Dick's works there is a potential to tackle the complexity of third order simulacra, seeing them as a representation of simulations that are "insuperable, unsurpassable, dull and flat, without exteriority" (125). Following this description it can be argued that *Ubik* in its world-building constructs and examines the idea of hyperreality, since, in the novel, one can never return from the virtual reality to the outside world. The postmodern crisis of truth is therefore more dire than in the case of *The Man in The High Castle's* forged objects or *The Three Stigmata*'s miniature layout realities, because the material universe is not merely inaccessible directly or substituted, but has been irreversibly separated from the subject's perceptual apparatus[53]. By applying the posthumanist framework to *Ubik*, I hope to demonstrate that the novel may provide a commentary reflecting specifically on the same issues of artificiality and dissolution of reality that underline Baudrillard's thought.

b) The Posthuman Subject in relation to Baudrillard's philosophy

Baudrillardian ideas align and expand upon the poststructuralist and postmodern schools of thought in 20th century philosophy. One of the facets of postmodernism dealt with diagnosing issues of subjects acquiring knowledge and practicing signification in a world wherein the great narratives of the past and humanist ideals of modernism have become obsolete. In Baudrillard's view, they are being substituted with capital penetration and power structures in which the autonomous subject is ensnared and dissolved. However, whereas Baudrillard imagines the individual as enslaved by the

53 Importantly, as Jorge Martins Rosa notices, this collapse is a modern occurrence in the human condition, since "[f]or Baudrillard … the roots are sociological and historical: 'Reality' is not a void, it *became* a void as a consequence of that slow development, from faking of reality to reality as a fake" (64). Therefore, Baudrillard does not negate reality, but its inaccessibility stemming from socio-historical circumstances of the human perspective.

politicized environment to be the terminal state of the subject in these circumstances, the posthuman thought outlines a dynamic, material relationship between the nodes of the network, that may serve as an alternative subject position:

> The posthuman subject is a radically new mode of subjectivity, characterized by heterogeneity, openness and variation, "a cluster of complex and intensive … assemblages which connect and interrelate in a variety of ways" (Braidotti 2006a: 16). No longer unitary, self-evident and coherent… Instead of being limited by its bounded organism-barrier, it is open to its surroundings, indeed, it is its relationality with what would be considered the bounded organism's "outside" or "other" that constitutes this ex-centric, non-anthropocentric posthuman subject. (Sharon 152)

Therefore, the consciousness involved in these conditions is outside of the humanistic sphere and, by extension, outside of the commodified system that would endanger it.

Kim Toffoletti, approaching posthumanism from philosophical and feminist frameworks in *Cyborgs and Barbie Dolls*, postulates that a kind of posthuman subject can emerge "at the collapse of the relation between representation and reality" (3), referring to Baudrillard's model of simulation. She describes "new formulations of the subject and fresh means of experiencing our surrounds through posthuman figurations. These entities are neither real nor imaginary, but products of a simulation order where dichotomies of value implode as the sign/origin relationship collapses" (2-3). Therefore, the third-order simulacra would provide the ideal conditions for the emergence of such a subject, but at the same time this entity would not be bound by its constraints. The arbitrariness of signs saturating the hyperreality would hold no power over a consciousness which rejects the entire taxonomy of real/signifier. If, as Baudrillard models it, the third order simulacrum is not originating in materiality but in the sign-order, then such construction of subjectivity would be able to navigate through the hyperreality without falling prey to its economy.

Following Toffoletti's thesis that "to be posthuman is to construct a notion of self within a culture of simulation, virtuality and the digital," and that "It is a new mode of existence by which the subject comes into being, as distinctions collapse between nature

and artifice, self and computer, virtual and real" (28), one could argue that the world of *Ubik*, with its virtual reality and semi-conscious machines, is exactly the kind of environment that could facilitate the emergence of posthuman consciousness. Although Toffoletti shares Baudrillard's stance that "science fiction is no longer a legitimate mode of explaining the posthuman moment," because, as she argues further, "the gap between the real and the imagery is eroding, and along with it, the genre of science fiction founded on fantasy" (Toffoletti 32), this critique is not quite accurate in the case of Dick's fiction, as his novels, while concerning the scrutiny of reality, in large part operate on the narratives of clashing, conflicting and transforming simulations or hallucinations. In fact, it can be argued that *Ubik* especially concerns the question of how a posthuman subjectivity can realize itself and achieve agency over a simulation.

4.3. Joe Chip and the simulacra

The plot of *Ubik* begins in a distant future of 1992. Most of the novel follows Joe Chip, an "inertial" in a prudence organization run by Glen Runciter. Inertials are people with abilities to neutralize the psychic powers of telepaths and precogs. Runciter Associates employs people like Chip to protect their clients from corporate espionage. Another piece of world-building revealed at the start of the novel is the institution of cold-pacs, where the deceased, cryogenically frozen into a state of half-life may, in a limited capacity, communicate with the living.

Joe Chip, his partner Pat Conolly, Glen Runciter, and a group of inertials are ambushed by a competing organization during an assignment on a Moon base. A bomb explodes, apparently killing Runciter. However, as the team returns to Earth, a series of anomalous transformations of reality occurs: everyday items – such as money,

technology or even consumables – begin to revert into older types or variants of the same objects. Soon, the entire reality shifts further and further back in time, while the members of the team spontaneously age rapidly and die one by one. Chip eventually discovers that it was Glen Runciter who survived the assassination, and the rest of the inertials, himself included, are kept in half-life, surrounded by a virtual universe that continuously degrades. To arrest that entropy, Joe attempts to acquire a mysterious product called Ubik. He is ultimately assisted by the consciousness of Ella Runciter, Glen's wife, who is also a half-lifer. Together they uncover an entity who has been responsible for the deteriorating condition of the other members of Joe Chip's team – a half-lifer Jory Miller who tried to prolong his existence by feeding on the vitality of other inhabitants of the virtual world.

Most of those events are related in the third person from Joe Chip's point of view. As such, it is his perception of the half-life reality that informs the narrative of the novel. His interactions with the simulated environment and his gradual transformation within it may be read as insights into the possible modes of relationships between the objects and the subject, as well as an investigation into what kind of subjectivity (if any) may emerge from this system.

After Joe's transference into the virtual half-life, a strange process occurs in his immediate vicinity. Everyday objects begin to transform, shifting into older versions of themselves. Cigarettes, electronics, buildings and vehicles are randomly replaced with their counterparts form previous decades. Eventually, this phenomenon encapsulates the entirety of Joe Chip's surroundings. Joe Chip tries to rationalize the process by referring to Plato's theory of forms while observing one such disintegration, when a television set transforms into an antique AM radio:

> The TV set had receded back a long way; he found himself confronted by a dark, wood-cabinet, Atwater-Kent tuned radio-frequency oldtime AM radio, complete with antenna and ground wires. God in heaven, he said to himself, appalled.
> But why hadn't the TV set reverted instead to formless metals and plastics? Those, after all, were its constituents; it had been constructed out of them, not out of an earlier radio. Perhaps this weirdly verified a discarded ancient philosophy, that of Plato' s ideal objects, the universals which, in each class, were real. The form TV set had been a template imposed as a successor to other templates, like the procession of frames in a movie sequence. Prior forms, he reflected, must carry on an invisible, residual life in every object. (126, ch. 10)

Yet, it cannot be said that the cold-pac reality ever achieves those universals, since the regression gradually approaches the year 1939[54], and at times reaches 19th century. The nature of Plato's ideal forms is supposed to be beyond time, but Dick seems to argue that the historical and cultural genealogy, or signification, is nondetachable from an object. This is why the TV set does not return into its base components. In the world of the novel, the physical reality does not correspond to any trans-historical ideal template; rather, material forms, changing in time, are their own complete semiotic reality, not based on ideas as models. Objects perceived in the simulation are rooted in culturally and linguistically determined chains of signification, and as such do not relate to any transhistorical truths but are entangled with the human perspective: a person sees a TV set as a completed functional assemblage within a specific cultural context, not its entire material composition. In that case, this fragment may be read as a postmodern revision or even a satire of Plato's notion of forms, bringing to light the arbitrariness of the idea. All stages of the object's reduction within the simulation are entangled with further entangling it with the hyperreal precession of forms which, however, do not possess any logocentric value, and function themselves as unanchored signifiers.

One could see this description of a "template" as in line with Baudrillard's precession of simulacra: a hyperreality in which the sign is not generated by reality nor

54 It is worth noting here that for the most part, with minor exceptions, the regression slows down on the 31st of August, 1939. Perhaps Dick tries to signal that the stable points of reference of reality were somehow destroyed by the 2nd World War, and everything after that – the post-war modernity – is already a self-accelerating illusion. Even these forms are not fully indicative of the stable reality, but they are just "natural atavisms" (*Ubik*), nostalgic or hauntological rather than concrete.

the difference of signifiers, but by a preceding sign (Baudrillard, *Precession of Simulacra*). If the forged antiques in *The Man in the High Castle* were of the first order of simulacra – copies of original objects – and the Perky Pat's layouts in *The Three Stigmata* were the second order simulacra – sign-objects producing signifiers in a medium of virtual reality, then the hyperreal environment of *Ubik* represents the third order. Not only are there no material referents to the virtual artifacts, but also the signs as referents to other signs substitute reality as a whole. These third-order simulacra occupying the simulated world were constructed without labor or differentiation and as such are signs that relate to nothing but themselves. Perhaps this is why they *revert* – falling ever deeper into their genealogical/technological network of prior signs, looking for a stable, traceable origin and never finding it, surrendering the search at a distant, apparently arbitrary point in the past.

Temenuga Trifonova provides one possible explanation of Baudrillard's views which might be helpful in comparing *Ubik's* world to the idea of simulacrum. She argues that the model of hyperreality does not operate on the basis of virtuality or the imaginary, as these would be "forces of negation whereas the pathological involution of the real in the hyperreal puts an end to negation … The virtual/hyperreal results from a reversal of causality, the introduction of the finality of things at their origin, the accomplishment of things even before their appearance" (Trifonova). This "reversal of causality" is exactly the behavior exhibited by the cold-pac world in the novel: objects reverting, in their entropy, to their historical predecessors, previous forms (cash turning into vintage coins, etc.), instead of reverting, as it would be the case within a more temporally logical change, into aged, deteriorated versions of themselves.

However, there is one element of the virtual world that runs against the principle of gradual decay. Throughout the novel, the human characters are stalked and killed,

one by one, by a shape-shifting being, later revealed to be Jory Miller, who feeds on the vitality of his victims. While the objects undergo the aforementioned temporal reversals on the grounds of being a part of a decaying virtual world, the negative effects of Jory's attacks on the persons trapped in there do not conform to the same pattern. People attacked by Jory age rapidly, become weak until perishing of old age, only then to be brought to the status of objects. They do not turn into their ancestors, or de-age, which suggests that in this simulation there exists some distinction between people and objects. Only the approaching death of consciousness begins to transpose the realm of the object onto them. The reader gets a glimpse at this process, when Joe Chip is close to death:

> It isn't the universe which is being entombed by layers of wind, cold darkness and ice; all this is going on within me, and yet I seem to see it outside. Strange, he thought. Is the whole world inside me? Engulfed by my body? It must be a manifestation of dying, he said to himself. The uncertainty which I feel, the slowing down into entropy – that's the process, and the ice which I see is the result of the success of the process. When I blink out, he thought, the whole universe will disappear. (114, ch. 9)

Joe Chip experiences a slow dissolution; merging with the environment as impending death brings upon him the process of reification. Perhaps he considers the world to be disappearing with him on the grounds of the psychological notion that it is only the subject that can *experience* such disappearance. That would suggest that within *Ubik's* version of hyperreality, despite Baudrillard's assessment of the dissolution of the subject into the system of signs, there survives a vestige of subjectivity, revealed at the moment of death. Again, Trifonova notices that such possibility exists in Baudrillard's model of simulation:

> The de-realization of reality is the destruction of subjectivity but, as Baudrillard notes, the crime is never perfect. If the real is still preserved—as the trace of what has been murdered—the subject also survives its annihilation or dispersal; its destiny passes into the object. By subjectivizing or de-realizing the world, the subject has revealed its ability to appear and disappear … which is, in fact, the strongest proof that there is still a subject … By disappearing, by eliminating itself as a point of view, the subject has proven itself even stronger and more real than Baudrillard might have expected. Subjectivity includes its own annihilation… (Trifonova)

Therefore the distinction between the world of commodity and the subject can still exist in hyperreality, albeit hidden deep beneath layers of signification. The unfortunate thing is that for Jory's victims in the novel this becomes apparent only after their life had been extinguished. However, there is still a chance for sustainable subjectivity in the simulation, but it necessitates a radical transformation away from the humanistic subject. If it were to be reformed into a posthuman consciousness, this subjectivity should be able to immerse itself into a network of creative, rather than exploitative, relations with the world of objects and plant itself *against* the hyperreality, overcoming it. This process is depicted in the novel as Ella's and, subsequently, Joe Chip's survival strategy against Jory, and will be explored further in the next sections of this chapter. However, even before that, the reader may distinguish an important change in Joe Chip's attitude towards his surroundings, when he attempts to stabilize the objects in front of him, acting against the process of regression: "'You are a spray can,' Joe said to the pasteboard container which he held in his hand. 'This is 1992,' he said, and tried to exert everything; he put entirety of himself into the effort" (202, ch. 16).

In what the narration calls "his final transcendental attempt" (203, ch. 16), Joe transforms from a passive inhabitant, undergoing dissolution in hyperreality, to an active agent working to establish a transversal relation between the subject and the object, pulling it out of the signifying regimen of commodity and into an ontological perspective where both he and the object are equal actants. Joe Chip uses the pronoun "you" to refer to objects, as if his will made it possible for him to transgress the ontological barrier between the human organism and a piece of matter. Previously, we have seen the characters in *The Man in the High Castle* acknowledge the agency of objects – the *I Ching* oracle – which granted them an indirect insight into reality as a contingent assemblage of vital matter. Similarly, Joe Chip, in this state recognizes the

importance of objects as active agents in shaping the world, and strives to reestablish that agency, and thus a sense of reality.

But, how can it be possible to introduce this material perspective to a virtual reality, where as we have established, the physical dimension has been thoroughly separated from the subjects? Toffoletti argues that the reconceptualization of the posthuman perspective operating within a virtual simulation takes advantage of this condition and erases the barrier between materiality and representation:

> This process whereby signs become disassociated from any material referent is what Baudrillard calls the 'emancipation of the sign' (Baudrillard 1993: 7). But this is not to say that signs don't have material effects. If, as it has already been noted, images generate our reality, then they should act on us. For example, the purpose of advertising is to encourage us to buy products, which in turn has genuine economic implications. The content of the advertisement may not be traceable to a 'real' object in the 'real' world, but the cultural reach of the image, the sites and spaces in which it circulates, forges what we come to know and experience as reality … If we cannot distinguish between once distinct entities such as sign/object or reality/representation, then dialectics as a mode of understanding self, society and identity is rendered ineffectual. In turn, the fixed nature of signifying practice is replaced by a far more uncertain system. (44-45)

Therefore, since the sign-objects or simulacra have influence (or even agency) on the organization on the inter-subjective, embodied[55] networks of people within the hyperreality, they also qualify as elements of those material structures. Through that impact on one's subjective reality, the objects' status as 'real' or 'representational' becomes indeterminate and irrelevant to the posthuman. Subsequently, by framing what is accessible to the perception, and what interacts with the inter-subjective assemblage as valid components of our conception of the world, we may find liberation from the essentialist notions of reality. When one is no longer bound by the logocentric taxonomy of real/artificial, they may enter a more productive mode of interacting with hyperreality. It may be the case that by dissolving the subject/object and the real/artificial barriers, the regime of commodity loses its power to dictate reality, and the

55 As I have argued in the chapter on *The Three Stigmata*, even the virtual reality is anchored, however strenuously, in the embodiment of the participant and their perceptual apparatus. The cold-pac reality in *Ubik* is only possible because the bodies of its inhabitants have been retrieved and placed in a half-life state of simulated consciousness.

shape of the virtual environment can be created in a cooperation between human and nonhuman assemblages therein, resulting in the kind of creative medium that the colonists in *The Three Stigmata* were striving towards (chapter 2.3). However, Joe Chip struggles to accomplish his goal on his own. For him to actualize this mode of being, and approach a sustainable subjectivity within hyperreality, he first needs to interact with the eponymous substance, Ubik, a commodity which also undergoes a transformation of its own.

