

Welcome to PKD OTAKU #19

One more time a huge delay with this very issue of your favorite pkd zine has been caused by me, the lazy co-editor. Patrick has already sent me his final draft weeks ago, but due to my move to Portugal in order to live in a free-love community, you were not able to access it until now. I have always promised my dear chief editor to be faster on every new issue, yet I have failed. Again. I hereby promise to overcome my laziness which has so far been hidden behind more or less good apologies. Therefore you get one more article this time. Not so bad, eh?! But next time I'll deliver it Bigger! Better! Faster! Promised!

Marc Oberst (Tamera/Portugal, 11/05/08)

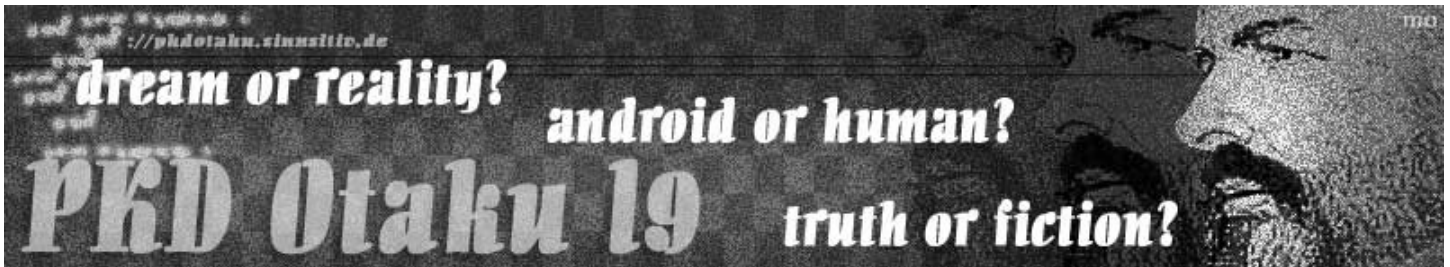
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Special thanks to Ynnon Tal.

Come to our website for more, now easier to remember at:
<http://pkdotaku.sinnsitiv.de>



“Finding the dark-haired girl” by Marc Oberst

Lately I felt like re-reading "the dark-haired girl" by Philip K. Dick another time. I chose the limited German version again released by the fantastic Edition Phantasia. It follows the author's original concept without the added material by Paul Williams – not that I did not like to read all the bonus material Paul collected for us, but while reading the wonderfully translated & edited book by Joachim Körber I felt closer to Phil, like reading his diaries with him sitting besides, not like documents about a dead personality. This more personal than fictive book had already given me a better view on my private situation of love when I was just 14 years. I am writing "*more* personal than fictive" as this collection of letters and dreams is – besides all the facts that could be proven to be based on reality – a quite fictional text since Phil believed like nearly all the modern novels and screenplays about love do to finally finding the one girl that would save him for the rest of his life. This romantic idea of love is what I would call "fictive" as two pages later it is the same situation but with another girl. And Phil, still believing with the same intensity. On and on.

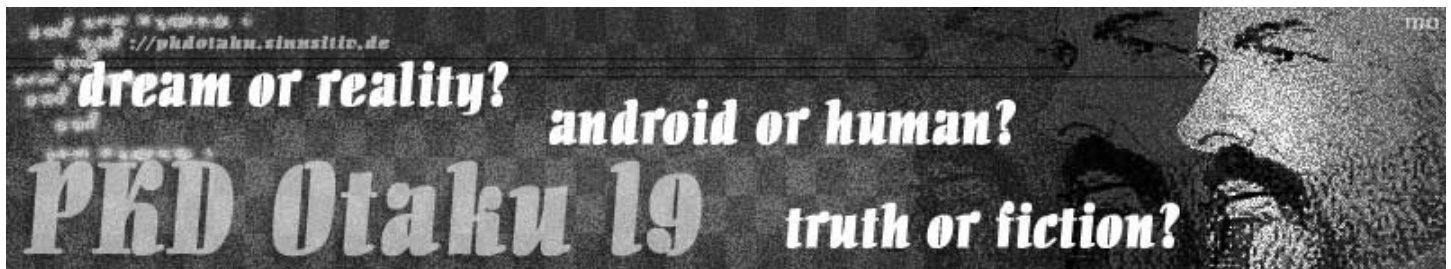
Samsara – Buddhism's wheel of reincarnation is what comes to my mind recognizing the repeating stories about his luck and pain. At the end of this book he seemingly made peace with all the mentioned girls and found at least for some time a painless way of living, his way out of the never ending circle.

