

FOR
DICKHEADS
ONLY



GARY
MEZAN
SLIME
MELD



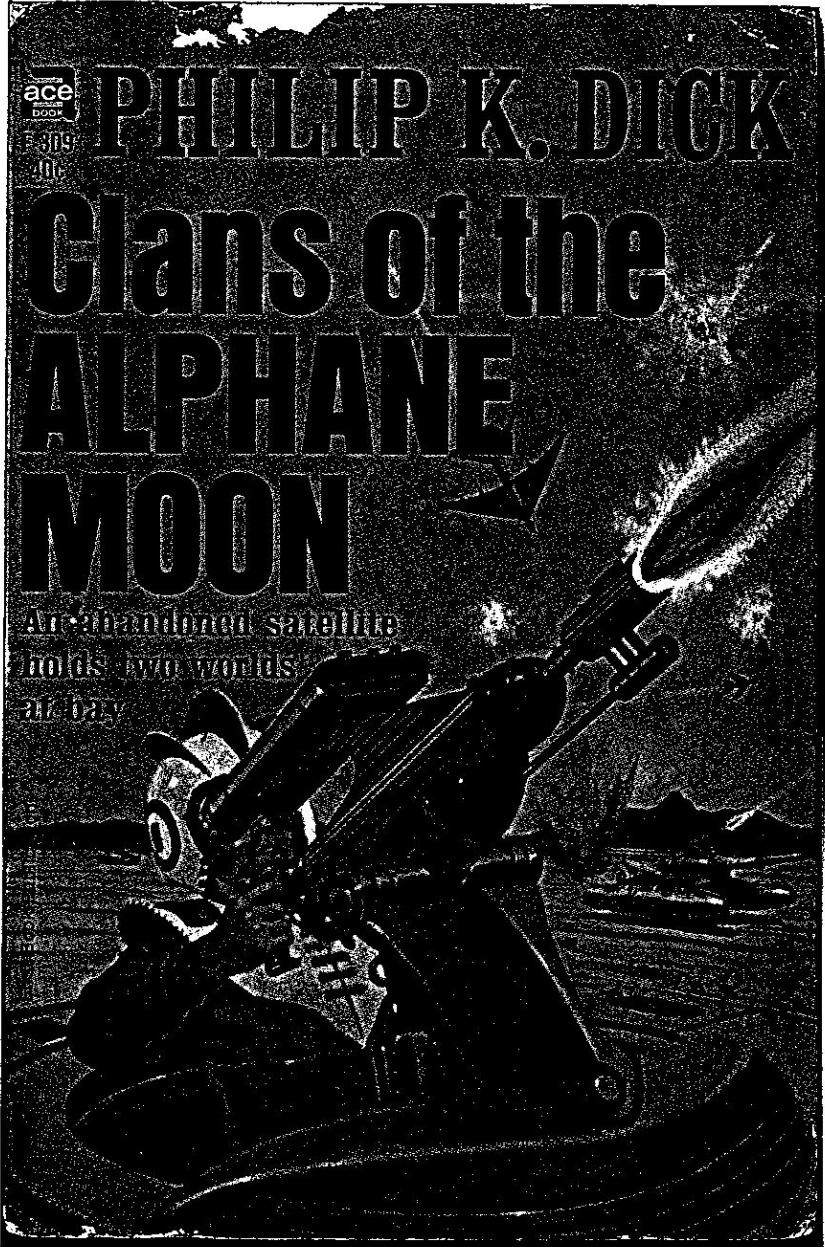
Box 112
New
Haven
In
46774

ace
BOOK

PHILIP K. DICK

Clans of the ALPHANE MOON

An abandoned satellite
holds two worlds
at bay



INTRODUCTION.

Welcome to the number one issue of FOR DICKHEADS ONLY. We hope you like it. I'd like to take this opportunity to tell you why we're doing this zine and also a little about our background.

As to why: The notice of the impending demise of the PKDS Newsletter came as a shock to me: I thought it would go on forever; the possibility that the Philip K. Dick Society would cease to exist had not occurred to me.

Since 1985, when I joined PKDS, the Society has been like an absent friend, one who writes intermittent letters full of good news and all the great things that are happening to him but who you somehow never get around to replying to because your own news is not always so good and your own life pales in light of his success. But your friend doesn't mind, his letters keep on coming and you're glad and perhaps they inspire you to try a little harder in your own efforts. Then one day he writes and tells you that he will only be sending you three more letters and you will never hear from him again. Good God! Flows through your mind. Without my friend's letters I'll be cut off, isolated from these things that are important to me. What will fill that hole?

