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BOOK REVIEW

## 'The Exegesis of Philip K. Dick' edited by Pamela Ja and Jonathan Lethem

December 30, 2011 | By Ethan Gilsdorf

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Whether to publish a writer's unfinished work is a question literary estates and heirs face, not always honorably.

Scraps and drafts by authors including Dr. Seuss, Robert Heinlein, Tolkien, Hemingway, and Douglas Adams have been released, posthumously, as books, sometimes ignoring the author's wishes.

Authors generate endless drafts and chuck 90 percent of it, for good reason. Most is chicken scratch.

In the case of hyper-prolific cult writer Philip K. Dick, we now have the strange scribbblings called "The Exegesis of Philip K. Dick." Dick likely did not intend these notes to be published - and, in fact, the editors point out that Dick's children were comfortable about the book, fearing that it could harm their father's reputation.

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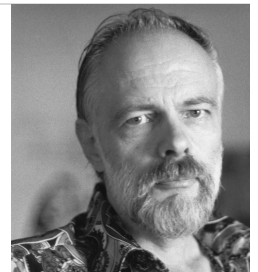
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Philip K. Dick. (Frank Ronan)

Dick toiled largely in obscurity. His big break came only after his death, in 1982, when "Blade Runner" was adapted by Ridley Scott as the film "Blade Runner." Since then, his literary star has ascended, along with academic interest in the "Exegesis" collection. Several movies, including "Total Recall" and "Minority Report," have been based on his work. Prior to "Blade Runner," only sci-fi diehards knew of Dick's 44 novels and stories, many infused with paranoia and corporate and governmental oppression.

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flight from that tyranny via transcendent experiences, drugs, and altered states.

Yet the one “real” event Dick could not escape became his obsession: what he called “2-3-74,” his own shorthand for the confounding events of February and March, 1974.

During those two months, Dick was visited by hallucinations and visual psyches described these visions, variously, as pink light beams; as “hundreds of thousand terrific modern art pictures”; as a “red and gold plasmatic entity” ; as “Zebra” and at eight years, from 1974 until his death in 1982, the effort to comprehend these visions consumed him. At night, he’d crank out dozens, sometimes scores, of handwritten typewritten pages of ideas, theses, lists, letters, drawings, flow charts, all embodying meaning of the French word “essay”: a weighing, a trial, an attempt. These philosophical spiritual writings have been released as “The Exegesis of Philip K. Dick.”

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