I found myself in a quite similar situation to what I already understood by counting 14 years concerning women and the way i started to love. It was the same intensity. I had been searching for my dark-haired girl, on and on, meeting an android instead. I first encountered Phil's writing with the release of "blade runner – the director's cut" in 1993, immediately reading the book & his topical short story collection "autofab" (released by the great Swiss publisher Haffmans, sadly out of business today) and discovered my girl friend of these days inside: Rachel Rosen. not only that but also because of the similarity I felt, I continued to read his books, one after another, besides struggling in reality with this girl. The next to come was another similarity. And than I spent all I saved of my pocket money to buy the limited and only-ever edition of "the dark-haired girl".

I found myself inside. And with it I understood the reasons for my decisions and my "fate", at least I got closer to understanding it all. Not being intellectually alone at this age of mine anymore, reading dick maybe kept me from committing suicide. At least made the fall into the holes of depression not as hard as before.

At this point I just felt what I can see clearly now: Phil's stories are just a cover. you will find more, if you take a deeper look. And I am not only talking about the intellectual theorizing concerning his political subtexts. Phil's "true" intentions go even deeper. when you say – as is usual nowadays when it comes to talk about his writings – the pulp stories are just a cover for the quest for "what is really real?" and his later works are covers for political intentions, I say the question of what is real, is just a cover for its answer, the political issues covers the spiritual ones Phil delivers within.

Just circumstantial evidence but a significant point to show my idea is that Phil loved Beethoven whom I love too and studied a lot since I discovered his works in my early youth (even before I discovered Phil's). Beethoven was able to insert an enhanced spirituality into the currently instituted system of faith as Phil did too. People got giddy listening to his music, because they were touched by this deep truth, a truth they could not articulate. With Phil it is the same. his stories could be pulp, but all have an immanent power of truth, he could not really see this himself, i guess,



otherwise he would have become a holy spiritual master instead of going nearly insane by all the strange happenings during the second part of his lifetime. And also the surface "intellectual" system – like contradictory testimonies (paradoxes that are general problems in philosophical circles, but obsolete in spiritual spirals) – just serves the real ideas below all these words to be spread worldwide. The spirit is simply there, inside his works.

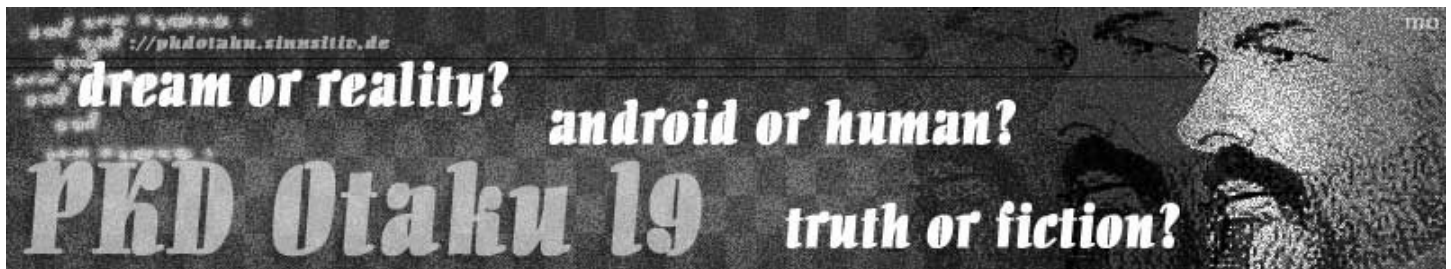
I am not going to say that Dick is a bigger genius than Beethoven who fooled us all or even a Zen master pretending to be an sf-writer. But I am going to say that there is one more level of information inside his writings, one more layer to reveal than all that has been revealed so far. Something behind the paranoid men, the dystopian film noir novelist we all love to read and try to understand. The answers to his own questions are already within. Even if not totally optimistic, you will find the solutions for all characters Phil created along their fictional storyline as you can find the answers to his own private struggles within his saddest letters. If you re-read Phil you will discover the love, the divine invasive love that is the true base of all his novels. And this is not only sf, not only political or intellectuals playing games, this is lived spirituality. Even if not consequently.

