



The Unteleported Man

Philip K. Dick

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Whale's Mouth was a planetary utopia for forty million Earth colonists - but none ever returned. It took only 15 minutes to get there by instant teleportation, but it was strictly a one-way journey. If you wanted to return, it was always possible to go the long way round - 18 years each way by conventional spacecraft. No one relished that, of course. Then one man decided to try it, and encountered some very powerful opposition.

The Unteleported Man Details

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From Reader Review The Unteleported Man for online ebook

Rene Bard says

I read the original novella version published in Fantastic magazine (1964 v13n12) which can be found online for free here. PKD's works are members of my "Bad Pizza" categorical set; that is, even bad pizza or bad beer or bad PKD (and I leave a few members of the set unnamed, but I digress) are better than 99% of the remaining choices in food, drink, or sci-fi, respectively.

This is a minor work, but like all PKD material it addresses major themes and it addresses them well. The story begins like this:

Rachmael ben Applebaum (RbA), owner of a space transport business which is now obsolete due to a recent teleportation invention, is pursued by creditors and decides to take his last and greatest asset - the space liner The Omphalos - on an 18-year one-way rescue mission to the Whale's Mouth colony in the Fomalhaut system. RbA convinces Matson Glazer-Holiday, principal owner of a private police agency called LIES Inc., to help him escape the clutches of his primary creditor Trails of Hoffman Limited (THL) which owns the telpor technology that put RbA out of business and intends to seize or destroy The Omphalos at first opportunity. RbA, based on fake audio he detected in alleged transmissions directed back to Terra from the Whale's Mouth colony, disbelieves THL's claim that a) the telpor process only works in one direction, only sending people from Terra to the colony with no way of sending them back home, and that b) the 40 million colonists who have already emigrated to Whale's Mouth are happy there. He suspects Terrans are being deceived by ... (wait for it)(wait for it) ... fake news about the colonists, and he fears the colonists who have teleported there may be dead or enslaved with no way out.

This set up is the best part of the story and, along with PKD's distinct empathetic tone and humor, is enough to carry us through the more pedestrian space opera that follows.

Jeffrey says

This is my first Dick book. From it I learned that Philip Dick was probably doing a lot of drugs in his life. Knowing nothing of the man himself, and only his writing from the movies that have been based on his novels, I didn't really know what to expect. Except what I got. The book starts with a great premise: two worlds separated by the entire solar system. Rachmael ben Applebaum, in an attempt to save his father's ailing shipping business, determines to travel from Earth (Terra) to the new planet (Whale's Mouth) via ship, a journey which will take him 18 years to complete. He's being stopped by the man who owns a company that operates Telpors, machines that transfer men in seconds from Terra to Whale's Mouth. But once telpored, one cannot return. The Telpor is a one way journey, and ben Applebaum believes that the idyllic life advertised on Whale's Mouth is not idyllic at all. He believes, and he's not alone, that he and everyone else are being lied to. Enter Lies, Inc., a private police firm run by a man who also believes that the utopia on Whale's Mouth is a lie. So we have a giant conglomerate that runs Terra (along with the UN, taken over by a new united Germany that seems to have won the second world war) at odds with a failed business man and a ragtag private security force.

The book falls apart, though, when the unteleported man (that's ben Applebaum) decides to teleport himself to Whale's Mouth to save the woman who magically has become his lover. (Dick lost some pages of the

original manuscript of this book, which may explain some of the missing plot developments.) Once ben Applebaum arrives on Whale's mouth, the book takes a turn to the bizarre. Our unteleported-now-teleported hero goes on a 100 page LSD trip through alternate realities, confronting strange creatures that may or may not be real while being hunted by agents of the telpor corporation. Freya, the woman he's gone to rescue, has been captured, while a group of scientists try to use knowledge of the future to force the characters to act. The UN has given ben Applebaum its most powerful weapon, though, a time travel device that is the crux of the end of the novel.

I'm going to spoil the ending of the book now, so don't read further if you don't want to know.