4.4. Ubik – commodity/god

Already in the beginning of the novel, before the characters even enter the cold-pac virtual reality, Dick paints a picture of a world that is ostensibly commodified in a fashion reminiscent of Baudrillard's characteristics of hyperreality. Everyday items in Joe Chip's life actively urge him, trying to talk him into spending money. The technological world is shown as possessing agency, however it is agency already entangled in market economy, subordinate to commodification. Coffee machines, news dispensers, even his apartment door, refuse to operate without compensation:

> The door refused to open. It said, 'Five cents, please.'
> He searched his pockets. No more coins; nothing. 'I'll pay you tomorrow,' he told the door. Again he tried the knob. Again it remained locked tight. 'What I pay you,' he informed it, 'is in the nature of a gratuity; I don' t have to pay you.'
> 'I think otherwise,' the door said. 'Look in the purchase contract.'
> … Sure enough; payment to his door for opening and shutting constituted a mandatory fee. Not a tip.
> 'You discover I'm right,' the door said. It sounded smug. (21-22, ch. 3)

A maintenance person reveals the imagined value system of the 1992 reality through a judgment of Joe Chip's character when he fails his financial obligations: "Our department – in fact this entire conapt building – is now programmed against an extension of services and/or credit to such pathetic anomalies as yourself, sir" (20, ch.

3). The worth of a person, their status as *normal,* is defined by their credit capacity. This network of commodities approaching the level of consciousness, or entering active negotiations with human consciousness, saturates reality. In a manner closely resembling Baudrillard's evaluation of capitalism, the line between an active agent and an object is vanishing. Yet, it is not the vitalist, posthuman force displayed by the assemblages of inanimate objects that structures the interdependent network of living matter, as was the case in *The Man in The High Castle,* but a more insidious mechanism of the commodity market, in which these objects engage in practices that subjugate the subject into an inferior, allopoietic position in the system. Joe, even before his half death is exposed to a reality in which objects usurp a primary place in the societal hierarchy. This inversion of power echoes the already mentioned metaphor constructed by Baudrillard in which "[objects'] emphatic goal-directedness has very nearly turned them into the actors in a global process" (*System of Objects* 56). This postmodern agency of the objects in the real world of the novel foreshadows the hegemony of hyperreality in the half-life virtual world.

Moreover, the only goal of this mechanism is to further its saturation, by ensnaring the entire social dynamic into a mode of endless, empty transactions. Daniel Wyman may help us to connect this dynamic to the Baudrillardian simulacra, by noticing that it is the commodification of reality that initially strips Joe of his agency: "In *Ubik* Dick characterizes Chip by his inability to keep money, and opens with him arguing with his door, which threatens to sue if Chip won't pay for its services… In this way, Chip's ability to act is constricted by money, and he is commoditized" (19). Capitalist system of value is in control, permitting only a degree of autonomy to the subject measured by financial wealth while at the same time generating autonomy of the objects. Commodities in Dick's novel invade spheres of life which are, in the western

tradition of philosophy, excursively human. They appropriate language, economic power, and finally invert the order of the system: they become more autonomous while people such as Joe are commoditized.

After the explosion, when Joe becomes a part of the cold-pac virtual world, this mechanism is still present, although it assumes a different form within the narrative. The already established, decaying objects which populate the environment are also marked by the quality of a commodity. Especially so is a substance called Ubik. Glen Runciter, contacting Joe from the living world through a television screen urges him to buy a spray can of Ubik, because it apparently serves as a deterrent against the all-consuming decay. His monologue takes the form of a TV commercial wherein he explains: "You see, world deterioration of this regressive type is a normal experience of many half-lifers... A sort of lingering universe is retained as a residual charge, experienced as a pseudo environment but highly unstable and unsupported by any ergic substructure ... But with today's new, more-powerful-than-ever Ubik, all this is changed!" (122, ch. 10). Runciter not only confirms the nature of the half-life world as an unstable facsimile of reality, but also presents a possible solution. However, he cannot explain how this "magic" product works, except for "by making use of the most advanced techniques of present-day science" (122, ch. 10). This advertorial mode of description accompanies Ubik almost every time it is mentioned. Four of the five epigrams presenting this substance occurring in the novel are commercials praising, in vague terms, the virtues of the spray. As Poster notices, through these instances, "we are confronted with a culture permeated by commercials such that reality is sustained by them. People… are able to maintain their sense of reality only by imbibing commodity culture" (260). Therefore, presenting Ubik in this way makes it just as counterfeit as the objects it is claiming to stabilize. The only apparent value is bestowed upon it by the language of advertisement.

This way of introducing this object into the world automatically bonds it to the realm of commodities.

At the same time, the vague, empty descriptors of Ubik do not position it in the realms of utility nor materiality. These are completely obscured if not nonexistent – subsumed by the same hyperreality that Ubik is somehow supposed to keep at bay. The commercialized Ubik promises only an illusion of salvation from the hyperreality. Mark Poster sees in this process a reflection of a movement towards the posthuman:

> With the multiplication and dissemination of increasingly advanced information machines, the earth has entered a posthuman era. Our society has done so under the general regime of commodity, which, at the cultural level, disseminates itself in the discourse of advertising. Dick's novel explores the Ubiquity of the ad and its relation to the formation of a humanity that is synthesized with information machines. (251)

In this view, the commodification of life is a factor (perhaps even a facilitating circumstance) in the emergence of the posthuman era. Similarly, the transformation of the subjects in the novel takes place in a framework of advertisements, and vice-versa: the posthuman influence over the world is often manifested or signaled by commodities – the nonhuman agents – and consumption.

However, while this hyperreality is the setting of the posthuman transformation, I argue that this transition may occur as a response to the regime of commodity, and not, as Poster argues, in line with it. If we were to perceive Ubik as a synonym of a vital and positive – reintegrative – force, a force belonging to and active in a posthumanist reality, even though it is presented as a commodity, that would suggest that Dick positions capitalism as an environment facilitating posthumanism while being critical of its artificiality. In the novel, this conflict does not go unaddressed and further developments in the narrative can prompt an adjustment of that assumption.

It might be noticed, for instance, that Joe repeatedly fails to acquire Ubik through commerce. The substance is either too expensive, unavailable, expired, or taken

away in exchange for some kind of service. Glen Runciter's commercialized salvation is actively fleeting if not downright unobtainable. Joe Chip, as an individual, is unable to overcome the simulacra while submitting to their capital-triggered structures. Then, when all hope seems lost, Ubik, the substance itself, undergoes a transformation aided by Ella Runciter, another half-lifer who assists Joe Chip.

Ella, at that point in the novel already being engaged in a posthuman mode of subjectivity (as I will explain in the next sections), helps the protagonist. She provides Joe Chip with a "lifetime" supply of the substance free of charge (198, ch.16). Prompted by this act the object gains a deific quality in its signification, which distances Ubik-substance from Ubik-product, thus reintroducing differentiation to the object hitherto homologized under the commodity regimen. Hayles proposes that this transformation stands for Dick's admission of the failure of capitalist economy of signs, as the substance's new quality allows it to put up a resistance against the egotistical, exploitative actions of Jory Miller. Jory *consumes* his surroundings, and the newly transformed Ubik deters his murderous spree. The critic writes: "Only after acknowledging this appetite (which must be understood as operating on the multiple levels signified by 'consuming') can the author discern, among the trashy surfaces of capitalist excess, the divine within the world" (*How We Became Posthuman* 187). This reframing in the narrative pulls Ubik from the hyperreality of signs, giving it a potential to create differentiated points of reference.

By referring to an earlier work of Baudrillard, *For a critique of the political economy of the sign,* one can see this process as analogous to what he calls "Symbolic Exchange." It is a phenomenon in which a subject, through their own sacrifice, gifts an object to another person and through that exchange the object is detached from the system of commodified economy. Baudrillard explains how in a symbolic exchange

"object is not an object: it is inseparable from the transferrential pact that is sealed between two persons… once it has been given – and *because* of this – it is *this* object and not another. The gift is unique" (64). In this process the sign-value of the object (stemming not from any material qualities or labor but from a general political economy) is invalidated. The network of signs that has been entangling the object is reconfigured since "What is neither sold [nor] taken, but only given and returned, no one 'needs.'… This is the metabolism of exchange… In this domain, value isn't even recognized. *And desire is not fulfilled there in the phantasm of value"* (207). Symbolic exchange therefore becomes an abolition of need and leads to the destruction of the illusion of economic commodity value.

Through this framework, one can initially position the Ubik spray as an object of consumption exemplifying the sign value realized through the language of advertisement. However, the act of symbolic exchange initiated by Ella transforms Ubik by destroying its attachment to the commodified sign economy. With that transition, the manner in which Ubik is referred to also changes from a register (or a regimen) of advertisement, to that of religious speech. No longer capable of expressing itself as a commodity, Ubik assumes a new voice in the final chapter of the novel:

> I am Ubik. Before the universe was, I am. I made the suns. I made the worlds. I created the lives and the places they inhabit. I move them here, I put them there. They go as I say, they do as I tell them. I am the word and my name is never spoken, the name which no one knows. I am called Ubik, but that is not my name. I am. I shall always be. (207, ch. 17)

The substance becomes no longer a purchasable product, but a divine being. It establishes itself as an actant, speaking in first-person voice, and capable of transformation. As such it becomes a narrative resurrection of what Baudrillard deems the lost referential (*Simulacra and Simulation*), not necessarily "authentic," but symbolic, capable of co-creating a reality that is not subservient to the system of

hyperreality. While this quasi-religious register may incite the interpretation that Ubik attempts to establish itself as a sort of transcendental signified (as was the case with Palmer Eldritch and his virtual reality discussed in chapter 2), my reading is that through that language Dick evokes a process more reminiscent of the instances of objects' agency in influencing the human subject's perspective on reality, as depicted in *The Man in The High Castle*[56].

This shift outside of the sign value does not automatically make Ubik itself real; however, according to Marcus Boon, Dick exposes in it the arbitrariness of commodities, thus stripping them of their illusory power over the subject:

> for Dick, it is precisely the most obviously 'counterfeit' objects in the world that have potential ontological import, because their inauthenticity already contains a negation of conventional notions of authenticity and, as such, they are closer to the truth than those objects which human beings consider real or authentic. (73)

In other words, through the adaptation of religious language, Ubik discards the pretense of value that the other objects in the simulation try to uphold. Boon continues: "the pathos of Dick's work lies in the way he is able to narrativize the struggle of any particular object – human or nonhuman – to overcome its status as a counterfeit in search of its own hidden truth" (81). This subversion of the perception of authenticity enacted by the nonhuman actant opens up a possibility of creating *new* modes of being for a posthuman subject, establishing an independent perspective instead of relying on humanistic conventions. In discarding its own signification as a product Ubik not only exercises agency, but also demonstrates to Joe that the system of signs that encompasses his reality may be engaged in through modes other than commodification. To further that point, Dick stages a juxtaposition between two entities with very different approaches to interacting with hyperreality: Jory Miller and Ella Runciter.

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56 In interactions between Frink's jewelry and Mr Tagomi, as well as Juliana and the *I Ching*. See chapter 1, sections 3 and 4 of this dissertation.

4.5. Two sides of the posthuman coin

The need for a departure from the conventional model of the subject has been one of the main goals of postmodern thinkers. Best and Kellner describe the postmodernists' aim to "decentre and liquidate the modern bourgeois, humanist subject which they interpret as a construct of modern discourses and institutions" (283). However, as they continue, "all postmodern theory lacks an adequate theory of agency, of an active self, mediated by social institutions, discourses, and other people" (283). As I argue, posthumanism attempts to construct ontologies surpassing this postmodern impasse by employing open, affirmative and dynamic ways of interacting with the world. In this section, two characters from the novel will be analyzed in order to evaluate their potential of representing such subject positions. Those will be Jory Miller and Ella Runciter. I argue that both of them exhibit the capacity to modify the simulated reality; however, the former figure does so in a mode of possessive individualism, while the latter through sustainable posthuman politics.

a) Jory

Throughout the novel Joe Chip is pursued by a malevolent entity, identified by the end as Jory Miller. He has been in the half-life state longer than any other character. He keeps himself alive by invading the cold-pac realities and consuming vitality of other inhabitants. This antagonist exhibits some control over the simulated environment. Lacking a body, he becomes an ever present, invisible form, only revealing himself as a shape-shifter who assumes the visages of his victims. As we have seen earlier, in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch,* Dick experimented with the possibility of an inter-subjective autopoietic network in a virtual reality. For the characters of that novel, the undertaking was largely unsuccessful because the commodification of sign-objects

within that space created the conditions in which the eponymous antagonist could prey on them. Jory is a similarly rapacious figure: solipsistic, and forcing his will upon reality.

His predatory drive towards immortality at the cost of others in his world positions Jory as a failed posthuman – as proposed by Patricia MacCormack – a being still enslaved to a desire for autonomy from others, yet interfering with their (as well as its own) capacity to both live and die. She states: "Posthumanities' experiment with infinite life has led to some very irrational reasonings indeed. Virtual universes are corroded for the unconscious sublimation of alterity as annexed, incorporated and consumed as part of the histeric drive for posthumanity" (136). She continues a critical inquiry towards this iteration of the idea of posthumanity by pointing out that this individualist stance "both causes and denies the actual and discursive death of others in its wake" (119). Jory's pursuit of immortality embodies those problematic aspects of a posthuman encoded in a virtual reality that MacCormack critiques.

During a confrontation between himself and Joe Chip, Jory explains:

> "I did what I do," Jory said. "It' s hard to explain, but I've been doing it a long time to lots of half-life people. I eat their life, what remains of it. There' s very little in each person, so I need a lot of them. I used to wait until they had been in half-life awhile, but now I have to have them immediately. If I' m going to be able to live myself …" (189)

In this fragment, Jory reveals himself another one of Dick's "spirits of capitalism" (Robinson 61), who, quite literally in this case, consume the vital force of their environment and other subjects in a voracious and accelerating drive towards self-preservation. Jory's depiction in the novel may be seen as a cautionary example against the propulsion towards disembodied subjectivity constructed under a techno-capitalist value system, undertaken without ethical considerations.

Moreover, Jory can be seen, in his selfish form of self-realization and attempts at immortality, as a being in a self-perpetuating loop of isolation which the simulacrum

forces upon him. It can be argued that Dick created here a figure analogous to Baudrillard's jogger:

> [jogging] is the pleasure not of pure physical exertion but of a dematerialization, of an endless functioning… Making the body run soon gives way, moreover, to letting the body run: the body is hypnotized by its own performance and goes on running on its own, in the absence of a subject, like a somnambulistic and celibate machine. (*The Transparency of Evil* 47)

Jory institutes his subjectivity only as a means of egotistic gain, turning every interaction with another human into a sort of vampiric exploit. Just like in the case of the jogger, his own compulsion for survival makes his consciousness subordinate to that compulsion. The characters do not encounter Jory Miller, but a hunger that was once Jory's. He spirals into a vacuum of his own making; he becomes a subject devoid of difference to the other – since he devours any stable point of reference he encounters, leaving only a pre-world war facsimile of history – and an object, a vessel for his own self-perpetuating need for consumption. Ironically, this solipsistic, aggressive attempt at retaining the individual self is exactly what allows the simulation to gradually destroy Jory's mind.

At one point, Joe Chip realizes that the regression of the universe is not entirely a result of Jory's will. While he struggles to stabilize the simulation for his own benefit, his power over the objects within it begins to wane: "He had constructed – not this world – but the world, or rather its phantasmagoric counterpart, of their own time. Decomposition back to these forms was not of his doing; they happened despite his efforts ... As the boy says, it' s an enormous effort" (194, ch. 16). We see therefore that for Dick the power rooted in possessive individualism, while seductive, is an illusion. Jory only maintains the *appearance* of being in control when in fact his power over the simulation is as fabricated as the objects he conjures. Despite his veneer of omniscience over the simulacra, he is as much subservient to the structures of this hyperreality as his

victims. By exerting energy to sustain a simulation created as a system of commodities (as a reflection of his own drive to consumption), he becomes trapped in a prison of his own making. Dick warns of the self-destructive nature of a subjectivity whose sole *raison d'etre* is consumption and control over others. While seductive, it ultimately leads to a dissolution of the self in the hyperreal, solipsistic simulation. As an alternative, Dick presents another character, Ella Runciter, who finds a way to navigate complexities of hyperreality and find meaning in sustainable subjectivity in the virtual world.

b) Ella

Ella Runciter, Glen's wife, is the force opposing Jory, and guiding Joe Chip to a new mode of signifying reality. While she coyly claims that the reasons for her assistance were "selfish, practical" (199, ch. 16), as she wants Joe Chip to take her place as an adviser to her husband, she also invites him to take up the mantle of the protector against the predatory influence of Jory. She, just as Jory, has the capacity to alter the virtual reality. However, while he utilizes it to manipulate and destroy its inhabitants, Ella partakes in a more productive form of creation. She moves against the capitalistic construction of Ubik in an affirmative, collaborative direction, by providing the other inhabitants of the un-dead virtual reality with the spray can for free, without engaging in its commercial mechanisms – something which her husband failed to accomplish or even conceive of, instead repeatedly urging Joe to buy Ubik.