Nothing... And then it pops into your head: Maybe now I should reply to my friend's letters... Maybe if I write, even though the news be indifferent and the words clumsy, my friend will be glad to hear from me. And so you decide to do it.

Thus -- FOR DICKHEADS ONLY. And my friend is not alone Paul Williams -- who I've only had slight contact with -- or Andy Watson, who ended up as our main contact with PKDS, but all the people who love the writing of Philip K. Dick and who, by their continuing efforts, are establishing PKD as the greatest writer of the Millennium.

As for who we are I guess it really doesn't matter -- to nearly all of you receiving this we're just those guys out in Indiana. But, anyway, there are three of us: Rev. Dr. X, Barb Mourningchild and me, Dave Hyde, who must use my real name because someone's gotta take care of business. In 1984 we formed our organization, Ganymede Slime Mold Prods, as a cover name for our various publishing and video enterprises. These days we're mostly into the Public Access TV movement, producing mainly alternative political videos. We also write: Barb's on her third novel and I crank out bits and pieces like you find here.

We're committed to this FDO venture for as long as it takes to write something about each of PKD's Science Fiction novels, starting this issue with *Clans Of The Alphane Moon*. We chose this method because all we have to work with, really, are the novels and stories of PKD, even though, personally, I'm unhappy in the role of critic/reviewer. So, we'd be pleased to publish any PKD related news, a la PKDS, or essays or whatever. But to do that someone has to send it to us, we cannot gather it. And also, we need help with graphics for future issues -- mostly cover art. Letters, of course, are always welcome. Sorry we can't pay any money at this time.

Subscriptions to FDO.

If anyone wants a subscription to FDO they can send us a donation or something in trade -- we particularly like weird videos and good stuff to read. We cannot at this time accept regular subscriptions because of the iffy nature of this whole project -- I may drop dead any minute.

So, on that positive note, welcome to FOR DICKHEADS ONLY number 1.

Dave Hyde, for GSM

***** FAVORITE DICK BOOK SURVEY! *****

As a space filler and because we're genuinely interested, we're soliciting for the next and future issues of FOR DICKHEADS ONLY your selections of and comments on your favorite PKD novel! As we go along we'll publish excerpts and when we get enough we'll tabulate the results -- determine for once and all the most popular Dick book as selected by us, his fans.

So... join in the fun (no ballot stuffing please)! Send your top three choices along with long or short comment as to why you chose the way you did to:

GSM Prods
Box 112
New Haven
IN 46774 Thanx.

Before entering the supreme council room, Gabriel Baines sent his Mans-made simulacrum clacking ahead to see if by chance it might be attacked. The simulacrum -- artfully constructed to resemble Baines in every detail -- did many things, since it had been made by the inventive clan of Manses, but Baines only cared to employ it in its maneuvering for defense; defending himself was his sole orientation in life, his claim to membership in the Pare enclave of Adolfville at the north end of the moon....