So there is no hunting for another dark-haired girl anymore. Not for him and not for me. Of course I had other spiritual masters teaching me as Phil had too (philosophical and religious, in writing and teaching, the I Ching also.) but I am happy that I can count also Phil among them, as an enhancer of quality in my life, not just a good sf-artist or intellectual philosopher. He touched me deeply and his ideas and answers on these are preparations of parts on my path to the goal of my life that I can see already shining, closer than the horizon.

Well, these are just some thoughts about another way Philip K. Dick influenced my life – definitely an underestimated author in his lifetime (and maybe still today) whom I admired through all the ups-and-downs in his writings and my history in parallel –. No masterpiece of an article or scientific research inside his works. But as I decided to finally quit my studies (philosophy and science of religions) even though being close to getting a master of arts title, I know that from now on I only want to write what I like, not what I should or have to. It should have been a longer text too, but as the idea came to me six weeks ago and the first draft has been finished already four, I am not able or willing – as this is no struggle for better marks anymore – to investigate further, both inside my brain and inside the library. Though I hope the idea I shared with you above, might be an inspiration for you too or at least a few minutes of funny reading. That's all folks!

"Pink Beam – A Note from the author" by Dave Hyde

Patrick Clark, esteemed editor of PKD OTAKU, has asked me how it is that I came to write *PINK BEAM: A Philip K. Dick Companion*. Well, I never intended to write a book on Philip K. Dick, it's just that when Paul Williams decided to discontinue the publishing of *The Philip K. Dick Society Newsletter* in 1992 after ten years of publishing it, I was devastated in an intellectual sort of way. I had joined the PKD Society in about 1985 and the *Newsletter* was a greatly anticipated adjunct to my then reading everything by and about Philip K. Dick. I knew that PKD was a great science fiction writer and the *Newsletter* was important to me in that its mere existence meant that I was not the only one who believed that way. Back then in the '80s PKD was not the Giant of Modern Literature that he is today (that he is now so considered is in no small part the result of the *Newsletter* and its bringing

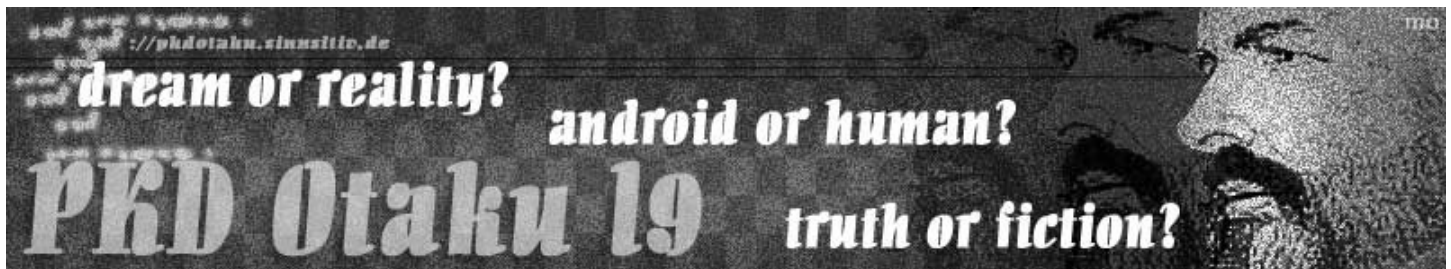


together the worldwide community of PKD fans; in a sense the *PKDS Newsletter* created this community). Back then PKD was appreciated by the fans of his science fiction and not seen, as today, as the straw-man, the patsy, the convenient icon of Post-modernism for every hack journalist and graduate student cranking out a PhD thesis. In the 80s and on into the 90s PKD belonged to *us*, his fans.