She also refuses to participate in the desperate attempts to prolong her half-living. Instead, she chooses to embrace death, believing it to be a way for reintroduction to reality through reincarnation: "Fairly soon I'll be reborn into another womb, I think" (199, ch. 16). She hopes that by facing the veil of death, she has a chance to become

introduced from the simulation into life. This too may be seen as an expression of her becoming posthuman. Here is Braidotti's perspective which may shed light on Ella's character: "in a posthuman perspective, the emphasis on the impersonality of life is echoed by an analogous reflection on death. Because humans are mortal, death, or the transience of life, is written at our core: it is the event that structures our time-lines and frames our time-zones, not as a limit, but as a porous threshold" (*The Posthuman* 131). Ella's hope of returning into the world in a new womb echoes Braidotti's vitalist notion of life as *zoe,* discussed in the previous chapter. She does not fear death as she sees it as an opportunity to reintroduce her vital energy into the autopoietic network of living matter. Instead of clinging to her half-life, she accepts the concept of death; however, instead of seeing it as a dissolution of the subject, she uses it to *affirm* her subjectivity, claiming: "I don' t think of myself as an 'entity', I usually think of myself as Ella Runciter" (198, ch. 16). Conceptualizing this "threshold," as Braidotti calls it, in this manner allows Ella to leave behind the commodified web of signs, and emerge as *tabula rasa,* becoming a posthuman creative force.

Braidotti places such a model of the posthuman "within an eco-philosophy of multiple belongings, as a relational subject constituted by multiplicity, that is to say a subject that works across differences and is also internally differentiated, but still grounded and accountable" (*The Posthuman* 49). The emphasis for the goals of these assemblages falls on communal solidarity and ethical accountability. These "affirmative politics" as Braidotti calls them, stand as both a critical approach and a creative force aimed at finding alternative projects of existence along the nature-culture continuum. Ella, by assisting Joe in negotiating a coherent signification of the objects in the virtual reality, not destabilized by the regimen of commodification, engages in just such politics. She establishes herself as transcended over the decaying simulation and capable

of generating a new mode of existence. Her being is embodied, and while her subjectivity is inscribed in the body that is currently frozen, she is able to overcome the cold-pac prison. In death, she does not see entropy but a potentiality for creating a new organization of vital matter in collaboration with other participants in that world.

Ella gains almost a divine presence, beyond the fear of death, and assisting Joe Chip towards the same transformation. Despite Haraway's proclamation in the final sentence of her Cyborg Manifesto, that she "would rather be a cyborg than a goddess," thus rejecting a kind of spiritual ecofeminism that presents the female as the "natural" opposition to the technological patriarchal world, scholar Nina Lykke finds in the metaphor of a goddess a transgression of both the artificial/natural boundary as well as an apt expression of female subjectivity in the contemporary world. She argues that

> If ... we compare the cyborg and the goddess as two metaphorical landmarks, it is obvious that they have much in common. Both are, so to speak, designed to transgress the borders between human and non-human. … Both try to redefine the relation between human and non-human as one of conversation and non-suppressive dialogue between different subjects, instead of a hierarchical and exploitative relation. (82)

Indeed, Ella finds herself in the role of a mediator between the human subjects and their virtual environment, and the shift from Ubik-as-commodity to Ubik-as-actant that she is involved in is certainly an instance of redefining the relation between human and nonhuman stressed by Lykke. The scholar proposes that the figure of goddess of spiritual ecofeminism calls not for a return to any pre-cultural purity, but is "a potential healer of broken bonds between human and nature, between the human mind and non-human matter – body, earth, cosmos" (84). The relationship between the human subject and the materiality that constitutes them is fractured by modern discursive dichotomies. The posthuman goddess is a narrative frame that "in contrast to her cyborg counterpart, tends to absorb the semiotic into the material. For her adherents, the goddess is – not just a name, a semiotic devise; she IS" (85). During their encounter, Ella Runciter

reminds Joe of his mortality, of the material conditions of one's existence that the subject is linked to, even in a virtual medium that, in its layers of simulacra tries to occlude the reality. Therefore, I argue that Ella too becomes that *goddess*, once again showcasing Dick's anticipation of the posthuman expressed through spiritual imagery or language.

If, as Hayles proposes, "in the posthuman, there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism" (3), then both Ella and Jory would qualify as posthuman beings. They permeate the entire simulation and are free to assume different avatars and to modify their surroundings, while their half-dead bodies influence them in so far as to inform their outlook towards death. In the case of Jory, it is a will to survive, realized by assimilating other inhabitants of the simulation and feeding of their vitality. For Ella, this interaction is reversed: she displays an emphatically motivated ambition to save the other inhabitants, connected to her in the virtual reality, while fully accepting death. She engages in the collective of half-livers, as well as the objects in the simulation (through Ubik).

In that sense, Ella is closer to a posthuman subject, as outlined by Hayles to be "an amalgam, a collection of heterogeneous components, a material-informational entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction" (*How We Became Posthuman* 3). This posthuman stands as a radical departure from the liberal humanist subject, characterized by Hayles by following C. B. Macpherson's analysis of possessive individualism as "owning nothing to society" and exhibiting "the human essence [that is] freedom from the wills of others" (3). Jory's predatory, egocentric acts of destruction are done in order to make him self-reliant in the simulation, whereas Ella understands the futility of that solitary undertaking, and opens herself up to a mutually

beneficial inter-connectivity with the whole of the simulation, stabilizing the world; offering *herself* as a point of reference from which a reality can be reconstructed. Ella is the embodiment of what Hayles sees as "a version of the posthuman that embraces the possibilities of information technologies without being seduced by fantasies of unlimited power and disembodied immortality, that recognizes and celebrates finitude as a condition of human being" (5).

As mentioned earlier, the process in which Ubik becomes transformed in the manner of religious trans-substantiation occurs thanks to the symbolic exchange facilitated by Ella's sacrifice or gift. In *Symbolic Exchange and Death* Baudrillard expands on the implications of such a phenomenon. According to him, the fundamental driving force behind the political economy is "the will to abolish death" (167), which is antithetical to the mechanics of symbolic exchange that necessitates or even embodies death or sacrifice. Baudrillard equates the idea of symbolic exchange to death as these two phenomena sever the connection of the object or subject respectively from the value assigned to them by the consumerist system. Therefore such an exchange is impossible within "this process of spiralling hoarding" (167). Because Jory creates the simulacra to feed and prolong his life, guided by an obsession over deferring death, he is only in control as long as his hyperreality stays impenetrable. Yet, the symbolic exchange between Joe Chip and Ella breaks his "spell." By shedding the sign value of Ubik, and, as Hayles proposes, celebrating finitude, they overcome the impossible and step outside the realm of simulacra.

4.6. Conclusions

Hayles places Dick's mid-sixties novels, including *Ubik*, as representative of both the posthuman perspective, and Baudrillardian landscape by noting the capital-oriented dissolution of stable distinctions between the subject and the commodity: "Typically these are highly commercialized spaces in which the boundaries between autonomous individual and technological artifact have become increasingly permeable … Given this dynamic, it is no surprise that the struggle for freedom often expresses itself as an attempt to get 'outside' this corporate encapsulation" (162). I argue that the lines between the subject and its environment which are dissolved in the hyperreality grant the posthuman the power to reshape it, and indeed establish a mode of signifying reality outside of the commodity regime. However, this dissolution also leaves the subject embedded into this world vulnerable to be denied autonomous embodiment and consumed or reified by the same hyperreality.

Dick utilizes an artificial labyrinth of white noise made of commodified signs and copies – the simulacra – leaving his characters with two options: either to stay lost, trying to navigate a space without an authentic point of reference, or expand into the kind of subject that is able to negotiate their environment and carve out their own exit. While it may not be possible to entirely escape that half-dead hyperreality, the posthuman perspective may grant them the ability to recognize it for what it is, thus bestowing on them a capacity to overwrite the system of signs with emergent reference points.

However, it is important to make a distinction: this capacity is *not* a mastery over the world the posthuman subject inhabits, it does not come from an "illusion of control" which, in view of Hayles would come from "ignorance about the nature of emergent processes through which consciousness … and the environment are constituted."

Rather, it is a "dynamic partnership between humans and intelligent machines" (*How We Became Posthuman* 288). Indeed, Joe, as a fully *human* subject is defenseless against the distorting, decentralized world of the half-live. Only the involvement of subjects transcending his perspective, such as Ella, permeating the simulation, facilitate his agency. Joe, opening himself up to the transformative qualities of the Ubik spray – and negotiating a mode of existence outside of commodified sign system with Ella's help – is establishing this kind of partnership.

Many of the motifs present in the novel begin in a Baudrillardian perspective, as individualized autonomous beings are plunged into a (third-order) simulacrum filled with commodified objects. However, while for Baudrillard these are rather grim circumstances, inevitably leading to a dissolution of subjectivity in an unstable, temporally absurd oblivion, it can be argued that Dick goes a step further and proposes solutions to that crisis. As Sue Short states in her critique in *Cybrog Cinema and Contemporary Subjectivity*: "Baudrillard … appears to combine deterministic explanations of media power with SF fears about human identity being threatened by external forces, yet his work is notably devoid of any response other than resignation and apathy, asserting that 'only fiction of a political universe remains'" (162). Critical and philosophical posthumanism, in contrast, searches for alternative modes of subjectivity capable of overcoming this hopelessness. Similarly, Dick's fiction does indeed focus on the internal and replicated, rather than exploration of the unknown, but within those simulated spaces, a new subjectivity *can* be discovered, formed as a posthuman other, transcending the simulacrum, emerging as new, despite the closed loop of self-reference within it.

Ubik is an experiment in pushing the characters past the humanistic perception of (un)reality. The product of this reaction is a synthesis of a posthuman subject for

whom the hyperreality is just as much an obstacle, as it is a catalyst for transformation. Baudrillard proposes that a simulacrum is "never exchanged for the real, but exchanged for itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference" (*Simulation and Simulacra 6*), and that "never again will the real have a chance to produce itself" (2). In contrast to this grim synopsis, the posthuman turn, as embodied by Ella Runciter, has the potential to ultimately overcome these limits, finding the 'reference' through interconnectivity with other beings, and embracing death as a transmission of vital force from the subject, back to the broader network of living matter.

Yet, through a character of Jory, Dick warns: this transcendence is not a given. Stirred into a vortex of desperate, consumerist preservation, it can just as well doom the undertaking. The transformation, then, cannot be done in a vacuum. Braidotti warns that "it is crucial to resist all tendencies to reduce posthumanism and post-athropocentrism to a relation of equivalence, and to stress instead both their singularity and the transformative effects of their convergence" (*Posthuman Knowledge* 8-9). In that sense, Dick seems to succeed at conveying the posthuman modes of perceiving and interacting with reality, as not equivalent to those of a classically understood liberal subject. Ella Runciter (and Joe Chip, to a degree in the final chapters) asserts her subjectivity through a positive, constructive interaction with the environment, bestowing, through symbolic exchange, sustainability to the inhabitants of unstable reality. Posthuman subjectivity necessitates inter-dependence with others, an openness to the environment, a positive-sum game. Therefore, it can be said that Dick's experiment results in a transition toward the posthuman, affirmative of newly reconceptualized realities, away from the vacuous commodification of modernity.

5. *A Scanner Darkly* – From a botched Body without Organs to a plastic brain

5.1. Introduction

By Dick's own admission, many of the experiences described in his 1977 novel *A Scanner Darkly* are based either on his own struggles with addiction or the events he witnessed in his community while living in Los Angeles. Equally prominent to the depictions of the destructive consequences of drug dependence is the novel's underlying feeling of paranoia and ontological confusion stemming from the broader social mechanisms directed at the drug users. The narrative is saturated with the atmosphere of oppression and awareness of surveillance in the everyday reality of the drug users. "Substance D," the fictional narcotic that is key to the novel's plot, combines the destructive potentials of various real amphetamines and opiates, while through the invention of the scramble suits and holographic scanners Dick extrapolates the future of technologies of surveillance employed by the police. In this chapter, I will explore how Dick portrays the use of these technologies and substances as potential catalysts or hindrances for the emergence of the posthuman. My aim is to analyze how the narrative

of Philip K. Dick's *A Scanner Darkly* depicts a variety of fragmentation of the human subject through intense movements of deterritorialization and reterritorialization brought upon by both social and bio-chemical factors, and the subsequent formation of a posthuman. The reading will make use of the concepts introduced by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* Michael Foucault's idea of the Panopticon, as well as the notion of brain plasticity as presented by the French philosopher Catherine Malabou. Ultimately I aim to analyze the different technologies of de- and reterritorialization seen in the novel in relation to posthumanist perspectives on the construction of selfhood and reality.

Firstly, the chapter will analyze how Dick explores the relationship between the apparatus of the surveillance, as understood by Michael Foucault, and embodiment, through the fictional device of the scramble suit. I will argue that the panoptic force of technology may be subverted through movements of deterritorialization to serve emancipatory purposes. The anonymizing qualities of the device designed to evoke paranoia may instead facilitate a more dynamic approach to the construction of the subject's identity.

However, as I will subsequently demonstrate, the characters in the novel also experiment with ways to radically shift their perception and sense of self through drug use. The resulting movements of de- and reterritorialization of one's identity, as Deleuze and Guattari predict, create "empty" or "failed" Bodies without Organs. In their *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* duology, the philosophers introduce the term "Body without Organs" (the BwO). Therein, the schizophrenic is set as an example of such a figure. He represents a subjectivity in flux, produced by capitalism but capable of escaping the confides of bourgeois reality through the process named by the philosophers "deterritorialization." As Adrian Parr puts it, "deterritorialization can best

be understood as a movement producing change …. [D]eterritorialisation indicates the creative potential of an assemblage. So, to deterritorialise is to free up the fixed relations that contain a body all the while exposing it to new organisations" (67). This remodeling in the construction of subjectivity can result in liberating the subject from the conventions of modern society, the state, or from under the control of capitalism, but Deleuze and Guattari often warn that it may just as well have destructive consequences. Various modes of organization sediment within the BwO in its journey through territories, which may end up resulting in an idiosyncratic subjectivity unable to engage in self-organization altogether. Such failed BwO may be realized as self-destructive tendencies of drug-users or suicidal persons. As I will argue, this danger seems especially pronounced by Dick in *A Scanner Darkly.*

Next, I will demonstrate how the author imagines the healing or body's compensation for the dissolution of the subject by comparing the process to Catherine Malabou's concept of brain plasticity. The concept of BwO represents a state of pure potentiality and experimentation, unbound to fixed identities and this quality connects it to Malabou's idea of brain plasticity, which sees the body (including the brain) as an autopoietic system that has the ability to modify its organization in response to new stimuli in its material environment.

Both the Deleuzoguattarian framework as well as Malabou's concept of brain plasticity will serve, throughout this chapter, to uncover the complex transformations of subjectivity experienced by the characters of *A Scanner Darkly*. However, first one has to scrutinize the broader societal circumstances depicted by Dick in his novel to establish how the environment imposes those changes on the subject. Thus, in the following section I open the discussion with Michel Foucault's analysis of the Panopticon.

5.2. Cyborgized Panopticon – the scramble suit

While the novel is heavily grounded in the realities of L.A.'s sixties' and seventies' drug culture, Dick opts to move the action into the near future and employs several science-fictional technologies, the most prominent of which is the invention of "the scramble suit" – a microelectronic membrane covering the entire body which displays on it's surface "a million and a half physiognomic fraction representations of various people" (16, ch. 2) in a randomized sequence. The ultimate effect is that by projecting onto the body discontinuous, rapidly changing fragments of people's faces and physiques, with the addition of a voice-altering device, the wearer becomes virtually anonymous. To any person perceiving them, they appear only as "a vague blur" (16, ch. 2). The device is utilized by the undercover narcotics agents from the Orange County Sheriff's Department as a way of hiding their identity not only from the drug users, but also from the corrupted officials and drug traffickers who have apparently infiltrated the law enforcement.