Author of *Time Out of Joint*

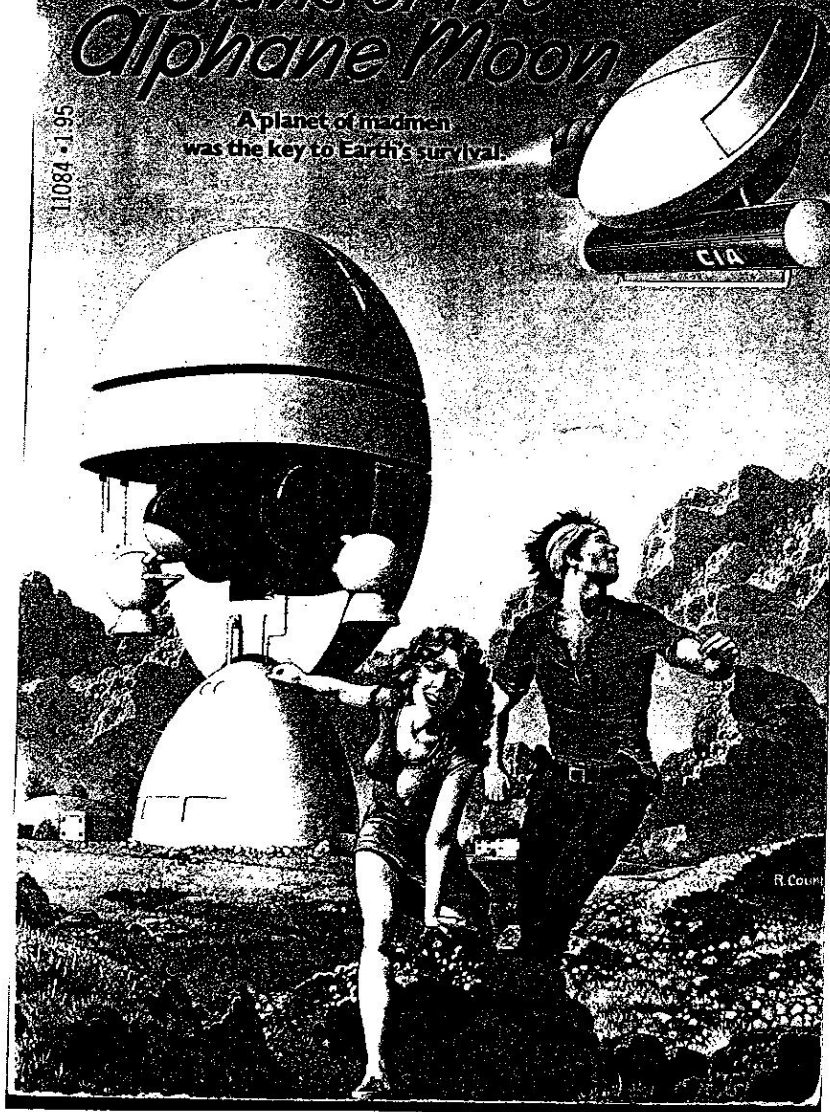
PHILIP K. DICK

Dell
SF

*Clans of the
Alphane Moon*

A planet of madmen
was the key to Earth's survival.

11084 • 1.95

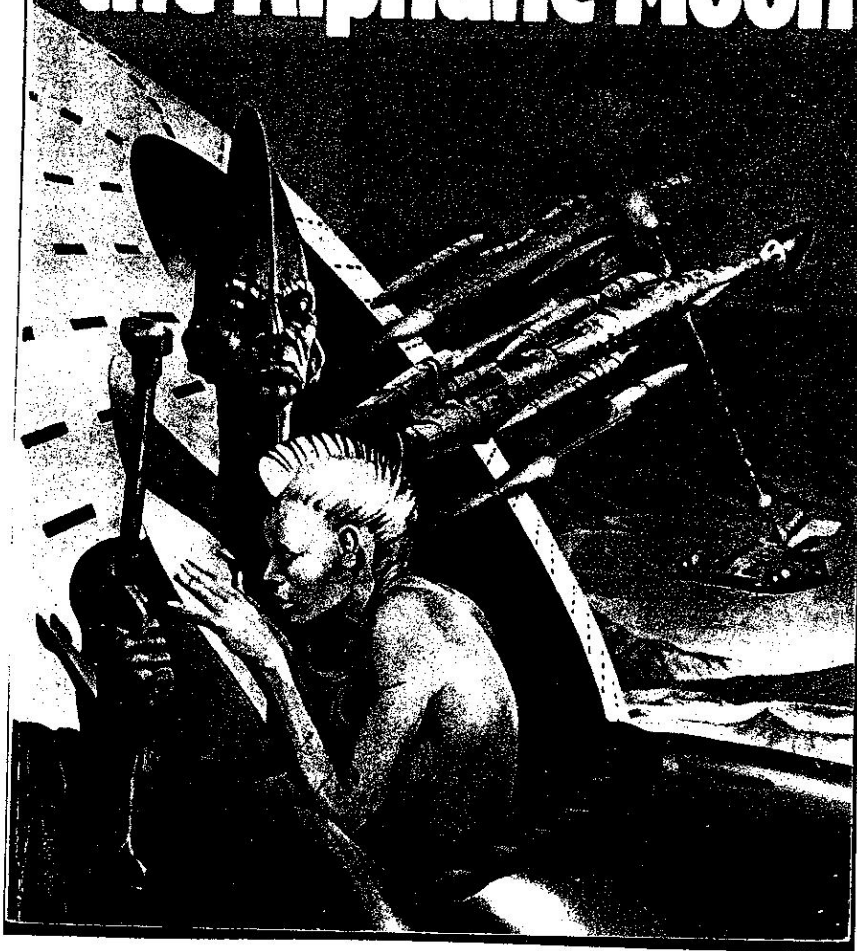


Panther Science Fiction

Philip K. Dick

Edited by Michael Williams

Clans of the Alphane Moon



Clans Of The Alphane Moon

For years I've been bugged by Barry Malzberg's afterword to the Bluejay edition of *Clans Of The Alphane Moon*. On rereading it I find that what pisses me off is that without actually coming out and saying it he downgrades the book: "-- this is a novel that makes the most severe demands upon the reader; to an outsider it might be one of the least penetrable of all the novels: it makes, ultimately no sense." And again, "If *Clans Of The Alphane Moon* fails -- a judgement arrived at with reluctance but deliberately -- the failure is not so much of the novel as of the category itself..." And there are other remarks.