So when Paul Williams announced the demise of the *PKDS Newsletter* I decided immediately to publish a fanzine of my own. I called this 'zine *For Dickheads Only* and wrote the first issue with the help of Barb Mourning Child and The Rev Dr X – my compatriots in Kokomo, Indiana where I then lived. We printed it out at home on my old Amiga 500 computer. We even had a color cover in the blocky lo-rez fashion that was state-of-the-art for the day. I titled the zine *For Dickheads Only* for two reasons. First, I'd been listening to an old Steppenwolf album which included a long song titled 'For Ladies Only' and I thought that'd be a good title if I simply substituted 'Dickhead' for 'Ladies'. And, second, I wanted to affirm our fannish sense of exclusivity and our irreverence. To me a zine is something from the underground, it arises from the people, it wants little to do with mainstream culture and values, in fact a good zine usually despises the above-ground society. But, at the same time, it should provide essential information about its subject. Of course, *For Dickheads Only* didn't come completely out of the blue. I'd been writing and publishing subversive newsletters on and off for years. In 1988 I'd put out *No Bullshit* a zine that covered the 1988 General Election between George Bush senior and whoever the Democratic candidate was that year. Eleven issues later I was burnt out on politics and hated every politician as the epitome of corruption. George Bush senior I consigned to the lowest depths of hell along with Ronald fucking Raygun and Tricky Dick Nixon. Add Baby Bush to these three assholes and we have the worst four presidents ever. May they all rot in hell! And the sooner the better...

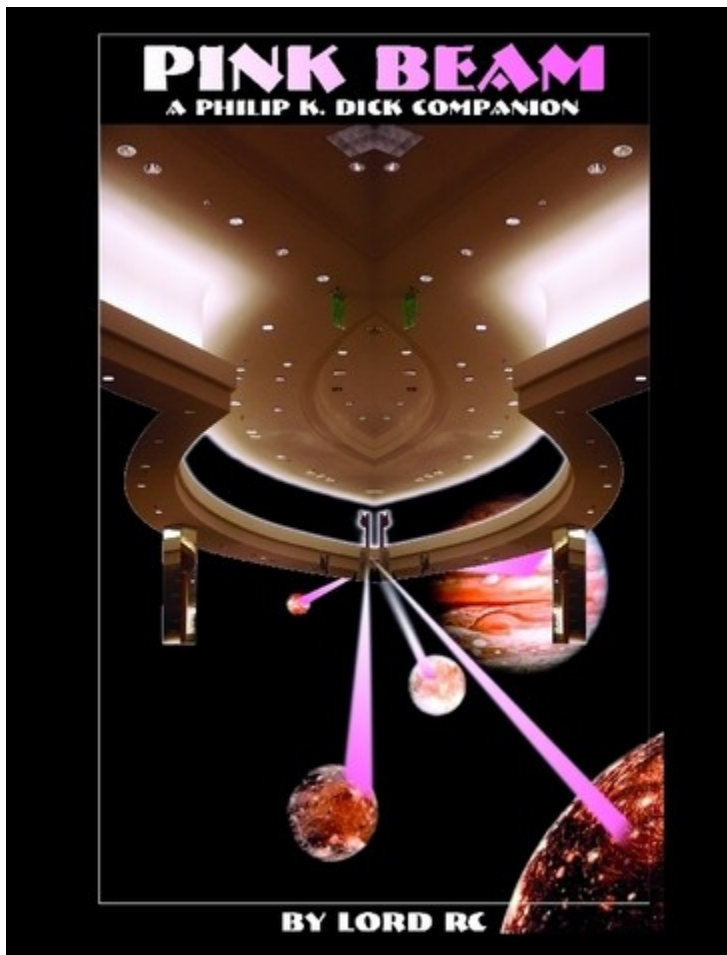
But, anyway, with *FDO* I started collecting and categorizing all the information I could find on Philip K. Dick. I entered notes and quotes and everything into my old Amiga computer because I wanted to know what I was writing about before I published anything in *FDO* – I knew the fans would be looking and I didn't want to look like an idiot.