The protagonist of the novel, Bob Arctor, is one such agent. On a day-to-day basis he lives as a jobless junkie, addicted to substance D. Once in a while, however, he hides himself inside the scramble suit and assumes the persona of Fred. As Fred, a narcotics agent, he spies on Bob Arctor's house, where scanning devices have been installed. Fred's task is to survey and document the drug-users' habitation in order to discover potential dealers. Absurdly, he is also required to snitch on Arctor – himself – since omitting his name would expose Fred's identity to the corrupt agents within the Sheriff's department. The scramble suit is therefore both a cause for and a product of social paranoia. On one hand it provides anonymity to the agents of the state, thus

creating distrust among the drug-users since anyone of them can be a potential "narc." On the other, the narcotics agents fear that criminals may discover their identities. The next two subsections of this chapter will explore the ambiguous nature of the suit as both a representation of the social and technological tool of the surveillance state, as well as a cybernetic modification of the wearer. I will argue that the consequences of this technology radiate outward – as a form of the Foucauldian Panopticon – and inward, inadvertently destabilizing the identity of the wearer.

5.2.1 the scramble suit as apparatus of state – The Panopticon embodied

The scramble suit and its merger of anonymity and embodiment in service of surveillance is reminiscent of Michael Foucault's analysis of the Panopticon, as presented in *Discipline and Punish*: an architectural figure envisioned by the philosopher Jeremy Bentham in the 18th century. It is designed to be a circular prison facility wherein the inmates are constantly aware of the jailer's gaze while unable to see him or other prisoners in turn. According to this arrangement, "Visibility is a trap … Each individual, in his place, is securely confined to a cell from which he is seen from the front by the supervisor … He is seen, but does not see; he is the object of information, never the subject of communication" (200). Foucault uses this image to illustrate mechanisms of discipline that "induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (201). In other words, the immediate result is internalization of the disciplinary gaze of power: the subject disciplines itself from the inside. What follows is hierarchization and individualization of modern society. The separated and surveyed subjects no longer have a capacity of forming "a crowd" – any form of productive collective or counter-

culture. The invention of the scramble suit in the novel is essentially, like the Panopticon, “a machine for dissociating the see/being seen dyad” (202). Here we encounter the aspect of the scramble suit which serves as a tool of the state, intrinsically linked with its generation of anonymity: the capacity for surveillance. The explicit function of a narcotics agent in *A Scanner Darkly* is to covertly spy on the drug communes. Bob/Fred lives among them *incognito* and whenever he is not in the house, he reviews the recordings from hidden cameras. Geared in the scramble suit, Fred is able to work among other agents, safe from the danger of Bob being exposed. The invention allows him to be a public figure, announcing and broadcasting his existence, thus planting the seed of the fear of being watched in the minds of the drug users. While the real-world implanted agents have to avoid publicity, and therefore diminish the awareness of their work, the scramble suit in Dick’s novel allows the state to put their tactics front and center in the collective consciousness. The shifting, blurring appearance of the wearer adds to the spectacle. The agent is everyone all at once, therefore omnipresent yet unknowable. The end result is that Bob’s friends (and later Bob himself) are constantly suspicious of being monitored. Anyone from their surroundings could be an agent, dressed down from their scramble suit that the junkies have just seen on the television or walking down the street. Without a way to confirm it, the feeling evolves into paranoia. David Murakami Wood poses that “Dick makes it clear that there is no clear dividing line between a clear-eyed and objective understanding of surveillance, and paranoia” (56). It could be said that the impulse of the outside (being surveyed) and from the inside (being paranoid) ultimately have the same results for the subject. In a way, the actual invigilation is only auxiliary to a much more powerful mechanism: creating a perception of an unlimited range of control for the state.

The imagery evoked by the technology underscores the destabilizing effects. The inventor of the scramble suit, S. A. Powers, is reported to be inspired by an experience of a drug-induced hallucination during which he had "witnessed … a frantically progressing montage of what … he imagined to be modern-day abstract art. … S. A. Powers had watched thousands of Picasso paintings replace one another at flashcut speed, and then he had been treated to Paul Klees" (16, ch.2). The narration invokes the names of surrealist and cubist painters whose portraits twisted and deconstructed facial features as a comparison to the effects of the scramble suit. Depersonalizing and reality-distorting effects are therefore firmly connected to this technology even at its very point of origin. Scott Durham argues that the scramble suit is a dialectical image of the ways in which the schizophrenia is both a product and a productive force behind the late stage capitalism. He positions the invention as "a paradoxical object through which the spheres of art and desire on the one hand, and of capital accumulation and repression on the other, dizzily exchange properties" (177). This dual quality may be seen in the fact that the scramble suit is, in-universe, inspired by the aesthetics of art, and in its function it utilizes these aesthetics to subjugate and control the population. If that is the case for the external influence of the scramble suit, then perhaps a similar paradox takes place inside the suit: what are the consequences for the wearer obscured by the scrambled images?

In the original Panopticon, while the inmates are individualized, the power of the jailer is obscured. Foucault assesses that "The more numerous those anonymous and temporary observers are, the greater the risk for the inmate of being surprised and the greater his anxious awareness of being observed" (*Discipline and Punish* 202). The scramble suit can be said to possess and exercise all three of those facets of power: multiplicity, temporality and anonymity. The description of the suit in the novel

confirms that “the wearer of the suit was Everyman and in every combination (up to combinations of a million and a half sub-bits) during the course of each hour. Hence, any description of him – or her – was meaningless” (16, ch. 2). Multiplicity is expressed through the virtually infinite number of variants of facial and bodily features projected onto the membrane creating an illusion of an endless continuity of observers. Each of these observers is temporary, since no combination lingers more than a couple of seconds on the suit’s surface, making it impossible for the “inmate” to remember and recognize individual jailers between each other. Both those factors combine to serve as a perfect, dynamic medium for anonymity. The illusion of supervision is projected onto the social reality and ingrains itself as a form of collective paranoia.

N. Katherine Hayles elaborates on Foucault’s idea, placing the critique of the Panopticon in the posthumanist context. She notices that abstraction of power into a disembodied gaze is what “gives the Panopticon its force, for when the bodies of the disciplinarians seem to disappear into the technology, the limitations of corporeality are hidden” (*How We Became Posthuman* 194). In *A Scanner Darkly*, the body behind the scramble suit does not vanish completely, but is instead obscured by a randomly generated amalgam of possible identities in a constant state of flux. It is important to note that Hayles makes an explicit distinction between the Foucauldian “body” and “embodiment” by stressing that “In contrast to the body, embodiment is contextual, enmeshed within the specifics of place, time, physiology and culture, which together compose enactment” (196). The scramble suit is a form of cybernetic augmentation which veils the embodied individual to turn him into a signifier of the broader system of control. It deprives the subjects of the ability to recognize and establish identities basted on difference, while at the same time homogenizing them into the Foucauldian “universalized body worked upon in a uniform way by the surveillance techniques”

(Hayles 194). This process applies both to the disciplinarians as well as for the disciplined. The embodiment of the narcotic's agent is modified by technology to obscure the limitations of his surveillance, while the drug user's damaged physique is marked as the basis for their discrimination and marginalization. In those cases, the individual embodiments are positioned by the state as normalized bodies, upon which 1) the technologies of surveillance can be effectively placed *en masse*, and 2) they establish what constitutes a deviation from the norm as a technique of division and control (this idea will be developed further in section 5.3.1).

As an actual invention forming the world in the novel, not an abstract mechanism, the amalgam of faces displayed onto the membrane of the scramble suit may be seen as an intensification of the gaze of the state and a reinforcement of the manipulative aspects of power noticed by Foucault. From the perspective of a member of the society depicted in the novel, who can be compared to the Panopticon's prisoner, the surveillance, or the judgment over their actions, is no longer coming from the invisible force at the top of the jailer's tower. Dick's novel brings to the forefront the paranoia underlying the Panopticon's mechanism. The depersonalized and dispersed control of the state is realized in *A Scanner Darkly* in the prevailing awareness of the characters that everyone and anyone – of the multitude of faces morphing on the scramble suit's surface – can be their warden.

The result is indeed mutual distrust, nurtured by narcotics, that takes roots in the fertile ground of a drug user's psyche. At one point, a friend of Bob's expresses the collective paranoia that envelops the group, when he poses seemingly nonsensical theory about himself being a spy: "'Maybe I was hired by secret forces,' Barris muttered in perplexity, 'But what would their motives be? Possibly to start suspicion and trouble among us … causing us to be pitted against one another, all of us, uncertain of whom

we can trust, who is our enemy ...'" (53, ch. 4). Barris's statement comes from a place of delusion and mistrust of his own perception and memory, however in this sentiment, he inadvertently provides the insight into the situation of the main character, and thus into the actual mechanism of surveillance at play in the novel. The pressure of the state control intensifies the subject's paranoia, which in turn reinforces the feeling of the state's ubiquitous gaze. The awareness of being observed disrupts the notion of a collective. How can one create a community when any one of its members may be the multi-faced jailer, sent to gather evidence of your misdeeds?

From Hayles's posthumanist viewpoint, such a jailer would be a kind of a living contradiction: a posthuman cyborg operating in a mode antithetical to posthumanism's emancipatory ambitions – a technology usurped by the state to uphold the status quo. However, like any contradiction, it gains a disruptive potential. It enacts instability around itself, as I have shown above, but it is in itself unstable, thus containing a possible line of flight. Let us consider this prospect in the next subsection.

5.2.2. The scramble suit as a line of flight – dismantling the face

For Deleuze and Guattari a Body without Organs is a kind of transitory state between territories, wherein an organism is able to detach the capacities of its subordinate "machines" or organs (understood here for example as patterns of behavior, desires, codes of conduct) from the limitation of the functions, organizations and hierarchies imposed on the organism by the rules of a given territory. As Daniel Smith explains:

> The body without organs is supposed to designate all of those things that an organic body could do, but that it is prevented from doing because of its homeostatic self-regulation processes. The body without organs is the full set of capacities or potentialities of a body prior to its being given the structure of an organism, which only limits and constrains what it can do: it is "what remains when you take everything away" . (106-107)

Therefore, an organism has a certain inherent potential to reinvent itself, to leave behind the stable structures and configurations of their organs. To become a Body without Organs is to realize that deterritorializing potential. By casting off the former productive function, the BwO can experiment and rearrange its organs to settle into a different territory. While in the later sections of this chapter I will develop the argument on how the main character may achieve BwO, for now let us consider how this concept interacts with the broader setting and the abstract mechanisms depicted in the novel. I argue that the scramble suit opens a way, or a line of flight for deterritorialization. Although a machine, with a specified productive function, it can be subverted.[57]

Based on the previously mentioned evidence, it can be argued that the scramble suit and the broader state apparatus which utilizes it, enact what Deleuze and Guattari would call a social and technical machine: a productive order which attempts to impose itself on the subject to keep it from achieving a Body without Organs. They condition and organize the subject to channel their creative force toward the production of capital[58]. However, these qualities also produce a disruption of identity for the wearer of the scramble suit. The anonymity which generates paranoia and enforces order for those outside of the suits, also causes a disassociation form identity for those inside of them.

This tension realizes itself as a deterritorializing force which in the Deleuzoguattarian framework is called "a line of flight." It is a vector of movement between the nodes of an assemblage or a rhizome which enables a deterritorialization of a productive subject into a Body without Organs. As the authors claim in *A Thousand Plateaus:*

57 Smith argues that, same as is the case with an organism, "Deleuze and Guattari [emphasize] the capacities that machines have to do something *other* than what they were designed to do. They do not understand machines to have been built »for« a specific end, which would thus remain within them as a kind of latent purpose or purposiveness" (100).

58 The hierarchical structure imposed by the Panopticon-like functioning of the state (represented by the scramble suit) creates docile, productive citizens by the way of contrasting them against the abnormality of the drug users. This idea will be further developed in section 5.3.1.

> Multiplicities are defined by the outside: by the abstract line, the line of flight or deterritorialization according to which they change nature and connect with other multiplicities…. The line of flight marks: the reality of a finite number of dimensions that the multiplicity effectively fills; the impossibility of a supplementary dimension, unless the multiplicity is transformed by the line of flight. (9)

Multiplicities, diverse complex structures not subordinate to a dominant signifier or a prior unity (Parr 176, Young 213), have the ability to undergo transformation by following a line of flight, outside of the limited scope of a rigid social structure. This line creates new possibilities for the multiplicity, which are not constrained by a single territory. In other words, the line of flight provides a direction away from a given organization of organs, liberating the creative forces within a body, allowing it to seek a new territory, new arrangement of subjective reality. The escape is ignited by a burst of accumulated creative energy. Once the organization of a multiplicity is dismantled, the restrictions of the previous territory are lifted. The body can conceptualize itself into a new multiplicity – reterritorialize and once again organize its organs to function in a productive process. A Body without Organs engaged in a chaotic, Brownian motion flows along the nodes of a multiplicity, experimenting and self-organizing into different territories. The unpredictable movement gives the BwO its fluidity, or the capacity to dynamically organize into new assemblages. In *A Scanner Darkly*, the anonymity and the morphing projections of multiple physiognomies granted by the scramble suit can be seen as a facilitation of that deterritorializing potential. The scramble suit – a machine that is designed as a tool of control becomes a potential site or catalyst of deterritorialization which, after all, is a movement away from authoritarian control over the individual.

In the novel, we can witness that rupture in the body of the protagonist that releases the accumulated potentialities into a line of flight. Bob, in an instance of social

anxiety, desires to fall back to his Fred persona, and considers different alternative identities offered by the scramble suit:

> What am I actually? he asked himself. He wished, momentarily, for his scramble suit. Then, he thought, I could go on being a vague blur and passers-by, street people in general, would applaud. ... It could be somebody other than Fred inside, or another Fred, and they'd never know, not even when Fred opened his mouth and talked. They wouldn't really know then. They'd never know. It could be Al pretending to be Fred, for example. It could be anyone in there, it could even be empty. ... Fred could in that case be anybody who happened to be at his desk that day. (21, ch. 2)

Bob notices the deterritorializing potential of the scramble suit. He begins to understand the notion that for an external observer the identity of the person inside the scramble suit is intrinsically undefinable, which feeds the possibility of a transformation for the wearer. This effectively reverses the logic, and thus the power, of the Panopticon. Here, Bob gains the insight that the surveillance state has no ability to enforce his self-organization. The veil of the suit grants him opportunity to rearrange his relation to society. The line of flight which springs forth from the assemblage of technologically mediated anonymity can be articulated as a subject's realization of his own capacity for making himself a Body without Organs.

Parallel to this, Bob considers a notion that in the context of social reality, there is no difference between the assumed or the signaled identity and one's self-identification: "You put on a bishop's robe and miter, he pondered, and walk around in that, and people bow and genuflect and like that, and try to kiss your ring, if not your ass, and pretty soon you're a bishop. So to speak. What is identity? he asked himself. Where does the act end? Nobody knows" (20-21, ch.2). What this thought expresses is that the pretense performed by the subject may transform that subject. The postmodern aspect of Dick's prose is especially evident here: Bob's thought process signals the idea of identity as a performance and the scramble suit allows the protagonist to access and internalize that concept. Assuming, or performing a different identity rearranges the organs into a new assemblage and the reterritorialization is completed. If this shift of the

subjective reality can indeed be called a line of flight, then the anonymity (and its consequences for the construction of identity) offered by the scramble suit would be a kind of line of flight located between the territories of the "straight" society with its apparatus of the state control, and the drug-users commune. The protagonist of the novel traverses this path each time he switches between the personas of Fred and Bob.