But *the category itself*; therein I think lies the basis for Malzberg's misapprehension of this book.

With his talk of categories he distinguishes between, presumably, Science Fiction and some other literature -- the Mainstream? with the underlying assumption that this other literature is the only literature of consequence. And when measured against this standard Science Fiction somehow *fails*.

It's an old argument and not much good. Literary categories, or the reification thereof, have little to do with inherent literary qualities and a lot to do with the snobbery of genre cliques. After all, the Mainstream is just another school of fish in the literary sea.

Philip K. Dick himself, we're told, desperately sought mainstream acceptance of the novels he wrote in the 1950s. Malzberg's own stories, those I've read, reveal this same yearning for mainstream literary acceptance. Nothing wrong with that.

Except that this is the 90's. Things go a little faster now and categorical thinking -- the very thing Dick examines in *Clans* -- is a little better understood. The dominant paradigm that generated the psychological realism of 50's literature is a little shabbier now. "Novels of contemporary suburbia and contemporary politics" of the sort written, presumably (I've never read any of them) by Styron, Cheever, Rahv and Howe are not only outdated but are irritating in their irrelevance. We've gone beyond the discovery stage. We *know* what the nature of this 50's reality is now; this dominant ideology that still drags us down. It's probably thanks to writers like those just mentioned that we do know it.

So to continue to write in this way is at best an excersize in idleness and at worse it shows an ignorance of reality -- the very thing these mainstream writers are supposed to be so insightful of.

Dick is different. He never accepted the package known as the dominant reality, the gift of Cold War paranoia that is only now decidedly crumbling. In the beginning with novels like *Solar Lottery* and *The Cosmic Puppets* he explored with a keen insight it's political essence -- one might say *odour* -- and at the end with *Valis* he wanted nothing more to do with it. By 1964 when *Clans Of The Alphane Moon* was written he had firmly established his own ideas as to the nature of consensus reality and was attacking it with savage humor in a series of books like *The Zap Gun*, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldrich* and, indeed, *Clans*. He'd been doing it for years and would continue for many more, the next break coming with *Flow My Tears, The Policeman Said*.

So, with an unwanted reality firmly established in his head, Dick played with it -- he was in his prime, 34 years old, his life, though totally fucked up, still had a future because he was still young. The

whole archaic, Aristotelian structure took his attention, as it would again with *The Penultimate Truth*. He looked at it, seeing the familiar hierarchy with its interminable categories, its' every difference between anything and everything at all noted down and made the basis of value and status. What, he thought, if this is all wrong? What if the nutcases are right? He wrote about that in *Clans Of The Alphane Moon*.

He chose as his particular target the categorizing habits of the psychologists -- and by extension all those privileged enough to call themselves Professionals. And this brings us back to Malzberg and 'the category itself'.

Again, Malzberg's a clever writer; it's hard to actually pin him down as saying anything that may be deemed critical of this novel. He talks of elisions and pines for mainstream respectability, prefers to see the novel in terms of psychological realism: "*Clans of the Alphane Moon* is about a failed marriage, an aggrandizing wife, sexual passion, thrall, impotence, financial jeopardy and distress, divorce, blackmail, adultery, guilt, self-loathing. No number of Running Clams nor self-hating simulacra will divert fully from that point."

Sure, that's right, the novel is about all those things but that is not hardly what's important: that's the *given*, the dominant reality with which Dick is playing. That's the type of psychological novel that Malzberg expects, that he therefore sees and, I might add, that Dick was perfectly capable of writing. And, as Malzberg points out, he *did* write it in *Clans*. But that's irrelevant. Malzberg may well prefer the straight psychological novel and resent it when its conventions are flouted but for Dick that sort of writing was a waste of time -- remember he'd already written a dozen mainstream novels and had had them all turned down: he'd given up on it as a bad job. So he dashed off the conventional novel, or those parts that he needed, and went off into outer space where he could be free of convention and reality and get down to the business of what exactly it means to be a human -- a prime concern throughout his work.