To some extent I didn't mind the deus ex machina ending because it meant that so much of the middle of the book that I completely didn't understand were meaningless. On the other hand, it seemed like such a copout, to get through all that plotting, the entire acid trip which seemed to be taking the story no where (fast) and wipe it clean with a trip back in time. ben Applebaum still has his memory, and he knows how to correct what he's done. I wouldn't have minded the sudden fix if it had been set up earlier, but time travel wasn't even introduced into the book until the last fifty pages or so.

All in all, I enjoyed the read. I was fascinated by the initial story. Maybe I should find the 1983 version of the book as opposed to this original 1964 version.

Keith Davis says

Probably the best description of a bad acid trip ever written. The first half of the novel is a coherent Science Fiction story about a man confronting a conspiracy that may be using a fake teleportation device to sent people nowhere. The second half was written later while Dick was messed up on some serious drugs. The psychedelic nature of the second half is enhanced by the fact that pages were lost from the manuscript and scenes jump and skip like a bad dream. The book was later fixed up and republished as Lies, Inc but I cannot imagine it is better than this hallucinogenic mess.

Erik Graff says

I don't remember much of this science fiction novella, later expanded by Dick as Lies, Inc.

Roddy Williams says

‘Whale’s Mouth was a planetary utopia for forty million Earth colonists – but none ever returned. It took only 15 minutes to get there by instant teleportation, but it was strictly a one way journey. If you wanted to return, it was always possible to go the long way round – 18 years each way by conventional spacecraft. No one relished that, of course. then one man decided to try it, and encountered some very powerful opposition...’

Blurb from the 1970 Methuen paperback edition.

Rachmael ben Applebaum is the hero of this, the original novella which was eventually expanded and re-

written as LIES Inc.

Applebaum is the heir to a once successful business which constructed interstellar starships. The company was rendered worthless by the development of Telpor gates by rival company Trials of Hoffman Limited. THL is one of the bright new companies of New Whole Germany and has been shipping colonists to a fertile planet known as Newcolonizedland in the Formalhaut system. The only drawback is that it is a one-way trip. The joyful colonists send back video-messages and the media shows scenes of idyllic pastoral perfection, but not one colonist has returned.

Applebaum determines to use the last of his ships – the rest of them having been claimed by THL as a debt-payment – to travel the eighteen year journey ‘unteleported’ since he seems to be the only person who finds something deeply wrong about the situation, a classically paranoid situation, but one which the reader, unsettlingly, shares.

He finds allies in LIES Inc, the UN backed Listening Instructional Educational Services, who confirm his theory that the broadcasts from Newcolonizedland are faked.

At just over a hundred pages it is a slight piece and one that Dick was not particularly proud of. It was hastily written (but then, with Dick, this was often the case) but nevertheless manages to capture the essence of that annoyance many of us feel at those who take as gospel whatever they see or hear in the media.

Dick’s trademark ‘fakes’ appear as usual on various levels. from the synthetic Theodore Ferry who appears on Applebaum’s ship to the names of organisations. LIES and Trails of Hoffman’ both carry connotations of falsehood.

The obligatory dark-haired woman is, in this case, Miss Freya Holm, agent of LIES and mistress of its Head, Matson Glazer-Holliday.

After Applebaum has set off on his eighteen year journey. LIES decides to invade Newcolonizedland and send back what truth they can about the conditions there.

Matson Glazer-Holliday and Freya travel through the Telpor gates and find themselves in ‘Sparta’, a garrison-state in which THL is building an army to re-invade the Earth which will be ruled from new Whole Germany. Matson is killed but Freya manages to send a coded message back and mobilise the LIES forces. A mini sub-plot shows the perspective of the ‘ordinary man’, Jack McElhatten, whose job is so menial and repetitive that he is being replaced by a trained pigeon. Despite the misgivings of his wife, Jack is swayed by the omnipresent coverage of scenes from the New World and is determined to emigrate and become a goat-farmer.

Despite a rather lacklustre denouement, this short piece – written only twenty years after the end of WWII – has echoes of the Holocaust and the unwillingness (which still persists today in some parts of the world) of the general public to believe the truth.

This is even more relevant to contemporary society where much that we believe is fed to us through the filter of the media.

Dick understood all too well the gullibility of the public and here is at least the beginnings of a major work, seriously flawed, but sometimes exposing the bones of a profound truth.