With the help of several fans I put out six issues of *FDO* over five years before I folded the zine in 1997. I didn't want to stop but when your life is falling apart, you're sleeping on your buddies couch, your job is suddenly 60 miles from home and home itself becomes where your ass is you can't do much of anything. But I'd continued to gather and compile PKD information even managing to transfer it from my Amiga to a string of bad Windows boxes, printing it all out in hard copy so I wouldn't lose it. Six years later my brother enticed me to the mountains near Ward, Colorado where in a bitter cold winter at 9,000 feet altitude and with another donated obsolescent computer I started PINK BEAM. I just didn't stop, I just kept going: writing, thinking, smoking dope, drinking, writing and then one day a year later it was done! In manuscript form, at least. Now came the hard part – finding a publisher. Needless to say I couldn't find one and soon gave up trying. For a do-it-yourself zinester like me I didn't have much hope of anyone in the mainstream publishing biz condescending to 'accept' my work; the whole 'submission' process itself I found degrading. So I gave up figuring I'd never get PINK BEAM published. But the publishing industry isn't what it used to be. A friend – Mark Ivins who did the cover for PINK BEAM – told me about Lulu Publishers. This is a great company that allows you to publish a book under their imprimatur. In effect Lulu Publishers has taken the printing and distribution process from the Big Publishers and given it back to the people. I was happy to work with their way of



doing things – no rejection slips, no condescending put-downs of your work, no waiting for months before they even bothered to reply, just You want to publish it, we'll print it! Of course, it took another year before the final design was done.

Now, here it is: done. I'm more amazed than anything that it is. I wrote it for PKD's fans. I wrote

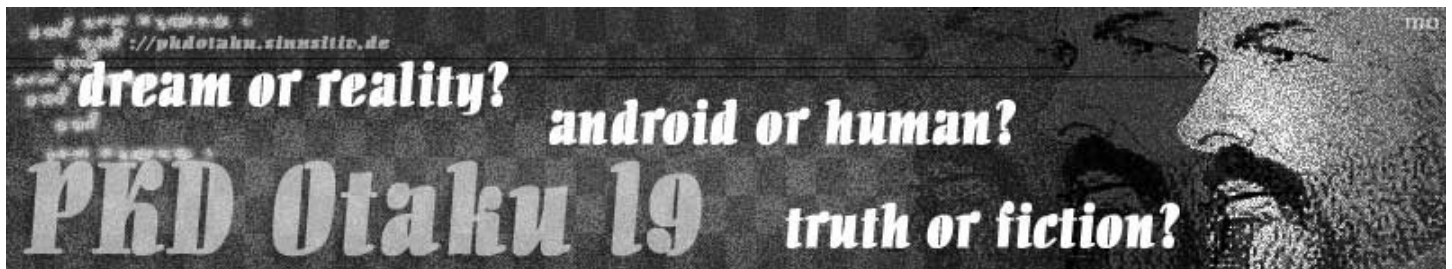


it so that future writers and students of Philip K. Dick's stories would have a basic reference work to answer questions about PKD's stories themselves. I've read so many articles, books, papers, etc. on PKD and his stories and been totally annoyed when the writers of same do not even bother to do minimal research into what they're trying to write about. So much garbage spouted off the top of people's heads. Well, here with PINK BEAM are the *facts*. Look them up dammit!