So, in *Clans Of The Alphane Moon* then, what does it mean to be human?

It means being a Ganymedeian slime mold. And also a man. Lord Running Clam and Chuck Rittersdorf. The free being and the socially bound.

Let's look at Lord RC. A Ganymedeian slime mold but, curiously enough, residing not on Ganymede but on Earth where he is free of the constraints of his own society and can slither and bubble where he will. His character is exemplary: friendly, loyal, unfailingly cheerful, even willing to lay down his life in an offhand way for someone he only recently knows. Perhaps these characteristics suggest the sort of personality that Dick thought at the time was how a free being would be.

Chuck Rittersdorf is, of course, the terminally bummed out individual familiar to us from many of Dick's books. Through no fault of his own everything has gone wrong: his marriage down the tubes, that lousy-ass job with the CIA, no friends, living in a dump and can't even commit suicide because passing slime molds take pity on him. He's totally beset by the everyday woes of living, the common tribulations we all have to put up with. The hassles caused by the hierarchical (categorical) social structure.

He's the man who is. The normal human whose problem is how to live in a world he doesn't really much care about. He typifies, perhaps, the compromise solution chosen by those who are unconscious of the true (or false) nature of consensus reality and who must make unwanted decisions as they arise with no other guide than unenlightened self-preservation.

The slime mold is the being he *will* be, once all this categorical nonsense acted out by the inhabitants of Alphane III M2 is seen for the idiocy it is and done away with.

For that is the purpose of the ex-mental patients: to ring the changes on the system, expose the ridiculousness of the whole elitist sham known as reality. To set the stage for Chuck and the slime mold as they both face death: the one who seeks it and the one who doesn't think much about it because he knows his individuality is not important -- he will live again. And at this point we can get metaphysical, if you want, but there's no need. The death of Lord Running Clam early in the book and his later resurrection in multiple form tells us several things about how Dick viewed the free being. The question is, What does it mean to be human -- and what does it mean to die? The slime mold tells us that we're all the same. He dies and many Lord Running Clam's are later alive *and they're all exactly the same!* There is no categorical difference between them. The slime mold lives as long as there is life. The egoic individual -- as exemplified by Chuck -- is only a shell, a social construction of a domineering reality, underneath it all at the very bottom is our universal humanness. And conventional thoughts of death are exposed as another example of societal conditioning.

The mental patients on the Alphane moon offer alternative responses to imposed reality with its self-serving categories. The tenuous freedom held by the clans anent their ex-status as mental patients is decidedly shaped by that ex-status. Despite their several efforts to function together by accepting their psychological diagnoses as something positive and working with it from there, they cannot throw off the weight of conventional opinion. It drags them down in every case: the Daps depression, the Pares paranoia, the Mans mania. Reaction defines action.

Perhaps Dick here was toying with the question of whether or not acceptance of conventional thinking -- acceptance of reality -- would make life easier, for certainly to accept one's categorisation in terms of psychological chimeras is to believe that no matter how fucked the world may seem personally and its not one's fault, maybe the psychologists are right? Maybe the given reality is the best of all possible worlds? Maybe you are insane after all.

Thus he covers all bases. With Chuck he gives us the common man totally in thrall to the dominant reality, unaware that he is a victim. With the slime mold we get the free individual, outside of it all. And with the nutcases we encounter those trying to be free inside a definition that may itself be insane -- or it may not. They don't know and nor do we what is the best way to seek freedom: Accept the given reality? Reject it? Compromise? Or is there another way?

If anyone in the novel offered us this other way it is Chuck Rittersdorf. His trajectory in the story from attempted suicide to attempted murder to complete alienation as he throws in his lot with the Alphanes and settles under their protection for a life on Alpha III M2 covers all these possibilities in a dynamic way (as opposed to the static reaction of the ex-mental patients).

Chuck changes as the story progresses. He becomes more free as he is forced into actions and decisions imposed upon him by the larger society as symbolised by his wife, his bosses at the CIA, Bunny Hentman, the clans, the Alphanes and even the slime mold. He is never free but in the course of the novel he does free himself up somewhat, ultimately trading one set of problems for another set, maybe simpler, maybe not. Is Dick saying with this character that there is no easy way to be free, one must rely on one's basic humanity? The ordinary man has only his wits, experience and whatever it is inside him that makes him balk in the face of catastrophe then somehow plow on through it because time rushes on and decisions are made whether you make them or not?