However, if the above is true, then it must also be concluded that the quasi-surrealist deconstruction of visuality that serves as the basis for the scramble suit's function is also indicative of the device's role in destabilizing any concept of essentialist identity. Deleuze and Guattari argue that "the face itself is redundancy … The face constructs the wall that the signifier needs in order to bounce off of" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 168). This function of the face is to individualize; the face is what *makes* the subject. For Deleuze and Guattari, the indeterminate potentiality of the body is constrained, weighted down by the linguistic signification that the listener/observer chooses to apply to the expressions, facial features and the overall physiognomy of their interlocutor. The face could be therefore considered the *prima facie* territory of humanism. If, as the example of the bishop from the previous paragraph shows, identity is legitimized by its performance and societal perception, then obscuring the face may liberate the subject from the calcified molar lines of the former territory. In Deleuze and Guattari's words: "If the face is a politics, dismantling the face is also politics involving real becomings, an entire becoming-clandestine. Dismantling the face is the same as breaking the wall of signifier and getting out of the black hole of subjectivity" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 188). Importantly, as Paul Patton argues, the freedom gained through this act "cannot be *captured* in liberal or humanist concepts of negative or positive freedom in terms of a subject's capacity to act without hindrance in the pursuit of its ends" (114). In other words, it is not as a "freedom to" or "freedom from"

something; the unitary pursuit of one's ends no longer applies to the subject-in-flight. When shifting between the assemblages, desire becomes more ambiguous. What Bob/Fred experiences whenever he assumes one or the other persona is a series of movements between social frameworks, or territories. He becomes a "schizo" in the Deleuzian sense, one who "carries along the decoded flows, makes them traverse the desert of the body without organs, where he installs his desiring-machines and produces a perpetual outflow of acting forces" (*Anti-Oedipus* 131). Bob and Fred are schizoid in that they are endowed with discrepant productive capacities. The liberating effect – or a line of flight – of this flow comes not from satisfying the subject's needs, but from the ability of the subject to change himself. Fred and Bob, physically different only in that one of them dons the scramble suit, are molecules in two assemblages, with distinct desires and traversing different territories. The scramble suit becomes, for a time, a tool for actualizing the liberating potential of a Body without organs, allowing for a technologically mediated movement between identities. Unfortunately, for the protagonist(s) this dynamic proves unsustainable and, as I will argue, the anonymity which underlines the process also erodes one's connections to their inter-subjective systems.

As with all configurations considered by schizoanalysis, Deleuze and Guattari warn that: "Dismantling the face is no mean affair. Madness is definite danger: Is it by chance that schizos lose their sense of the face, their own and others'…, the sense of language and its dominant significations all at the same time?" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 188). As we shall see, this threat proves true for Bob/Fred. The inability to self-identify either as an individual, or even as human, weakens the link between Fred and Bob, as well as the connection between Fred and humanity as a whole. Jennifer Rhee, referring to the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, claims that the scramble suit's alienating

qualities also lead to a detachment from the sphere of ethics: “Fred is deprived of face … De-faced, Fred is excluded from participating in the face-to-face encounter ant thus not given entry into the intersubjective relation…” (138). Fred/Bob inhibits his ability to form connections with other people. The linguistic ability based on identification and semiotics falls apart. He becomes paralyzed, helpless to take any action or communicate his circumstances, since he is trapped between two frameworks of signs and ethics: that of a member of a commune, and that of a narcotics agent. The anonymity – the denial of a face – inhibits empathy and any sense of belonging, making him emotionally detached. For a posthumanist scholar, Patricia MacCormack, “Skin is the site of encounter between enfleshed self and society. The skin is where the self involutes into the world and the world into the self. Skin is inscribed with texts of race, gender, sexuality, class and age” (22). From this perspective, the scramble suit may represent a cybernetic prosthesis which forms a barrier between the self and society, isolating the subject from meaningful interactions or reading of reality.

This additional layer of detachment also suppresses self-recognition. Indeed, Kucukalic sees in the scramble suit “a powerful metaphor of Fred/Arctor’s loss of selfhood” (181) that extends beyond physicality. While wearing the suit and reviewing the security footage of his own home, Fred cannot refer to himself – Bob – in the first person, in fear of ruining his cover. By the second half of the novel the disconnect is so severe that Fred either does not want to or cannot acknowledge even to himself that he and Bob share one physical body. When a fellow narcotics agent confronts him about it, Fred rejects the notion:

> “… I pieced it together a long time ago. That you’re Arctor.”
> “I’m *who*?” he said staring at Hank the scramble suit facing him. “I’m Bob Arctor?” He could not believe it. It made no sense to him. It did not fit anything he had don or thought, it was grotesque. (181, ch. 13)

In the above fragment the narration reveals how the association between Fred/Bob's autobiographical consciousness and identity diminishes. The process is additionally intensified by the effects of substance D which will be scrutinized in the next section. In short, the scramble suit puts Fred/Bob in a situation in which he lacks the means to recognize his own reflection in a mirror. In his constant movements with the ebb and flow of his positions in the state apparatus, Fred/Bob drifts farther and farther away from his sense of stable identity. The deterritorialization initiated by putting on the scramble suit is therefore both liberatory and estranging at the same time.

In his essay on Dick's late novels Scott Durham assesses that "Dick's works remain … an attempt to grapple with contradictions inherent in the politicization of late-capitalist delirium which no counter-hegemonic cultural politics can ultimately fail to address" (174). The position of Bob/Fred as at once an instrument of the state and as a member of a marginalized group is a clear example of this delirium. The subjects absorbed into the political machine are required to conduct surveillance on themselves. The mechanism of the Panopticon has been therefore successfully enhanced through bringing forth the paranoid aspect inherent in it, institutionalized and internalized by those taking part in it. In *A Scanner Darkly* the machine of control achieves its peak efficiency: Fred/Bob participates in the Panopticon both as the prisoner and the jailer. He moves from one position to the other in relative reterritorializations, but this movement also gradually strips him of the ability to organize back into a coherent personhood. Both of his roles are veiled in anonymity so that he cannot fully anchor himself to either of those identities. Peter Fitting argues that

> the split identity of Bob/Fred is an image of alienation and social contradiction. Bob's schizophrenia was the outcome of the attempt to resolve class conflict through the rewriting of this opposition in terms of "freaks" and "straights"; but the attempted resolution … leads instead to the destruction of the character involved. (232)

The once unitary subject becomes torn by a constant tug-of-war of de- and reterritorialization between his positions within the apparatus of the state and the drug-users commune. The product of that movement are the split personas of Fred/Bob Arctor: a person continuously shedding his identity through the deterritorializing anonymity of technology, and drug use.

In Dick's novel the crisis of identity is intensified and facilitated, at least partially, by the complex mechanisms of anonymity represented by the scramble suit, but also by the protagonist's addiction to substance D. While, as we have seen in this section, the technological prosthesis opens up a line of flight and initiates the dangerous process of experimentation with identities, it is drug abuse which ultimately catalyzes absolute, which means destructive, deterritorialization. In the next sections I will attempt to demonstrate how Dick, in his depiction of the consequences of drug abuse, creates an insightful representation of the idea of a failed or empty Body without Organs introduced by Deleuze and Guattari. The dangerous experiments with identity undertaken by Bob/Fred may prove to resolve in the annihilation of selfhood. I will investigate both societal and bio-chemical factors involved in these processes, and their implications for the discourse of posthumanism.

5.3. Substance D

In *A Scanner Darkly,* the processes of de- and reterritorialization manifest themselves on the levels of identity as well as neurobiology. There exists a connection between the mechanisms of the apparatus of control and the epidemic of addiction. The disenfranchised subjects in the novel seek escape from the oppression of the state through an apparently synthetic drug called "substance D" or "slow death." The addicted try to disrupt the organization of their productive organs in order to

deterritorialize, to escape from the social reality. Michael Foucault in the preface to *Anti-Oedipus* explains that according to Deleuze and Guattari, "The individual is the product of power. What is needed is to 'de-individualize' by means of multiplication and displacement, diverse combinations. The group [must be] a constant generator of de-individualization" (xiv). One could therefore see the drug-users' commune as one such formation. They escape the gaze of the control apparatus by making themselves into assemblages which do not comply to the processes of subjectification. As Durham argues: "Bob Arctor … emerges from a counter-culture whose use of mind-expanding drugs provides relief from the repressive world of the »straights« as well as the means for the creation of a realm of freedom within the suburban social field itself" (181). However, for many, the self-destructive practice of narcotization is a heavy price to pay for this liberatory action. It could be argued that the state of Bob's and other users' minds illustrates the result of de-individualizing practices that are not undertaken fully willingly or consciously; they are the sum total of the inadvertent side effects of addiction as well as the pressure of the state apparatus. Bob partakes in this deterritorialization without being aware that this process takes place, causing him to become a victim of confusion, paranoia and distrust of his own perception of reality. These modes of escape make the drug users vulnerable to two distinct, yet connected processes. One of them is to be signified as the Other – to undergo a reintroduction into the system as a depersonalized boogeyman, a tool to keep the straight society in check. The second process involves creating a failed or empty Body without Organs, when attempting to induce deterritorialization with drugs.

The consequences of these phenomena are unveiled to the reader in the narrative of progressing changes in perception and the construction of self-consciousness through the point-of-view character, Bob/Fred. However, as it is often the case with Dick's

protagonists, he is an everyman, and the struggles of the individual are also representative of the broader societal issues[59] and tendencies scrutinized by the novel. The following analysis of the repercussions of drug use will include both the crisis of identity experienced by Bob/Fred, as well as the context of a political reality of exclusion suffered by the addict's community.

5.3.1. Split identity on the level of society – manufacturing an enemy

The first signs of the struggle between social identities emerge in the second chapter of the novel. Bob/Fred, hidden under the scramble suit, is asked to give a speech about the goals of narcotics division's tasks to a group of wealthy citizens, unaffected by addiction, nicknamed "straights" in the novel. Initially following the script, soon the protagonist gets increasingly annoyed by the casual cruelty and lack of understanding of the drug-users' plight displayed by his audience. He deviates from the prepared lecture after realizing how disconnected the listeners are from the realities of addiction:

> "If you saw me on the street … you'd say, 'There goes another weirdo freak doper'. And you'd feel aversion and walk away." Silence…
> [He] thought, when you're living inside looking safely out, and your wall is electrified, why think about that?
> "If you were a diabetic," he said, "and you needed money for a hit of insulin, would you steal to get the money? Or just die?" Silence. (18-19, ch. 2)

In the above fragment, Fred attempts to reframe the issue by comparing addiction to a physical illness which should be treated rather than criminalized. However, the narration offers a glimpse into his internal monologue, which reveals that the healthy society detaches itself from the issue. They construct a discourse in which the drug users qualify not as members of the same group but rather as an outside threat, to be feared at worst and ignored at best. What Fred reveals here is that the de-personalizing

59 As Christopher Palmer notices, in Dick's narratives "it is usually society as a whole that is pathological, and very often the individual's illness consists in the fact that he takes upon himself the condition of society as a whole" (*Exhilaration and Terror* 39).

technologies of the state (the scramble suit being perhaps the most literal iteration of those) serve to territorialize, and individualize; to outline a clear division between *us* and *them*. It is the exercise of what Deleuze and Guattari call "factitious and artificial reterritorializations" undertaken by capitalism. According to them "Capitalism in constructed on the ruins of … the mythic and the tragic representations, but it re-establishes them in its own service and in another form, as images of capital" (*Anti-Oedipus* 303). The plight, the existential struggle experienced by the disenfranchised is reformed into a discourse promoting lawfulness, productivity and obedience, lest one becomes another outcast. The process induces a perception of artificial tribalism, ordering people into oppositional territories. The drug users once again serve a productive function: as the manufactured enemy. Therefore the drugs inadvertently work as a tool of intimidation for the state. Those who succumb to the addiction become pathological individuals in the eyes of society. They are on the outside, serving as a spectacle, a precautionary tale of what can happen if one does not abide by the norms of the system. Kucukalic points out that "Throughout *A Scanner Darkly* we are reminded that the two worlds – the establishment and anti-establishment – exist under the same rules and conditions of buying and selling" (185). Commodity dictates the economic circumstances of the straight society and the drug users alike. It provides the incentive for the former to stay in line and propels the drug trade. Descriptions of the narcotic's price and fantasies about pharmacies supplied with substance D are intertwined with images of chain restaurants and coca-cola vending machines. Christopher Palmer also positions this relation as Dick's re-staging a dialectic of exclusion and inclusion: "Those who seemed discarded and neglected, whose economic situation and marginal culture is sympathetically delineated, are a part of a whole after all: their lives on the margin replicate the conditions of exchange and consumption that prevail throughout the

society" (*Exhiliration and Terror* 178). This observation encapsulates the tragic irony of the economic reality of the novel: both straights and drug users are subordinate to the same regime of capital. The regime in its drive for self-preservation creates a schism, a signified differentiation between forms of consumption, allowing one group to develop a sense of moral superiority, and thus create an enemy. The systemic problem of a capital-driven abandonment and violence towards a group becomes disguised as a fight against a demoralizing influence. Haraway describes this process when she argues that "Gender, race, or class consciousness is an achievement forced on us by the terrible historical experience of the contradictory social realities of patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism" ("A Cyborg Manifesto" 75). The division occurring in Dick's Los Angeles is a model of such contradictory social reality. For the drug users, a narrowed-down world presents itself, with a reduced scope of possibilities. Once a category has been constituted, the subject is denied the ability to imagine themselves as anything other than that category. The systems of power manufacture a segmented social reality which is instilled into the subjects, imposing obedience and docility.

In other words, the rhetoric of the state creates an Other. Here, in the framework of critical posthumanism, we are dealing with what Rosi Braidotti sees as a symptom of the core issue of the liberal humanism: an arbitrary dichotomy between who does and does not qualify as a human. She writes:

> The dialectics of otherness is the inner engine of humanist Man's power, who assigns difference on a hierarchical scale as a tool of governance. All other modes of embodiment are cast out of the subject position and they include anthropomorphic others: non-white, non-masculine, non-normal, non-young, non-healthy disabled, malformed or enhanced peoples … All these 'others' are rendered as pejoration, pathologized and cast out of normality. (*The Posthuman* 68)

Following these characteristics, one could classify the drug addicts of *A Scanner Darkly* as such Other – disenfranchised and shunned from the normative, humanistic society. They lack the productive value in the economic sense, the sole marker of worthiness for

a citizen. Due to their chemically induced neurodivergence and substance dependency they may be excluded from any stable support network, which will only result in driving them deeper into addiction.

On the other hand, this kind of a nomadic subject, who finds themselves outside of the class paradigm may begin to search for alternative modes of being through a movement between territories which do not fall into the hierarchies imposed by the dominant systems. It approaches the posthuman state argued for by scholars such as Braidotti. In fact, in Francesca Ferrando's view posthumanism strives towards post-dualism, that is "the awareness that dualism has been employed as a rigid way to define identity, based on a closed notion of the self and actualized in symbolic dichotomies, such as 'us'/'them', 'friend'/'foe'… and so on" (*Philosophical Posthumanism* 54). Dick explicitly creates this awareness in the narrative of *A Scanner Darkly* and continues to present the devastating consequences of such rigid divisions as well as the struggle to break out of them. The novel deconstructs those political realities by stressing how the healthy society and the drug users are the same people separated only by the exercises of power over their bodies (through substance dependence) and minds (through instilled awareness of surveillance). Therefore, the primary distortion of reality that the reader encounters in *A Scanner Darkly* comes not in the form of drug-induced hallucination, but from a construction of false dichotomy on the level of social or political reality. The signifier of "human*"* has been split and hierarchized. Or rather, if we follow Braidotti's conception of the Other, it was incomplete from its Enlightenment-era beginnings, and the state merely weaponized that distortion of reality against the undesirables.

Kucukalic notices how Dick exposes the arbitrariness of these divisions through the character of Bob Arctor who straddles the line between these groups: "the two realms are not established as a duality, but instead, Arctor's personal demise is set

against a structure that intertwines the drug world and the straight world, showing that they operate under the same rules" (178). Each of *A Scanner Darkly's* characters contains lines of potential transformations and becomings spreading in every direction. What restricts their identities and sets the boundaries between the worlds of drug-addicts and "straights" are the tools of ideology, the mechanisms of power. In order to better hold control over the society, the rigid structures are reinforced, while fluid assemblages are marginalized and pathologized. Because of those restrictions, to achieve a line of flight, for any deterritorializing movements to take place, an enormous volatility is needed. It could be said that the straight society represents the kind of territorializing influence that Rivkin and Ryan in their foreword to Deleuze and Guattari's selected texts describe as "the moments of fixity and power" (378), while the drug-users escape towards the possibility of the posthuman – in the sense of being non-dual and non-hierarchical – movements of "undoing, [moments] when fixed orders fall apart and are transformed" (378). That is why the counter-culture poses a threat to the structures of power, and as the next section will show, to themselves.