Naturally there will be mistakes in the book. My greatest fear is that I've omitted completely one of Phil's stories or novels. I've checked and checked – UBIK's there and THE THREE STIGMATA but are all the short stories? I'm sure that if I've made such a gross error some fan will call me on it. And I hope they do. I want their input so I can produce a better edition in the future. I guess the real reason I wrote PINK BEAM is that I believed it was something that *had* to be done. It was necessary that it be done so that those of us who believe in the greatness of Philip K. Dick can now have something to work from: a basic text dealing with the basic facts of PKD's stories. Now with PINK BEAM to hand we can get on with the real

work of understanding PKD's career and how it relates to modern literature. I've read somewhere that PKD is considered the greatest writer of the latter half of the 20th century. This is someone's opinion, but what is the basis of this opinion? With a reference book like PINK BEAM serving as a companion to Phil's stories perhaps now we can answer this question.

PINK BEAM: A Philip K. Dick Companion' by Lord RC, Lulu Publishers, softcover, 322 pages, ISBN 978-1-4303-2437-9, \$29.95. (24.11 euros) Including Introduction, appendices, footnotes, index and Afterword. To preview and order your copy please go here: <http://www.lulu.com/content/549268>



“Throwing Ubiks” by Gerardo Acosta

The fanzine I wrote has the title *Ubikando*. It has no literal translation into Spanish or into English, I guess. However, in Spanish it will sound like “throwing ubiks” which is the meaning I wanted to express.

The fanzine was always distributed digitally. I wrote the 3rd issue in Word. At the beginning it was distributed only on the Spanish PKD web list called “Biblioteca_dick” (“Dick’s library”). At some point I got mad with some people from that web list so I decided to stop the publication of this fanzine, at least to publish it on that web list. The way you can get the 3 issues is by following these next instructions:

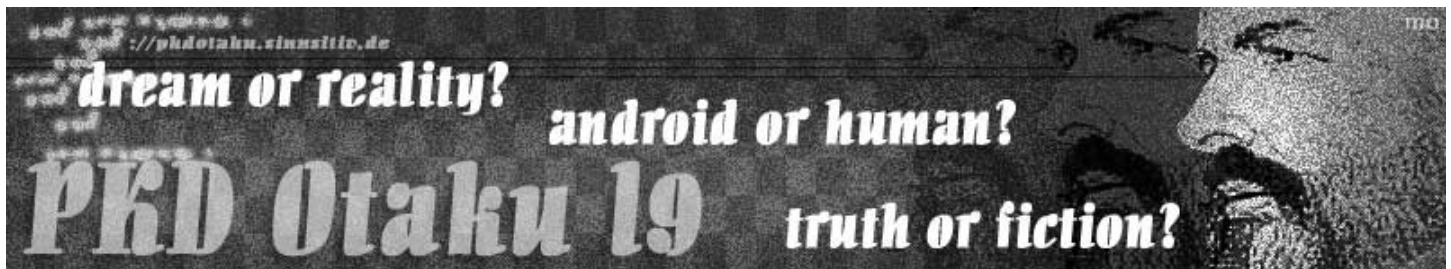
- a) go to <http://www.matem.unam.mx/personal/index-investigadores.html>
- b) click on “Acosta, Gerardo”
- c) a new window will appear, then click on “Publicaciones” and that’s it.

The content of the fanzine was mainly taken from the fanzine *PKDS Newsletter*. Paul Williams allowed me to translate whatever I liked from that fanzine only if I publish the Spanish translations as a fanzine (as it was done).

This is the description of each issue of the fanzine *Ubikando* is the following:

Ubikando 1, August 2003 (86 pages)