I don't know. Dick really offers no solutions in *Clans Of The Alphane Moon*. Gabriel Baines, the sympathetic representative of the Paranoid clan -- and for us of all the Clans -- offers faint hope that the acceptance of reality will do much good; you may feel better about yourself but the fact remains to *them* you're still a nut.

Dick's only hope seems to be outside intervention by alien beings. I say this because, despite Baines and Chuck's evolution, the slime mold itself is too overpowering a character to let the alternatives offered by the clans and Chuck be fully realised -- they are weaker solutions.

And if that is the case, is there any hope for mankind? Must we wait for the aliens from outer space to appear and help us all out?

Dick, from the evidence of his life, never gave up this hope and with his experiences of February/March 1974 his hope was realised, an alien power intervened in his personal life and changed it decidedly -- seemingly for the better. *Clans* then is a prelude to *Valis*.

But I can't wind up this review without commenting on the parts of Mary Rittersdorf and Joan Trieste: Love gone sour and love proffered anew. Evidently, as Malzberg points out, Dick was having a hard time of it with marital problems while writing this book and in typical fashion he wove his personal life into the story. Chuck Rittersdorf, like Dick, has marital problems. He loves his wife, Mary, even though she's the consummate bitch. But once she forces him out he quickly, on the advice of the slime mold and with the alien's help, sort of falls in love again with Joan Trieste. But he's scarred and confused, he cannot accept that love is the answer: he's had too much recently bad experience with it. He balks and cannot plunge into the relationship with Joan -- a nose dive being the only way to fall properly in love. Thus Dick sidesteps the issue of whether love is, indeed, the answer to life's woes. Perhaps he is pointing out that love of the interpersonal, one-on-one sort is something else outside of the dominant reality. It *may* be the answer for Dick, we don't know, he didn't write about it in this book. And I'm not sure if he ever squarely addressed that question in any of his books, even though, as we know, he promptly fell in love with every passing dark-haired girl.

Instead, he contrasts it with the universal love symbolised by the slime mold, what Lawrence Sutin calls *caritas*. Without that basic caring being first fully established in the world personal love can only be warped and destroyed by a society that demands conformity to expectations that each of us see differently: Chuck was content in his job programming CIA simulacrum, but for Mary that wasn't good enough, she expected more and their marriage was destroyed. Their love was not strong enough in the face of society. Love, then, is not the answer -- at least under present conditions.

And with Dick's final sardonic comment on Chuck's love life with Mary we see, from our view outside the novel, what Chuck does not: you can grow and change and free yourself up but without the corresponding growth of the rest of society, as instanced in this case by Mary, *along the same lines as your own*, you are still attached in the same old fashion: Chuck and Mary back together again but this time with Chuck minus an earlobe.

So, wrapping up, *Clans Of The Alphane Moon* cannot truly be said to have failed on any measurement of literary excellence. When Malzberg suggests in one of the quotes above that no number of slime molds and self-hating simulacra can fully divert us from the point that the novel is about all those categorical-type things of common existence, I can only state that I think he's wrong. The slime molds and simulacra are not meant by Dick to divert us from the cold reality of his life but are the central concern of the novel, the devices by which he explores and explodes categorical thinking itself. Reality-based novels -- the mainstream -- are firmly embedded in the dominant mass reality or whatever you want to call it. They cannot see beyond its artificial horizons. And to hold up this defunct mainstream as any sort of standard is like measuring the worth of a rock song by its adherence to 19th century musical conventions.

With *Clans* Dick has destroyed the usefulness of stereotypical literary classifications and with it the status of mainstream literature: If that literature accepts the dominant reality then it is nothing more than propaganda for that system. And, to make a heavy point of it, there is only one purpose to propaganda: to keep those in power in their positions of authority. No wonder those 1950's type publishers wouldn't publish Dick's straight novels, they knew, probably unconsciously, that to do so they would be putting themselves out of a job.

Dave Hyde. 6-27-91. This has been a Ganymedeian Slime Mold Prod.

"A rat, from its hole behind the icebox, scuttled across the floor. The woman invader, seeing the clumsy little weapon which it carried, shut her eyes and moaned."