Jozef Melichár says

Miestami naivná, miestami skratkovitá dystopická scifi s jednoduchými parareliami na nacistické Nemecko a so všetkým, čo som už v scifi čítal, čiasto v prepracovanejšej forme. Ale práve aj z vyššie uvedených dôvodov to pekne odsýpalo až k celkom prekvapujúcemu koncu.

Jack Stovold says

My Philip K. Dick Project

Entry #35 - The Unteleported Man / Lies, Inc. (written Nov. 1964-Mar. 1965, published Sep. 1964)

Wow! Now this is a MESS. A glorious mess, yes, but still a mess.

In fact, I'd been kind of dreading dealing with the whole The Unteleported Man / Lies, Inc. problem. (See, I don't even know what to call it.).

Actually, scratch that. For the rest of the review, I'll be using Lies, Inc. as that was what Dick titled it during his final rewrite. For PKD fans who are interested in reading this, as I was, but unsure what to do, let me try and clear it up for you as best I can.

There is no definitive version of this story, although I think the newer Mariner edition is the closest. Dick originally wrote "The Unteleported Man" as a short story, or novelette. This was published in a Fantastic Stories magazine, and Dick's editor at Ace Books suggested to Dick that he nearly double the length (by adding to the ending) and they would publish it as a novel. Dick did so, but the editor didn't approve of the material, and so it was published as one half of an Ace Double Novel as it was in the magazine. I believe to read this original version, you would either have to get the original magazine, or the Ace Double, both of which would probably be expensive and hard to track down. Then ten or so years later, when the Ace copyright expired, Dick sought to have the book republished in the longer version, which he had written. However, there were two problems. Dick couldn't figure out how to unite the two halves of the book, and there were four pages missing from his 1965 expansion. Dick set about rewriting and expanding, so he wrote a new opening and rejiggered some of the material in the original novella. Unfortunately, Dick died before he could complete his rewrite, so the Berkeley edition published in 1983 was the original novelette, and the expansion material with three gaps indicated in the text from the missing pages. A later edition found the revisions Dick was making for the Berkeley edition, and another writer filled in the gaps. However, after that, the original missing pages were also found. The most definitive edition now is the Mariner edition, which includes the novel and the expansion with Dick's intended revisions and the missing pages. Dick's revisions also include some minor deletions here and there, so there is no one version that contains every word, however. Whew.

My solution was to buy both the Berkeley edition and the newest revision, which fortunately turned out to be the Mariner edition. In trying to unravel this whole mess, I consulted the internet, but most of the sites I found described the situation before the Mariner edition was published. Fortunately, the afterword in the Mariner version made the situation clear. If you're only going to get one version, I would recommend the Mariner edition. However, I had the interesting experience of reading both side by side, simultaneously, a chapter or two from each at a time.

First of all, they start differently. Dick's new beginning introduces us immediately to Lies, Inc. and the rats, one of my favorite conceits from the beginning of the book. The entire rat subplot (in which protagonist Rachmael ben Applebaum lives a mysterious double life as a rat in some alternate reality) adds a lot of spooky, mystical atmosphere to the beginning of the book but suffers as it disappears completely with no warning about a third of the way through. This is a weakness of the book, probably part of the rewrite Dick never got to finish, disappointingly. It's interesting to compare scenes played straight in the older version, where in the new version, poor Applebaum finds his rat reality superimposing itself over his life.

The rat example is just the most glaring example of a larger problem of this book. It's all over the place, and the tortured publication history is only partially to blame. It can be fairly difficult to follow at times. It's insanely complicated and packed with bizarre ideas, even for a Dick book. I enjoyed it a great deal, but after finishing it and reflecting on it a bit, I started to remember all the dropped plot threads I had been looking forward to more of, and felt some disappointment.

But man, this book is insane. Up to a certain point (anyone who has read this will know exactly what point I mean), it's actually relatively straight-forward for mid-period Dick, but once we go down the rabbit-hole here, you might find yourself needing some air. The expansion here was written not long after Dick's experience with LSD, and Dick did not have nice trips. He had terrifying trips, and he was nice enough to give you a little taste of what that's like here. To me, what it is most frightening here is the fact that time loses its meaning. Applebaum experiences in a short time what to him seems like thousands of years. And he is conscious of his reason and rationality disintegrating, but completely powerless to stop it. Reading this, it was almost viscerally panic-inducing.