- a) “Presentation”. Here I introduce the fanzine and the main purpose of it (publish material not previously presented in Spanish);
- b) “A history of the fanzines dedicated to Philip K. Dick”, by ubikg
- c) “Introducing the Philip K. Dick Society”, by Paul Williams (taken from *PKDS Newsletter* Num. 1);
- d) “PKDS Newsletter, vol. 1” by ubikg (A description of the content of the very first issue of the *PKDS Newsletter*. I translated the Jonh Boostra interview);
- e) “Self-portrait”, by Philip K. Dick (from the *PKDS Newsletter* Num. 2);
- f) “La voz de Dick” (“Dick’s voice”), by Elvio E. Gandolfo (This is an essay that was originally written in Spanish in 1979. For me, Elvio is the oldest and the biggest Argentinean PKD fan, and this essay is one of his first written originally in Spanish);
- g) “Old interesting news”, by ubikg (Here I translated parts of the “news section” that appeared in the *PKDS Newsletter* Num. 1);
- h) *World of Chance*, by ubikg. (It starts with an small essay about the differences between *World of Chance* and *Solar Lottery*, and then the first 2 chapters of *World of Chance*)

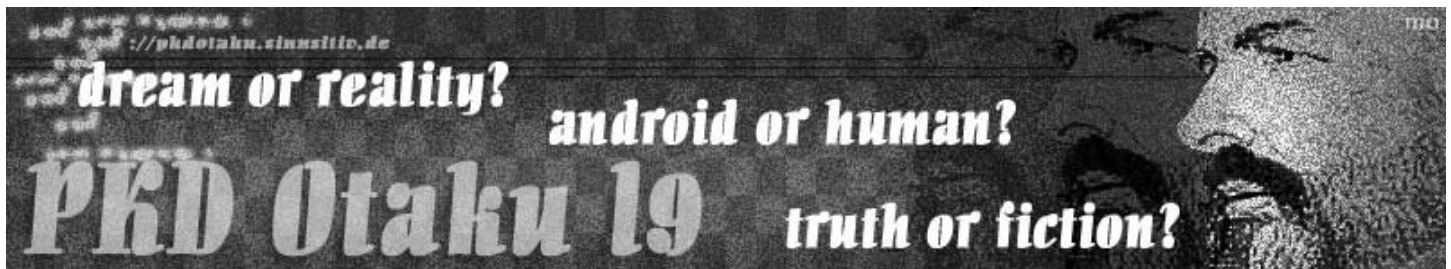


Ubikando 2, December 2003 (47 pages)
Dedicated to "Beyond lies the wub"

- a) "The magazine and the story of "Beyond lies the wub"", by ubikg. It is about the genesis of "Beyond lies the wub", about the different translations into English and Spanish of this story (and even French);
- b) "The wub lives", by Philip K. Dick (From *PKDS Newsletter* Num. 24);
- c) "Different opinions". Here I translated different opinions about "Beyond lies the wub";
- d) "Something rich and strange", by Frank C. Bertrand (From *For Dickheads Only* Num. 5)
- e) "Here lies the wub", by Dave Hyde (From *For Dickheads Only* Num. 5);
- f) Fragments of "Not by its cover"
- g) "An answer", Benie Kling (From *For Dickheads Only* Num. 5);
- h) "John Campbell Jr. and Philip K. Dick", by Scott Pohlentz (I forgot where this was taken from, perhaps from *For Dickheads Only*)

Ubikando 3, March 2004 (159 pages)

- a) "Editorial", the presentation of the contents of this big volume;
- b) "Philip K. Dick: 1918-1982". This is an essay that was originally published in 1982, I think that the 1918 should be 1928 and I don't remember if it was my mistake or if it appears originally as 1918 instead of 1928.
- c) "Some random memories about Philip K. Dick", by Tim Powers. Taken from *PKDS Newsletter* Num. 2);
- d) "The death of Philip K. Dick", by Tim Powers. Taken from *PKDS Newsletter* Num. 3;
- e) "Some random notes about VALIS and the mystic experiences of Philip K. Dick", by Tim Powers. Taken from *PKDS Newsletter* Num. 4.
- f) "Letters and Questions". In contains the letter by Tessa Dick published in the *PKDS Newsletter* Num. 2.
- g) "Patrice Duvic interviews Philip K. Dick". This is not only the interview by Patrice Duvic, but also a rework of the very first essay of Elvio E. Gandolfo. It was originally published in 1976;
- h) "Philip K. Dick or the quest to reality", by Emilio Serra. This is the strangest essay about the work of PKD that I have ever read. It was originally published in 1980;
- i) "Philip K. Dick: the other realities", by Juan Carlos Planells. This essay, originally published in 1982, is a long description of the work by PKD. Juan Carlos is for me what Elvio is, I mean, the oldest and biggest PKD fan from Spain;
- j) "Dickosis", by Raul Alzogaray. I think that this essay, together with the ones by Elvio and Juan Carlos, should be translated into English. It was originally presented in 1984;
- k) "Where the wub lies?" by ubikg. My first PKD story.
- l) "Mystery around the death of Philip K. Dick" (From *Simulacrum Meltdown* Num. 1 and the *PKDS Newsletter*)