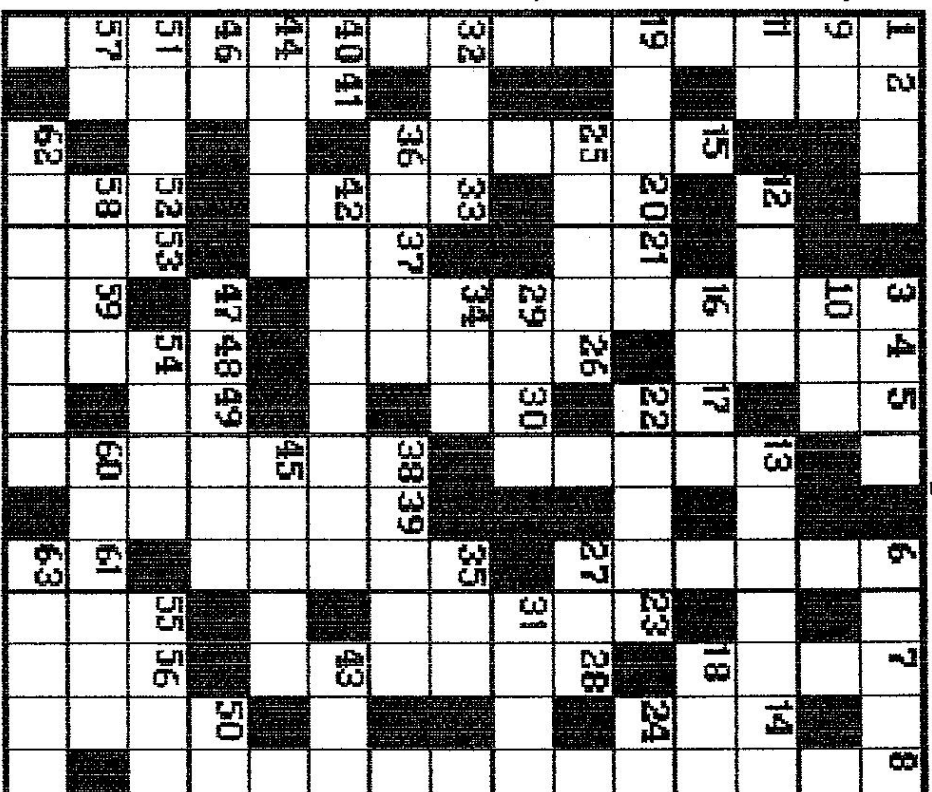
ACROSS

PHILIP K. DICK MEMORIAL
CROSSWORDS #1: Clans of the

DOWN

Alphane Moon.

1. Ganymedean title of respect.
3. Baines, to his friends.
6. Chuck's programming buddy.
9. Freudian notion.
10. Curve.
11. Outside Diameter.
12. Twilight area.
13. Lillistap epithet.
- 16 & 63. Bunny's writers.
18. Resort.
19. Stopped slime mold sound.
22. Chuck's fate after the CIA found out about his other job.
24. Famous alien.
25. Alternative quibble?
27. How Mary likes her wine, presumably.
29. Good calcium source.
31. Joyous name.
32. Kent State.
34. PKD's number.
35. Sleep state.
36. Bunny's TV job.
38. Jacob Simeon's clan.
40. Mary's title.
42. Slime molds's moon.
43. One Dick publisher.
44. Royal Alphane Army Air Force?
45. Darkness.
46. Shot for 39DN.
47. Ziggy.
50. My opinion of Malzberg's Afterword.



51. Big monster.
54. Gun fodder.
55. Skitz Delegate.
57. VALIS, for one.
58. Cosmic period.
60. Dick' Bishop.
62. Civil War simulacrum.
63. See 16 Across.

1. Bunny's real name (10,5)
2. Strange.
3. Heeb habitat.
4. Enclosed space.
5. Calender reckoning.
6. Moon phenomena.
7. PKD's favorite cats?
8. Famous Heeb saint (6,7)
13. Alphane cash.
14. Human progenitor?
15. Peasant.
17. Radio Frequency.
20. Intelligence Quotient.
21. 'Sun' minus the 'n'.
23. Graceful star?
- 26 & 38 DN. TV comic and Alphane spy. (5,7)
28. Early satellite.
30. Met
33. Soviet ballerina.
35. Lillistap enemy.
37. Relative of 15 DN?
38. See 26 DN.
39. Paul Williams for PKD?
41. Several raduses.
48. Rave.
49. Mystical word.
50. Gabe thinks he's one.
52. Chuck's attorney.
53. British brew.
55. Magical Dick pot.
56. Males.
59. Preposition.
61. Cheap Jeep?