5.3.2. Destruction of the *self* – botched BwO

As the plot of the novel progresses, so does the mental instability of Bob Arctor. The signification that divided the society brings to the protagonist a profound confusion of identities. In his desperate, drug-fueled struggle to operate between two territories, his personality splits. Shifting back and forth in a nervous movement between emulating two incomparable ethical modes traps Bob/Fred in a limbo outside of social structures. The narration unveils how the protagonist sees himself in different positions at the same time: "To himself, Bob Arctor thought, *How many Bob Arctors are there?* ... Two that I

can think of, he thought. The one called Fred, who will be watching the other one, called Bob. The same person. Or is it? Is Fred actually the same as Bob? … *But*, he thought, *who am I? Which of them is me?"* (74-75, ch. 6). Fred/Bob falls into an existential crisis when he stops entirely to recognize the other persona as himself. As we have established, a major component of this confusion comes from the overwhelming tension between identities imposed on the subject. In the Deleuzian framework, to escape such imposed productive scheme, one must make themselves a Body without Organs and experiment with fluid configurations of assemblages. Allucqere Rosanne Stone presents a position in which "Multiple personality… is the site of a massive exercise of power and its aftermath, the site of marshaling of physical proof that identity – of whatever form – arises in crisis" (35). She uses an example of the court of law in which the victim is required to "manifest a collection of identities, each one of which is recognizable to the jury as a legal subject" (35). These personas are necessary in the frame of the legal system to legitimize their victim-hood, but at the same time they evoke the trauma and violence to the point of grotesque. Similarly, the state machine forces Bob into a set of roles in which he – as Fred – has to inflict performative violence and intimidation on himself. At one point we read: "a portion of himself turns against him … defeating him from the inside" (147, ch.11). This kind of spectacle, executed within the bounds of the apparatus of power is the mechanism that contributes to Bob's personality split, inciting his desire for an escape from a calcified, politicized formulation of reality into deterritorialization.

However, Bob/Fred seeks the means for this maneuver in a hallucinogenic drug: substance D. At first, Bob excuses his growing addiction by rationalizing it as a way for a narcotics agent to blend into the commune. Later, the act of consuming the substance becomes a coping mechanism against the looming realization of his neurological

damage. He claims: "I know, if I just had another hit, that my brain would repair itself" (50, ch.4). It is an instance of what Chris Rudge, in his essay on biopolitics in Dick's fiction, calls "auto-deployments of *tekne iatrikes* (medical and mechanical arts). These are the subjects' various modes and techniques of healing themselves … or otherwise investing in the material consumption of a substance, instigating the performance of a procedure that suits or furthers their ends" (34). For a politicized subject such as Bob, partaking in addiction may be therefore a possibly inadvertent protest or rejection of modern processes of control applied to their bodies as outlined by Foucault. The question then arises: are those techniques successful, or does the desperate self-medication strain the abused social body even more?

Bob is already dealing with a mental crisis of identities. The drug adds to that a disturbance in the perception of reality. At various points in the novel he experiences olfactory hallucinations overpowering his cognizance in a moment of stress, seemingly isolating him from the reality of the situation; the drug disturbs passage of time and inhibits his rational faculties, when Bob cannot correctly comprehend the simple mechanism of a bicycle gear-shift; it also causes his mind to adjust the perceived reality to his subconscious desires, when the face of Donna, who rejected him, is superimposed on the image of his lover. All these psychological phenomena, compounded with Bob/Fred personality split, are revealed to be effects of the drug wreaking havoc on the protagonist's brain. During a check-up, a medical deputy diagnoses Fred with neurological damage:

> In many of those taking Substance D, a split between the right hemisphere and the left hemisphere of the brain occurs. There is a loss of proper gestalting, which is a defect within both the percept and cognitive systems, although *apparently* the cognitive system continues to function normally … It's a toxic brain psychosis affecting the percept system by splitting it. (86, ch. 7)

If the effects of the drug are so severe, then what, aside from chemical dependency, pushes Bob further down the spiral of addiction and schizophrenia? While Dick constructs this phenomenon based on a 1968 neurological study[60], if we approach this diagnosis through the Deleuzoguattarian framework, it can be seen as the effects of "a botched BwO."

In his attempt to produce a Body without Organs, Bob/Fred fails at what Deleuze and Guattari point to be "a very delicate experimentation since there must not be any stagnation of the modes or slippage in type: the masochist and the drug user court these ever present dangers that empty their BwO's instead of filling them" (152). Firstly, in the case of the protagonist of *A Scanner Darkly* this "stagnating mode" of being as a BwO is the deadly drive towards escapism into a hallucinatory state. However, while the addict strives to disengage from the identity imposed by society, he does not realize that he is immediately pulled back into it by the process of signification as the Other, the mold of a shunned drug user, as outlined in the previous section. Those repeated attempts are stagnant in that they do not get him any further from the dominant territory (in Deleuze and Guattari's words: "you can fail twice, but it is the same failure"(152)), while the body and mind deteriorate. Secondly, the "slippage in type" of the BwO, or a confusion or hesitancy over one's process of deterritorialization, comes from the fact that Bob/Fred already engages in the deterritorializing movements (as it is shown in section 5.2.2) when he shifts between identities while donning on the scramble suit. The drug use introduces interference into that process disrupting the reformation of productive organs. The combination of drug abuse and juggling identities dislodges the trajectory from a single line of flight and into a state of limbo. As Deleuze and Guattari warn: "If you free [BwO] with too violent an action, if you blow apart the strata without

60 Bogen, Joseph E. (1968). "The other side of the brain: An appositional mind." *Bulletin of the Los Angeles Neurological Society* 34:135-62.

taking precautions, then instead of drawing the plane you will be killed, plunged into a black hole, or even dragged toward catastrophe" (161). If a "filled" BwO is one that transforms its organs along a controlled, deliberate trajectory, or line of flight, then an empty BwO has wasted its transformative energy and cannot resist outside signifying forces, and is essentially *drifting* between territories until it falls into the gravity well of the dominant territory. The black scenario presented here is what Bob/Fred experiences when he is torn asunder between two states of being, and thus throws himself into the unreality governed only by intensities of his desires.

The most prominent instance of such a collapse of subjective reality can be distinguished in the moment of the novel where Fred, at that point already dissociated from Bob, reviews the holographic projection of a surveillance recording taken in Bob's bedroom. Earlier, a fellow drug user, Donna, had rejected Bob's sexual advances. To console himself, Bob slept with another junkie, Connie. When Fred watches the intercourse captured by the scanners, he notices that Connie's face is replaced with Donna's. Believing he imagined the anomaly, he rewinds the tape, only to discover that Donna's likeness is apparently grafted onto the recording (ch. 10). Fred experiences a hallucination so strong that it becomes seemingly implanted onto the material reality, distorting the digital information. The fact that the scanner, or the recording, also have been compromised by the delusion means that either the drug's effects are permanent and consistently distorting Fred's perception, or that his hallucinations have somehow infected physical reality of the technological object.

Interestingly, the ontological confusion is catalyzed or even amplified by technology. Just as Fred uses the scramble suit to create a distance between himself and society, he also utilizes the scanner as a prosthesis to validate his hallucinatory perception. The technology, the subject and their present circumstances create a

structural coupling of systems. The downside of that cybernetic symbiosis is that neither the reader nor Fred can be sure at which link of this ontological chain the interference/hallucination occurs. Is it Fred, his scanner, or the reality itself that is distorted? If "the real is the end product, the result of the passive syntheses of desire as autoproduction of the unconscious" (*Anti-Oedipus* 25), then there apparently is no difference, since the elements of the assemblage are mutually productive. They are also mutually cohesive in the sense that the hallucination assimilates those aspects of the world, which are supposed to affirm the "objective" reality.[61] In a way, Fred inadvertently makes himself, in a coupling with his scanner, a schizoid machine through which desire produces a reality. The organs, dislocated from their productive functions through Bob's deterritorializing practices, engage in the Brownian motion building up the potential energy. For Fred, these forces manifest themselves akin to ripples on water surface; the distorted reality registered by the scanner is precisely this kind of a ripple.

At first glance, this could be considered a successful creation of a Body without Organs and its subsequent reterritorialization, through "a schizophrenic experience of intensive qualities in their pure states … [which] are often described as hallucination or delirium" (*Anti-Oedipus* 18). In their reinterpretation of Judge Schreber's account, Deleuze and Guattari argue that

> Delirum and hallucination are secondary in relation to the really primary emotion, which in the beginning only experiences intensities, becomings, transitions. Where do these pure intensities come from? They come from two preceding forces, repulsion and attraction, and from the opposition of these two forces. … Further, if we are to believe Judge Schreber's doctrine, *attraction and repulsion* produce intense *nervous states* that

61 Here, it is the scanner that is supposed to capture reality, yet the digital picture morphs permanently into the hallucination. The phantasmagorical overrides and replaces the physical reality. Similar occurrences are present all throughout Dick's oeuvre: In *Three Stigmata…* the whole world becomes "infected" with Palmer Eldritch's physiognomy; in *Eye in the Sky* the characters collectively travel through universes constructed from their subconscious desires; in *Martian Time-Slip* Manfred's schizophrenia seemingly alters the perception of reality of mechanical automatons, and so on, which gives more credence to the previous assessment that for Dick, subjective perception can never capture unmediated reality. Through these reoccurring distortions, the author emphasizes that what the subject experiences is a contingent organization of their social, material and mental circumstances.

> fill up the body without organs to varying degrees … following an endless circle of eternal return. (18-19)

Since the present persona, Fred, is disconnected from Bob, so are his desires and emotions. Because of that, the hallucination does not become a positive force. The preceding forces, which are supposed to balance out and initiate the flight, are divided between two subjects. Therefore the BwO becomes "empty," that is, it loses the ability to reconfigure its organs back to any productive functions. Or, as Eugene B. Young defines it, it is "a poorly constructed BwO, or failed experiment, whose flows or intensities are interrupted, blocked, or stratified, and thus do not produce anything" (56). With no clear vector of escape Bob/Fred is left with an impotent intensity. The accumulated energies cannot be transferred into an appropriate line of flight, since Fred does not recognize Bob's desire emerging from the latter's mind, bringing to the former only shock and confusion. The protagonist, in a violent movement is flung away from any coherent territory allowing the holographic/hallucinogenic vision of Donna to usurp his reality as a sort of interference, cross-wiring of two identities which overloads the system. The BwO cannot reterritorialize, to reform a coherent organism. The hallucination is evidence that Bob/Fred is permanently stuck between two incongruous assemblages. The desiring functions of one's organs seep into the other, at which point their subjective perceptions break down. The intensities dissipate transforming the potential BwO of a schizophrenic into the empty BwO of a drug user.

This emptiness surfaces in the narrative further on in the novel, this time from the perspective of Bob. Entering his home, he instinctively feels the disembodied gaze of the hidden holographic scanners, and by extension, that of Fred. He expresses it in a way that could be considered paranoid, if not for the fact that he is indeed surveyed. Interestingly, Bob dehumanizes the apparent watchers by convincing himself that "whatever it is that's watching, it is not a human" (146, ch. 11). Thus the persona of

Fred is reduced into a machinic function. Bob proclaims that "something" is watching him – the eponymous scanner. He wonders: "What does a scanner see?… Into the head? Down into the heart? [Does it] see into me – into us – clearly or darkly? I hope it does, he thought, see clearly, because I can't any longer these days see into myself. I see only murk" (146, ch. 11). Bob, who can no longer identify his autobiographical *self* – desperately hopes that the state machine may bring him back into a stable territory, to ground him, even if to a position of a docile, surveyed subject. Tragically, the scanner – Fred – is already infected by Bob with the conflicting flows of desire, as evidenced by the appearance of Donna's visage on the recording. What is left for both of them is a deteriorating, empty BwO.

Substance D is tellingly nicknamed "slow death," "high-grade death," "*mors ontologica,"* "death of the spirit" at different points of the novel. Dick is adamant in reminding the reader that the flight undertaken by the drug users drives them towards an annihilation of consciousness. Importantly, Deleuze and Guattari notice that danger, and caution that in becoming a BwO:

> you invent self-destructions that have nothing to do with the death drive. Dismantling the organism has never meant killing yourself, but rather opening the body to connections that presuppose an entire assemblage. … If in dismantling the organism there are times one courts death, in slipping away from significance and subjection one courts falsehood, illusion and hallucination and psychic death
> (*A Thousand Plateaus* 160).

These are warnings for caution, and for a deliberate, conscious and controlled experimentation with BwO. A volatile unconstrained deterritorialization may guide the subject into a vulnerable, unsustainable configuration of the organism, such as the Bob/Fred split described in *A Scanner Darkly*. Through the narrative of Bob Arctor's descent into physical and psychological self-annihilation, and through the motif of a consciousness-destroying narcotic, Dick seems to offer the same warning: counter-culture is crucial for liberating oneself from the reification by the state, but is not a

sustainable means to that end, since the process is destructive to the experimenter. Arctor's experimentation with drugs and identities eventually leads to brain-tissue necrosis. According to the medical deputies, the damage in his left hemisphere causes the right one to attempt to compensate for the impairment. This compensation can be seen as the beginning of a process of repair that we shall analyze in the next section. However, because the brain is not adjusted to that change, Bob/Fred perceives "the world as reflected in a mirror … *pulled through infinity"* (169, ch. 13). The theme of a darkened scanner returns once again and Fred finally realizes the extent of his mental deterioration through that metaphor: "that reflection that returns to you: it is you, it is your face, but it isn't … I have seen myself backward" (169, ch.13). The catastrophic disconnection of identities is complete, to the point where Bob/Fred cannot identify his autobiographical self even without the barrier of a scramble suit. When the identities of both personas collapse, Arctor, in a final desperate act seeks help in an addiction treatment facility called the New-Path.

Kylie Message emphasizes that "BwO does not equate literally to an organ-less body." Instead, it "seeks a mode of articulation that is free from the biding tropes of subjectification and signification [but] it must play a delicate game of maintaining some reference to these systems of stratification, or else risk obliteration or reterritorialization back into these systems" (33). Therefore, the BwO has the capacity to transform and subvert the organs through which it experiences the world and itself, but it should not abandon the stable territories completely. Some initial framework is necessary to successfully navigate the possible lines of flight. As we shall see in the next section, a complete deterritorialization that Bob/Fred ultimately undergoes is met with both of the dangers articulated by Message. First, the combined deteriorating effects of the drug and the mental strain of shifting between two identities leave the protagonist's sense of self

annihilated, reduced to a reflexive machine[62]. Then, the reprogramming suffered at The New-Path, and the subversion of his fellow agents reify him. We shall analyze the protagonist's final persona, as a failed, annihilated Body without Organs, but also as an instance of an embodied being approaching a posthuman status thanks to the concept of brain plasticity.

5.4. Bruce – the prosthesis

Arctor, desperate to recover, is brought by Donna to the New-Path drug rehabilitation clinic. It is a fictional institution loosely based on Dick's own traumatic experience with California's X-Kalay addiction treatment center (Arnold 86). There, under a regime of physical strain and psychological abuse, the protagonist transforms for a final time into a new personality – Bruce. This is where the reader is met with two revelations. First, New-Path is a cover for a *criminal* organization manufacturing substance D and the patients are brain-washed into becoming mindless slaves working on producing the drug. Second, Donna is secretly a federal narcotics agent who deliberately primes and sends Arctor to retrieve evidence of New-Path's criminal role.

When cautioning against the danger of botching a BwO, Deleuze and Guattari note that "Staying stratified – organized, signified, subjected – is not the worst that can happen: the worst that can happen is if you throw the strata into demented or suicidal collapse, which brings them back on us heavier than ever" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 161). This danger – the violent return of subjectifying forces – is realized at the end of the novel. The empty BwO that used to be Bob Arctor is reintroduced into the same productive territory that caused his destructive deterritorialization – Bruce is now making the drug that created him. On the other hand, the state apparatus that initiated

62 "Reflexive" in the sense of performing habitual, automatic actions, without conscious consideration.

Bob's/Fred's confusion of identities, now capitalizes on his damaged body. During a short fragment when the narration moves away from Arctor's point of view, the reader gets a glimpse at the thought process of another narcotic's agent, Mike:

> Substance D, like heroin, was organic. Not the product of a lab. So he meant quite a bit when he thought, as he frequently did, that all those profits could well keep New-Path solvent – *and growing.*
> The living, he thought should never be used to serve the purposes of the dead. But the dead – he glanced at Bruce, the empty shape beside him – should, if possible, serve the purposes of the living… The dead, Mike thought… they are our camera (210, ch. 15)

Arctor – Bruce – is reified into the state apparatus as the camera, a scanner. This quality is emphasized by the fact that Bruce suffers echolalia: he automatically repeats whatever is said to him. Emptied from his potential intensities, he is instrumentalized as a reflexive organ, stripped of agency and any prior personality. In the words of Murakami-Wood: "this is the organ without a body rather than the body without organs. Fred/Bob/Bruce has become by this stage in his view, not exactly a machine, not exactly a human, but only the mechanical watching components of a human being" (51). Any other organs, the protagonist's mental capacities to return to full consciousness, to reterritorialize on his own terms, are obliterated. The hollow body becomes Bruce, easily filled with mechanisms of subservience – he becomes an allopoietic component of the state machine. However, there is still hope. The destruction is not final. A trace of the transformative potential remains, in the form of a biological prosthesis. Bruce's brain and body can be just as well framed as an autopoietic system which rebuilds itself, circumventing the ruination. As was the case with Ella Runciter in *Ubik,* the death or dissolution of the subject is not the final step of a node in a posthuman system, but an opportunity for a re-organization.