After his initial freak-out, Applebaum and others find themselves trapped in para-worlds, a series of terrifying realities, where the rules are written by mysterious forces, and everyone seems to be vaguely malevolent, multi-ocular, self-cannibalizing, sea creatures with obscure motives in disguise, eager to push on you a book that seems to write the future. Did I mention it was weird?

How this all ties into Newcolonizedland on Whale's Mouth, and the Trails of Hoffman company and New Whole Germany's secret war on the UN and Lies, Inc. is unclear. I haven't even mentioned tons of things going on with Dr. Einem von Sepp and his disturbing experiments, the colony itself, Al Dosker and a million other things. There's a lot going on, and I'm not going to lie and say Dick really all brings it all together. But the book has a strange, entrancing logic of its own, and it seems that the various mysteries here might be more satisfying left unsolved, all though it would have been nice to have a little more light shone on them. Or maybe I'm really missing something big here.

Anyway, if you want a confounding, endearing, maddening completely Phildickian ride, you don't need to look much farther than this. The fact that there isn't even one definitive version, or even narrative that can be agreed on, seems to put a suitably meta spin on the whole thing.

My edition: The Unteleported Man: Berkley Books paperback, 1983

Lies, Inc: Mariner Paperback, 2004

Up next: "Counter-Clock World"!

December 4th, 2012

Note: This review is mainly based on the 2004 Mariner edition.

Phillip says

5/10

serprex says

Page 166 "It made no sense"

Page 191 "why not hie yourself there?"

Cuts are timed perfectly. LSD induced plot reboot brings the mediocre story with a couple of good gags into a story where the language suddenly becomes thick & flavorful. Happened to know meaning of 'irreal' as I learnt this morning through *of Montreal's White Is Relic?/?Irrealis Mood*. Was consistently being annoyed by timing & how that fits with supersea speeds. It was kind of dumb how Rachmael's going after Freya when

they have no connection & she's in a position where she'd want to be taking charge on Fomalhaut anyways. Dosker was somewhat discarded. McElhaltten is a weird bipartite short story weaved in, worth it for the pigeons-stealing-all-our-jobs humor. Comes up again with advanced housefly surveillance. & then it gets to the last pages & it's like seriously? That's the hook up? As Freya says, "Gee"

The compressed language was neat, but needn't've been expanded, especially inside dialogue

Thingisms were pretty punny. Really liked that "Living life over" pun

Fingon says

Bilo bi više da nije pisano u maniru ABNedovih prevoda. Postoje i dobri Nemci.

Michael says

this book is so bonkers i can't help but to recommend it. seriously, even dick's bad books are worth reading. he may have been a paranoid, pill popping, nutball, but goddamn was this man a genius.

Justine says

Loved the start, but unfortunately it fell apart in a kind of drug induced haze towards the end. Not unlike a lot of Dick's other work.

Celo says

One (long) sentence review:

Idea is 5/5 but the form is 1/5 that makes it 3/5 overall, and a warning, read only if you don't mind bad confusing writing and boring descriptions.

Charissa Ty says

Read this 2 years ago.

What caught my eye was the really attractive title. Also, I think he would have been pretty high when he was writing this novel. Didn't really make much sense til the end.

Everybody is getting shot in the neck with an lsd shot anyway. I guess that inspired Divergent's simulation room.

Scott Holstad says

Odd book by one of my favorite writers. Totally schizophrenic book -- two in one. Starts out as straight sci fi -- for Dick, anyway. Halfway through, it morphs into this bizarre, drug-induced psychedelic experiment that destroys the original plot and isn't really brought to a satisfying end, for reasons I won't go into here. I kept wondering while reading the second half if Dick had been reading Williams Burroughs at the time of his writing this book. Cause this definitely has a Naked Lunch feel to it. I hesitantly recommend it, cause it is a good, interesting read, but frustrating at the same time. Still, Dick's worst stuff is better than most others' best...