A Maze of Death -- Our visit to Ft. Collins, Colorado and the grave of PKD. (Or what we did on our summer vacation)

*** * * * * *** * * * * *** * * * * *** * * *

The first thing you notice about Ft. Collins, Colorado as you approach it from the east on Interstate 80 is that it smells like an open sewer. Jeez, I said to Barb in the passenger seat, it figures. Philip K. Dick is buried in the stinkiest town in the whole of Colorado.

She nodded and took a deep breath. The secret, she said, is to take a deep breath, that way your nostrils get burned out with the smell, just like the pig farms in Indiana.

Right. I drove on and by the third exit the smell had abated somewhat. Let's pull off here and get something to eat and find out where the graveyard is, I suggested.

Okay. So I pulled off and found a convenient Burger King and went through the drive through. After ordering burgers for Barb and the kids and a chicken sandwich for me I edged up to the window. When the girl appeared to take our money I asked her where Philip K. Dick, the famous Science Fiction writer, was buried. Who? She said. Philip K. Dick, I enunciated, you know, the famous writer who's buried here in town.

Let me get the manager, she said, maybe he knows. So the manager shows up. Well, there's a graveyard just down the street here, he says, let me give you directions. So off we go.

Luckily the graveyard was huge and situated in the middle of the town so we couldn't miss it. I drove into the entrance and slowly crept down the winding driveway, looking out my side at the gravestones while Barb looked out hers. It was starting to get dark so I turned on the headlight. Then... Aha! There it is: DICK carved bigger than life on a grey rectangular stone, just like in the photo in the issue of the PKDS Newsletter. I backed the car up and twisted it around until our one remaining headlight shone straight onto the stone.

Barb and I got out, leaving the kids in the car. They were a little spooked. We examined the headstone. Wrong Dick. This one was engraved with the names Mary and Jack or something. So I pulled out my trusty miniature flashlight that I got from this guy at work and cast around for the right stone on the theory that all Dicks would probably be buried close to each other -- a family plot.

No luck. There were no more Dicks around. We got back into the car and renewed the crawl down the driveway. Only it wasn't a driveway but a series of circular roads with many branches. So we were totally lost among the gravestones and now it was completely dark. In the back seat the kids began to whine. But we kept up the search: having driven 1000 miles we weren't about to give up our quest lightly.

After more minutes of peering around we saw a young couple walking through the cemetery. Hey! Let's ask them, suggested Barb, maybe they've just spent an afternoon at the shrine. So I sped up to them and Barb hollered out the window, Hey! excuse me, do you know where Philip K. Dick the famous writer is buried?

No reply. The couple huddled together and rushed off.

Well shit, I said, What's wrong with the people in this town, don't they know who Philip K. Dick is? What kind of town is this?

By now the kids were getting really scared. The whine level rose a notch. Reluctantly we decided to give up our search. We'd been at it for a half an hour and the place was a lot bigger than you might think a graveyard would be. So, while Barb still searched I headed for the exit. Only I couldn't find it. Here we were in the middle of town bordered on all four sides by well-lit streets and surrounded by similar looking gravestones. All those windy roads fed into each other and curved all over the place. I drove round and round, hopelessly lost -- though not really *lost*, I could see in all directions the traffic driving down the well-lit streets. But there was no way to get onto the streets, the goddam driveways went everywhere *except* out. We were stuck in a real Maze of Death.

Barb and I howled with laughter as it got more ridiculous the more we drove around. In the back seat the kids shivered with fear. Well sheeoot, I said, there's no way out of here. We're doomed to drive round and around this cemetery until our gas runs out or the Walker-on-Earth comes to give us advice.

But after more fruitless circling looking for the exit, I realised that while the cemetery was enclosed by the 4 streets, there was no wall or boundary of any sort around the cemetery itself -- no fences, just the gravestones and grass then the streets. Eureka! I said. We're outta here. And I wrenched the wheel over and slipped through the headstones, across the grass and bounced onto the street. Reality at last!

Soon we were back on I80 headed for the mountains and our vacation at my brothers antique store in Lyons. We never did make it back to Ft. Collins and PKD's grave but we figured, what the hell, we'd come *close*. My only regret was that I was unable to conduct my secret plan of chipping off a corner of PKD's marker for a talisman with my handy 2lb ball-peen hammer which I keep under the front seat of the car. Oh well, I'd've probably cracked the fucker in half and got busted for graverobbing and the whole lot of us would've ben burnt at the local stake for confessed lycanthropic tendencies...