The realization of that potential may be seen in the final chapter of the novel, when Bruce is sent to a farm to tend to the New-Path's crops. The mental and physical conditioning applied in the facility is supposed to put an epistemological block,

preventing the workers from perceiving the actual crops: little blue flowers, *mors ontologica* – the organic source of substance D. However, for a just a moment Bruce overcomes that cognitive barrier and notices the plants, whereupon the New-Path's director covers his eyes:

> He bent down and saw growing near the ground a small flower, blue. Many of them in short tinkly tinky stalks. Like stubble. Chaff. …
> Such lovely flowers.
> "You're seeing the flower of the future," Donald, the Executive Director of New-Path, said. "But not for you."
> "Why not for me?" Bruce said.
> "You've had too much of a good thing already," the Executive Director said. He chuckled. "So get up and stop worshiping – this isn't your god any more, your idol, although it was once. A transcendent vision, is that what you see growing here? You look as if it is." He tapped Bruce firmly on the shoulder, and then, reaching down his hand, he cut the sight off from the frozen eyes.
> "Gone," Bruce said. "Flowers of spring gone."
> "No, you simply can't see them. That's a philosophical problem you wouldn't comprehend. Epistemology – the theory of knowledge."
> Bruce saw only the flat of Donald's hand barring the light, and he stared at it a thousand years. It locked; it had locked; it will lock for him, lock forever for dead eyes outside time, eyes that could not look away and a hand that would not move away. Time ceased as the eyes gazed and the universe jelled along with him, at least for him, froze over with him and his understanding, as its inertness became complete. There was nothing he did not know; there was nothing left to happen. (216, ch.17)

This scene may be read as an illustration of a complex process wherein a body with greatly diminished, if not completely destroyed, self-reflexive capacities becomes reorganized as an instrument of perception for a broader network of its environment. As I will explain further, this organization may be facilitated by the plastic quality of the brain, but first I want to outline the relation of this new body-as-perceptual-apparatus to its environment.

The narration and dialogue, such as the mention of "a transcendent vision" and the revelation that "there was nothing [Bruce] did not know"[63], suggest that in this

63 While the idea is reminiscent of the American transcendentalist R.W. Emerson's metaphor of a transparent eyeball ("I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me" (6)), the crucial difference is that this moment of ego-death for transcendentalists was an intermediate step to a celebration of individualism and appreciation of the natural world, while here the understanding comes without the capacity for admiration, since the knowledge of reality begins at the point where consciousness ends. It is the posthuman view as proposed by Hayles in which "reflexive epistemology replaces objectivism; distributed cognition replaces autonomous will" (288).

configuration, the resultant perspective is somehow broader or more receptive to the material complexity of this new assemblage. An answer as to why that is may be provided by posthumanist scholar, Cary Wolfe. He builds upon Niklas Luhmann's argument that psychic and social systems construct an organizational boundary between themselves and their environment as a means of self-preservation, by selecting and conceptualizing and thus reducing the complexity of the raw information. Wolfe proposes further that "Under pressure to adapt to a complex and changing environment, systems increase their selectivity – they make their environmental filters more finely woven, if you like – by building up their own internal complexity by means of self-referential closure" (14-15). If this understanding of self-reference is to be applied to the human, then consciousness emerges as such a selective filter, ordering the constant flow of stimuli. A conscious human subject, in the process of self-organizing constructs a subjective reality, and a boundary between themselves and the "outside." Once this mechanism is disabled, as is the case with Bruce's brain damage in *A Scanner Darkly*, the environmental complexity floods in, the system/environment distinction collapses, and the body becomes an organ of the environment. If individual consciousness is the result of a reduction of material complexity so that the subject may conceptualize or signify reality, then with the loss of the self that complexity reveals itself. Bruce changes from an observer equipped with a faulty instrument into an instrument of observation for a broader system.

When Arctor becomes "a camera," as Mike calls him, he no longer has to rely on his consciousness – which produces reality distorted by conflicting territories – and can instead be positioned as an organ in the network that is his environment. This is what allows him to notice the flowers, hidden beneath the crops and obscured by New-Path's

brainwashing. When Donald, the Executive Director puts his palm over the eyes[64], he effectively turns off the camera/scanner: he deprives the perceptive organ – literal: the eyes, and metaphorical: Bruce himself – of its only function. This may be why time itself seems to momentarily stop for the protagonist; with the individualized self annihilated "there was nothing left to happen" – no subjective temporalization or thought – without the connection to the rest of the assemblage.

The process of Bruce becoming such a system may be explained by the idea of brain plasticity as presented by Catherine Malabou. For Bruce, the mediation of environmental stimuli by the human consciousness is circumvented by brain plasticity which links the outside – the material reality – to the body. Malabou asserts that

> the idea of cellular renewal, repair, and resourcefulness as auxiliaries of synaptic plasticity brings to light the power of *healing* – treatment, scarring, compensation, regeneration, and the capacity of the brain to build natural prostheses… the affected structures or functions try to modify themselves so as to compensate for the new deficit" (*What should we do…* 27-28).

Plasticity allows the nervous system to make new connections, and to compensate for the damage not by the way of recreation but creativity. If the subject's sense of self, their personality, is destroyed by the outside forces, chemical imbalance or severe trauma, plasticity offers a prospect for new structures of subjectivity to emerge. The new personalities that Arctor adapts in his struggle against the pressures of society and the biological damage of drug abuse can be interpreted as forms of those natural prostheses. The progressing trauma is compensated for with whatever new, temporary formulation of identity can be built upon his experiences and surroundings.

However, the shift into Bruce is certainly more radical than shuffling between the personas of Bob and Fred, since the former were, at least to a degree, self-aware, and interacting with each other. Bruce, on the other hand marks a definite detachment

64 Crucially, the narration repeatedly describes them not as "Bruce's eyes" but "the frozen eyes" or "the dead eyes" – as if these organs were somehow separate from the subject.

not only from the previous identities, but also from a functioning, conscious subjectivity. In a later work, *The New Wounded*, Malabou analyzes the possibility of a trauma so severe, that the brain's compensating plastic processes have to erase the previous, damaged personality and construct a new subject, often with diminished or completely lacking emotional and self-recognizing affects. She assesses:

> If the wound, as the determining cause of the transformation of the psyche, has a plastic power, it can only be understood in terms of the third sense of plasticity: explosion and annihilation. If brain damage creates a new identity, this creation can be only *creation through the destruction of form.* The plasticity at stake here is thus destructive plasticity. (*The New Wounded* 17)

Bruce certainly fits that mold, however, Malabou acknowledges that even in this sort of negative, destructive plasticity, there remains a trace of the previous subjectivity, if only as the origin point, the facilitator of its self-destruction or replacement:

> It would be necessary to consider that, in order to think the work of negative plasticity – that is, evacuation of identity, absence from self, or absence to oneself – one must also postulate the existence of an internal, endogenous, process of destruction that responds to the traumatic stimulus and welcomes it, in a sense, facilitating its work of annihilation. (*The New Wounded* 70)

Perhaps in Bob/Fred there existed a certain internal assessment, an anxiety that the only line of flight which had not collapsed was this destruction of self. In that case, Bruce would be a product of a negative plasticity, that has been molded from a desperate desire to escape the trauma suffered by his preceding subjectivity.

Yet, this newly formulated position allows Bruce to undertake one last act of agency – a remnant of the goals of his previous identities – and smuggle one of the flowers to present as evidence for other narcotics agents. Fred/Bob engaged in the surveillance apparatus as an undercover agent in hopes of contributing to the disruption of the manufacturing and trade of substance D. In the final scene of the novel, Bruce hides the flower of *mors ontologica* in his shoe in hopes of showing it to his "friends," the narcotics agents, at a later opportunity. Provided by Bruce, such physical evidence would instigate an investigation into the New-Path as the manufacturer of Slow Death.

The narration leaves it ambiguous whether Bruce is aware that he is helping to bring down the drug production. Yet, if we follow Malabou's theory of plasticity, we can come to the conclusion that the question of *what (or who) exactly* does the thinking here is moot. An agency is on display here, even if it is not the agency of the narcotics agent Bob, but rather the plastic brain's prosthesis. It is a Deleuzoguattarian organ that reformed; it adjusted its function in a new territory and took the place of the destroyed ego. The consciousnesses of Bob and Fred did not survive until the finale of the novel, nevertheless their goal – to bring down the drug trade – has been reached by that which replaced them.

It is important here to make a distinction between Bob Arctor's personal ambition to end the drug trade stemming from his experience within the community, and the drug war perpetuated by the control apparatus of the state, for which Bob Arctor (as Fred) was a tool. While Bruce's final action indeed contributes to the goal of the state, thus confirming his reterritorialization, ultimately it does not register as such, since the final sentence of the novel reveals that he treats the smuggled flower as "a present for my friends" (217, ch.17). Bruce's agency is not so much an extension of the state's power but a residual echo of a personal, subjective effort on Bob's part to contribute to the betterment of life of his community – the friends, as expressed at the beginning of the novel, when Arctor goes off-script in his speech to a group of politicians: "Don't kick their asses after they're on it. The users, the addicts… Just try to keep them, the people, any of us, from getting on it" (20, ch.2).

When the personas of Bob and Fred spiral into decay, Bruce usurps the primary spot in the brain, operating on those parts on the brain, which have not been destroyed. In fact, for Malabou the default mode of being in the contemporary society is for "the individual ... to occupy the midpoint between the taking on of form and the annihilation

of form – between the possibility of occupying a territory and accepting the rules of deterritorialization. … We live in an epoch in which identity is defined no longer as a permanent essence but as a process of autoconstruction" (*What should we do…* 70-71). Where Bob/Fred errs in this endeavor is that navigating this midpoint requires a delicate balance, whereas he moves intensely and violently between territories, pulled by the forceful tides of the apparatus of surveillance from one side, and substance abuse from the other. The price he pays is the overwhelming trauma, reparable only through "negative" plasticity. The destruction is not final, since the plasticity creates a new autopoietic system with the material environment. What Bruce regains is the availability of lines of flight, which have been denied to Bob/Fred. David Roden, combining the cyborg ontology with Deleuzian vocabulary defines a line of flight as "an abstract potential for the transformation of a non-unified and one heterogeneous system or »multiplicity« into a new state or new mode of functioning" (31). Bruce is one such posthuman machine, inducted into an autopoietic system as a scanner, an eye for a broader assemblage. At the cost of self-consciousness, he gains access to a much broader perspective on his environment, signaled in the fragment discussed earlier by the phrase "There was nothing he did not know" (216, ch.17). He is unable to see the whole picture on his own, but through incorporation into the network of matter, a clearer picture of reality is produced.

It could be argued that Bruce's ontology stands as a model of "unlearning the human" or in other words, seeing reality through a *posthumanist reading,* as proposed by Herbrecheter and Callus. In an essay they ask "how is it possible to read as if one were not human, or at least from a position of analytical detachment in relation to the humanity – whether 'essential' or 'constructed' – that informs and determines the very position from which it is read?" (95). For the authors, the difficulty of such a reading

comes from the contradiction of reading "against one's self, against one's own deep-seated self-understanding as a member or even representative of a certain 'species'" (95). However, if Bruce does not possess a self-understanding, then this contradiction is resolved. His "reading" of his surroundings, his understanding of reality, is untethered from preconceived notions of identity. Lack of self-consciousness, inability to place oneself within the society, to be self-reflective enough to internalize an identity – of a drug addict, or a straight – is the quality which finally allows for a perception of a reality not muddled by ideological, discursive distinctions. Both Fred's and Bob Arctor's perspectives were compromised by where they saw themselves in their respective territories. Fred could not accept the reality that he and Arctor are the same person, because of the sense of superiority instilled by the polarized society. Bob's drug abuse compromises his perception. His personal paranoia and desires feed the damaged parts of his brain which in turn projects them onto his perception of reality. Bruce is not burdened by either ego or desire. Without personality, without the ability to look inward, to create an idea of self, there is nothing which can be projected outward. With the outside/inside barrier obliterated, Bruce becomes a part of an autopoietic system of his environment, a node in the network, capable only of receiving stimuli and outputting information of reality. He is an eye, a scanner, a true cyborg.

Depicting a human being as an embodied set of informational processes involved in dynamic structural couplings with their environment is what scholars such as Hayles and Stefan Herbrechter argue for as a model of the posthuman. The latter posits that

> The posthuman individual as social and political actor within a deathropocentered environment is not so much a singular identity but a collection of co-operating actors… [Agency] continues to exist but at a more complex and social level and might indeed happen at a level of consciousness that is outside the individual and human subject. The true nature of subjectivity as fragmented, contradictory and irreducible to conscious self-identity, ultimately remains unknowable, since subjectivity and

> environment often simply 'emerge' and are thus to an extent unforeseeable. (Herbrechter, *Posthumanism* 212-213)

For Malabou as well, the consciousness and identity are secondary, emergent phenomena, preceded by what she calls the "proto-self," "a form of *organic representation of the organism itself* that maintains its coherence" (*What should we do…* 59). It is a nonconscious process organizing the biological and environmental stimuli into a coherent signal which only then emerges as the autobiographical self. However, once the *self* has been annihilated, the signal has to move along a different continuity. Plasticity alters the neural pathway of information to something other than consciousness. For Bruce this becomes the de facto state of being. He can be seen as the sort of posthuman distributed intelligence that Pramod Nayar speaks of when he talks about: "the posthumanist vision of human embodied intelligence that draws its 'selfhood'… from the sum total of the interactions of its part within an environment. In place of the self-contained consciousness, we now have a consciousness that can only emerge within an environment and through distributed, beyond-the-brain networks" (58). In such perspectives, the human body is seen as a site of continual transformations, where new forms of subjectivity can emerge through the couplings of human and nonhuman elements in a common network. If we consider this statement in relation to Bruce and the idea of plasticity, he could be considered as a posthuman being whose *self* is a co-organization of potentialities existing within the (damaged) body and the context of its environment. Instead of trying to bring back the neural arrangement that constituted personality, the neural plasticity engages in a process of repair that, for a lack of any individual subjectivity on which to rebuild consciousness, draws stimuli from components working *in the world* to produce a distributed self.

Deleuze and Guattari argue that "the schizophrenic experiences… not at all any specific aspect of nature, but nature as a process of production" (*Anti-Oedipus* 3). In the

final chapter of the novel, this is the mode of perception that allows Bruce to see the flower, which should be obscured to him by the New-Path's psychological conditioning. The field, seen as a capitalistic machine of production unveils its purpose to Bruce, its cog. Deleuze and Guattari offer a model in which "the real truth of the matter – … that resides in delirium – is that there is no such thing as relatively independent spheres or circuits: production is immediately consumption…" (*Anti-Oedipus* 4). Since Bruce, as a schizophrenic, does not possess "the false consciousness" that would allow him to distance, individuate himself from this process of production, he is able to perceive past the veneer of social constructs. Bruce becomes something altogether different than human: a recording machine, unbound by temporality and synthesizing information through reflexive brain processes. The sense of self is not a part of that reformation. Bruce's final prosthesis turns him into a posthuman camera: one with a comprehensive perspective on the inter-connectivity of reality, yet comprehending none of it. Without a subjectivity, a way of looking inward, the thresholds of the human dissolve in him completely; what remains is a being that immerses itself, becomes an integral organ in the body of material reality, reflexive and sensitive to all its facets.

On the surface, the fate of Bruce presented in the novel appears to be solely negative. The intense experimentation with drugs and changing identities has left him a husk of a former self, an empty BwO. However, under a careful scrutiny, equipped with the posthumanist framework, one can notice the positive, reparative aspects of those circumstances. Every movement of the subject towards annihilation is met with a counter-movement towards regeneration and healing. Yet, it is not a movement in an opposite direction – a return to the humanistic subjectivity – but a construction of a new line of flight. As Malabou stresses, the brain is not flexible – it will not spring back to some predetermined configuration – but plastic, constantly adapting and compensating

for the damage. Bruce's plastic brain adapts and subverts the role of a reflexive organ. The inner workings of the nervous system surface to the pulverized consciousness as epiphenomena, loose connotations that do not form a bigger picture for Bruce, but which are nevertheless consistent. Bruce does not comprehend how his actions may bring an end to the drug's production, but a trace of Bob/Fred follows through with his mission. The empty BwO is still able to produce a vestigial organ, independent of the damage done to the organism.

5.5. Conclusions

Dick, in *A Scanner Darkly* paints a vision of a posthuman reality far removed from the techno-utopian dreams of humanity transcended through technology. Instead, the author, in one of his darkest, and at the same time, most personal novels writes of survival at all costs in a world imbalanced by the aftershocks of rampant capitalism. Two prongs of the production machine, surveillance and substance dependence, turn the community against itself in order to maintain the status quo and validate the apparatus of control. The posthuman cyborg, or rather the posthuman machine emergent in these circumstances is the result of irreparable trauma. Once again Dick warns that there are dangers associated with a movement past the category of the human, thus echoing and providing a new perspective on Deleuze and Guattari's cautioning of the perils of deterritorialization. However, thanks to the autopoietic qualities of a plastic brain, this new being can still find new pathways of becoming, alternative ways of experiencing the world. The being is able to reach beyond linear temporality and away from the constraints of autobiographical self. In *A Scanner Darkly* Dick scrutinizes and deconstructs the human by framing identity as a prosthesis, malleable and

supplementary to perception. When taken away, the network is forced to search for alternative modes of being, which in turn brings it closer to other elements of the environment. These movements could offer hope for an "empty" Body without Organs (BwO) to replenish its productive force, even if the resultant entity is not an autonomous subject, but a symbiotic (or sympoietic) element in a distributed system. The self-creation following the ultimate deterritorialization in Dick's account is bleak for a human: the consciousness is annihilated, leaving behind a husk: an empty BwO. However, for a posthuman it is just another movement along the flat plain of modes of experiencing the world.

Throughout the novel we see different attempts and iterations of escaping the bounds of the normative society. From the very beginning Bob Arctor is simultaneously entangled into the state apparatus, and subverts it by utilizing the scramble suit – a technological panopticon – to reconstruct himself as Fred. The suit enables him a line of flight towards a different identity. Moreover, if skin, in the posthuman perspective is the primary organ of interaction between the interior and the exterior, the scramble suit may be viewed as a rather interesting metaphor of a posthuman, technologically mediated prosthesis: an actualized "flickering signifier" as imagined by Hayles – a pattern of self, appearing and disappearing at will from and to the technological medium. Later, another interaction between the man and the machine accelerates this movement even further. Fred, while observing the recording of the holographic scanner is seduced and affirmed in his delusions by a piece of technology which seemingly reconfigures the "objective" reality. This marks the initiation of a total deterritorialization: the process of becoming a BwO which until that point had only influenced his sense of identity has then distorted his sense of reality. Then, as I have argued, Bob/Fred becomes an empty BwO. Finally, the ultimate, reparative, or at least compensating transformation can take place. The

annihilated consciousness of Bob/Fred is overwritten by a different neurological system, the posthuman agency named Bruce.

In one of the previous chapters we have analyzed the eponymous three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch – cybernetic prostheses of the alien, posthuman antagonist. In A Scanner Darkly a similar trinity is present, albeit far more subtle. Dick presents the reader with possible, yet dangerous transformations of subjectivity encompassed in what could be called "Three Prostheses of Bob Arctor." The first one is the anonymizing skin, the scramble suit, which represents the prosthesis of skin/identity and marks the creation of the alter-ego Fred. The second is the scanner, a device which is supposed to record the reality, and yet it transforms it – the prosthesis of the eye/ontology. The third is Bruce, the plastic reconstruction of an empty BwO – the posthuman prosthesis of the brain/consciousness.

Conclusions

In this dissertation, I have explored the connections between Philip K. Dick's novels and some of the formative ideas of postmodernist and posthumanist philosophies in order to showcase that for Dick the solution to the postmodern crises related to ascertaining realistic truth and the dissolution of the subject may lie not in returning to the traditional, humanist and anthropocentric values but indeed in a movement towards technologically and materially embedded, self-organizing assemblages of human, nonhuman and hybrid agents. These networks, as represented in Dick's narratives, whether constructed socially, through cybernetics, within simulation, or in the material environment, may achieve a broader perspective on, and a more dynamic interaction with given environments than the traditionally construed humanist subject.

I have shown that Dick engages with the posthumanist idea that the traditionally conceived human being is invariably constrained in its epistemic capacities by the anthropocentric taxonomies and essentialist discursive practices which limit the category of "meaningful existence" to the individual, conscious and biological subject, while excluding and pejorating the Other. Conversely, the posthuman perspective, as Cary Wolfe argues:

> enables us to describe the human and its characteristic modes of communication, interaction, meaning, social signification, and affective investments with *greater* specificity once we have removed meaning from the ontologically closed domain of consciousness, reason, reflection, and so on. It forces us to rethink our taken-for-granted modes of human experience, including the normal perceptual modes and affective states of *Homo sapiens* itself, by recontextualizing them in terms of the entire sensorium of other living beings and their own autopoietic ways of "bringing forth a world." (*What Is Posthumanism?* xxv)

By depicting potential migrations of the subject from a closed ontological domain of a rational individual situated in a hierarchic social order and into the organizationally open networks of diverse actors, Dick enacts this recontextualization proposed by Wolfe, finding the hybrid or the nonhuman *within* the human. With this ontological transformation, the subject may affirm themselves as a contributing element in the system of living matter, without the need to hierarchize or seize control over its organization. Their construction of subjective reality is no longer a solipsistic pursuit, prone to distortion by taxonomic distinctions and systems of value of possessive individualism. Instead, as I argued, the posthuman subjectivities emergent in Dick's novels may be framed as processes of creation of a common world in a collaboration with other beings, organized in correspondence to the model of an autopoietic system. But one does not need to fear a dissolution into homogeneity within these networks as the boundaries between the subject and the environment become less rigid, since the posthuman thrives on difference and diversity.

In my view, Dick negotiates between human and posthuman subjective positions of experiencing reality, acknowledging the inadequacy of the anthropocentric, humanist perspective to the task of finding any objective truth (whether or not such a thing exists) or distinguishing the authentic from the simulacral; instead, he critically considers the possible alternatives. However, a crucial aspect of Dick's approach to the posthuman, stressed in the readings in this dissertation, is the awareness of the danger of dissolution

– of the broader social organization as well as of the subject – associated with these transformations.

In chapter 1, by presenting objects in *The Man in the High Castle* – artifacts, works of art and literary texts – as actively involved in the creation of political reality, I have argued that Dick opens up a possibility for the emergence of non-anthropocentric agencies, in concurrence with the new materialist philosophical thought. These inanimate props may be seen as his early attempts to construct posthuman ontologies, not yet in the form of androids or cyborgs, but as material and conceptual actant-objects with and without human involvement. These actants, when engaged in dynamic assemblages possess potential to modify one's subjective construction of reality. Both the pin scrutinized by Mr Tagomi, as well as the I-Ching oracle used by Juliana and Abendsen, reveal to these characters the complex contingencies guiding the organization of their reality, in refutation of the essentialist ideology of fascism, dominant in the novel's setting.

In *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, as I argued in chapter 2, the Martian colonists attempt to recreate such a cooperative construction of reality in a simulation with the use of the drug Can-D and Perky Pat Layouts in the process of social autopoiesis. However, the regime of capitalist economy leads to the usurpation of the transformative potential of such a system by authoritative forces and desire for individual self-preservation over the good of the network. Dick encapsulates this dynamic in the figure of the main antagonist, Eldrich, who employs his designer drugs to impose his own identity over the collective and establishes a simulated universe similar to the Can-D trance, but one in which he has the sole authority over its construction. I argued that through this figure Dick represents the dangers of prioritizing

individualistic drives towards eternal life, commodity economy or control over others. These pursuits destabilize the autopoietic social systems and isolate the subject.

The analysis in chapter 3 showcased how in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* Dick criticizes the discursive practices which position humanity at the top of an arbitrary hierarchy of living things, and thus lead to violent persecution or patronizing of nonhuman and cyborgized Others. Dick seeks a resolution to this negative dialectical process by imagining possible acts of transformation for the human subject that result in a shift towards a posthuman perspective. I argued that the author anticipates the potential of the figure of the posthuman cyborg, as proposed by Donna Haraway, to reframe the relationships between human and nonhuman participants of life. In the novel, that transformation is realized under the guise of a spiritual revelation experienced by the main character, and results in a new understanding of his role as a part of a vital, inter-subjective network that encompasses not only the human or the natural but also nonhuman and technological Others. Rick Deckard, the novel's human protagonist, when exposed to the cooperative social assemblages established by the androids, is forced to question and adjust his assumptions of what constitutes a community, valuable existence and how one experiences and expresses empathy. Ultimately, the novel demonstrates a possible formation of a discursive perspective that challenges dominant hierarchies of humanism and highlights the transformative power of encounters between humans and technological Others.

The novel *Ubik*, discussed in chapter 4, further explores the issue of the human struggle to construct a stable experience of reality against the commodification of life and hyperreal modes of signification. I argued that for Dick, under these circumstances, adopting a posthuman perspective may reclaim the materiality and mortality occluded by Baudrillardian simulation. I positioned the characters of Ella Runciter and Jory

Miller as contrasting representations of the practices of affirming one's subjectivity against dissolution in this environment. While Jory exhibits the stance of possessive individualism, which is ultimately revealed as a desperate measure to preserve his diminishing consciousness at the cost of other inhabitants of the simulation, Ella approaches a position that could be described as posthuman sustainable subject in Braidotti's terms; at peace with her mortality, Ella directs her energy towards strengthening the vital, material bonds with other subjects in the shared environment.

In chapter 5, I offered an analysis of *A Scanner Darkly*, and with the use of Deleuzoguattarian concept of Body without Organs, as well as Katherine Malabou's brain plasticity, I concluded that the novel illustrates a possible outcome of a volatile experimentation with one's construction of identity, resulting in a loss of the sense of self. Drug use and surveillance technologies of the state become catalysts of deterritorialization for the main character, but in the process of shifting between identities of Bob Arctor and Fred, he relinquishes the connections with his social and material assemblages which ground his subjectivity. The resultant "emptied" BwO, Bruce, is virtually devoid of self-identification, but thanks to the dynamic adaptability of his embodiment – the brain plasticity – he is able to reintegrate once more, as a perceptual organ, into the vital assemblage of his environment.

Overall, this dissertation elaborates on the existing readings of Dick's novels, and covers a representative portion of his considerable literary output. By drawing on the postmodernist analyses, such as those by Jameson, Palmer, Baudrillard and others, and expanding on the posthumanist perspectives on Dick, proposed by scholars such as Hayles, Galvan and Vint, I have formulated a new insight into the author's understanding of the complex interactions between the subject – whose humanist

provenance undergoes a radical redefinition – and the dynamic systems that construct their reality.

From my analyses emerges a picture of a writer acutely aware of the uncertainties about the stability of what the realist paradigms used to call reality and the self – the uncertainties that have increasingly come to characterize the contemporary human experience. With precision and insight comparable to those of postmodern and poststructuralist philosophers such as Lyotard, Derrida, or Baudrillard, Dick identifies the spuriousness of logocentric, rationalist and humanist positions' claims to *know* the objective parameters of reality and the human subject's alleged exceptionality found in its purported essence. The counterfeit objects in *The Man in The High Castle, Ubik's* decaying simulacra or the institutionalized "empathy" in *Do Androids Dream…* are only some of the more overt instances of the human reliance on arbitrary signification codes that function as the necessary apparatuses in the task of meaning-making. However, Dick does not stop there, but, similarly to the aforementioned philosophers, explores the implications and possible consequences of this condition: from the proliferation of fascist ideologies and the state's control apparatus (*The Man in The High Castle, A Scanner Darkly*), the rampant commodification of life (*The Three Stigmata..., Ubik, Do Androids Dream…),* alienating the subject from their embodiment (*The Three Stigmata..., Ubik),* to social hierarchization and the exclusion of the Other (*Do Androids Dream, A Scanner Darkly*).

Subsequently, Dick arranges his narratives and the characters within them as depictions of the subject's struggle to position themselves outside of this postmodern encapsulation. The more positive outcomes, such as those achieved by Ella and Joe, or Deckard, see the protagonists expanding their perspectives on existence by adopting a stance of cooperation and acceptance towards other inhabitants – human and nonhuman

– of their shared environments, thanks to which they are able to overcome the exploitative or exclusionary discourses and practices of humanism. The emergence of the posthuman, as depicted by Dick in these instances, is not necessarily equal to the vanishing of the subjective perspective, but a movement outwards or towards stronger sense of embodiment and multiplicity, wherein *the self* becomes entangled in a network of mutually beneficial agencies. It is, as Rosi Braidotti proposes, a reinscription of "posthuman bodies into radical relationality, including webs of power at the social, psychic, ecological and micro-biological or cellular levels" (*The Posthuman* 102). Even the rather grim fate of Bruce, the damaged remnant of Bob Arctor in *A Scanner Darkly,* carries out that process, as his brain, by the way of plastic adaptation, reintroduces him to the network of vital matter.

On the other hand, those characters who strive for a technological transcendence of consciousness over body or an assertion of their essential uniqueness and individuality are often portrayed as antagonists. Palmer Eldritch embodies the rapacious expansion of the ego, attempting to position himself as the sole authority and master of his reality. *Ubik's* Jory as well collapses into a stance of possessive individualism driven by the fear of death, with disregard of the other inhabitants of the environment he exploits. Through these figures, Dick stresses the solipsism and unsustainability inherent to such ambitions.

Importantly, the characters who undergo the *positive* posthuman paradigm shift rarely require the intervention of technology on their bodies to do so. In fact, the science-fiction technologies more often than not hinder this process, as is the case with Chew-Z drug in *The Three Stigmata…* or Penfield Mood Organ in *Do Androids Dream…* . The process of integration into or gaining awareness of the autopoietic organization of life happens for characters such as Juliana, Deckard, or Ella Runciter

not necessarily through a serendipitous intervention of science-fictional technology, but by the way of discovery of the posthuman potential within themselves and their material environment, often coded in the language of spirituality in the narratives. I have identified a link between the spiritual motifs in Dick's novels and their posthumanist dimension in works such as *The Man in the High Castle, Do Androids Dream…,* and *Ubik.* There exists a tension between institutionalized religion as a tool of affirmation of the essentionalist discursive regimens, such as Neo-Christianity in *The Three Stigmata,* or the empathy boxes in *Do Androids Dream…,* and the personal spiritual revelations of the characters such as Mr Tagomi or Deckard, which as I argued, are coding liberatory shifts of perspective from under those regimens. While the figure of the cyborg present in Haraway's writings invokes the image of a technologically modified being, N. Katherine Hayles asserts that "even a biologically unaltered *Homo sapiens* counts as posthuman. The defining characteristics involve the construction of subjectivity, not the presence of nonbiological components" (*How We Became Posthuman* 4). Therefore the project of finding the posthuman perspectives in science-fiction literature should be focused on models of subjectivity, such as those outlined in this dissertation, which disrupt the idea of a unified, individual and universal mind through whatever means, be they social, material, linguistic or spiritual. The spirituality that Dick projects in some of his works stipulates a newly conceived, post-human subjectivity capable of renewal not just of itself but of its vital relations to the dynamically understood environmental and intersubjective networks.

The technologies to which we often entrust our survival and societal development cannot be treated as the silver bullet to resolve the systemic problems of the contemporary world. Instead, the posthuman philosophical projects and Dick's narratives alike urge us to critically reexamine our relationships with these technologies

and their consequences for the delicate balance of the intersubjective, material and vital networks which construct our realities. The simulated worlds of *Ubik* and *The Three Stigmata* show us that the virtual spaces we share may serve as media of intersubjective collaboration, but may just as well become the breeding grounds for the market forces bringing reification and commodification. The developments in the fields of artificial life and intelligence, like the eponymous androids and electric sheep of Dick's novel, create for us the opportunity to question the exceptionalism of human consciousness – conceived in traditional essentialist terms – but also to reinforce it and all of the exclusionary discourses it entails. Finally, scientific discoveries give us unprecedented insights into the dynamic energies of seemingly inert matter that construct our universe, and into the complex biological processes from which our embodied consciousnesses emerge. But it is through Dick's variety of science-fiction in moments such as Juliana's revelation of the contingent nature of her universe, or the depiction of how the body *creates* the dual self of Fred/Bob Arctor, that one can consider how to reforge these insights into mutually constructive practices of connecting to their world and its fellow inhabitants.

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