"A list of PKD zines" by Gerardo Acosta

"PKDS Newsletter" (USA) (30 issues, Aug 1983 – Dec 1992). Paul Williams.

"Dicksieland" (USA) (1 issue, 1987). Arthur Hlavaty.

"For Dickheads Only" [FDO"] (USA) (6 issues, 1992 – summer 1996). David Hyde.

"Radio Free PKD" (USA) (7 issues, Feb 1993 - Aug 1998). Greg Lee.

"Beyond Lies the Web" (UK) (1 issue, circa 1996-1997).

["The God in the Trash"] (Russia) (4 issues, 1999 – circa 2001). Nadia Markalova. Russian language. Available at <http://www.sf.perm.ru/god.shtml>

"Simulacrum Meltdown" (USA) (3 issues, 1999 - Oct 2001). Patrick Clark. Available at <http://home.arcor.de/pkdotaku/pkdfra.htm>

"E-Dika" (USA) (1 issue, Jan. 2003) David Hyde. Online only; aka FDO #7 Available at <http://www.philipkdickfans.com/pkdweb/FDO7.htm>

"PKD Otaku" (USA) (19 issues so far, Jan 2002 - to current). Patrick Clark & Marc Oberst. Available at <http://home.arcor.de/pkdotaku/pkdfra.htm>

"Rouzleweave" (Japan) (4 issues, Mar 2002 – Apr 2003). Perry Kinmann.

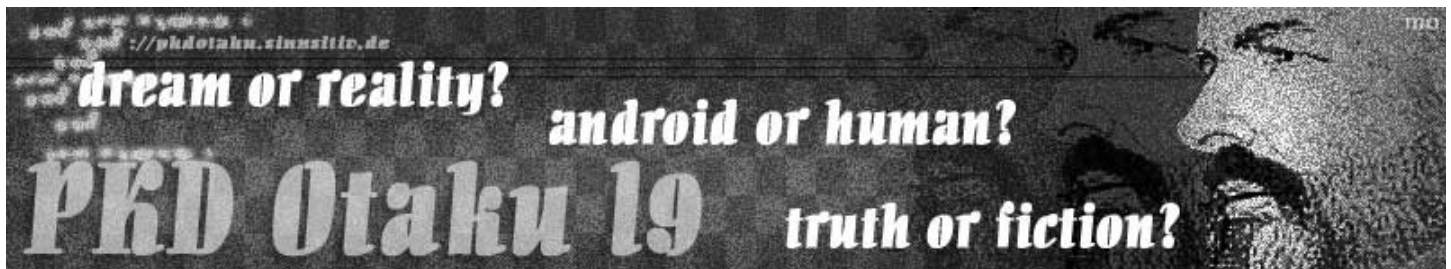
"Ubikando" (Mexico) (3 issues Aug. 2003 – Mar. 2004) Spanish language. Available at <http://www.matem.unam.mx/personal/index-investigadores.html> click on "Acosta, Gerardo" then "Publicaciones."

Special PKD issues: magazines with substantial PKD-related material

"Science Fiction Studies" no. 5, March 1975 (USA) text available at <http://www.depauw.edu/sfs/covers/cov5.htm>

"Foundation" no. 26, October 1982. (UK) Contents: "Philip K. Dick: A Cowardly Memoir" by Peter Nicholls; "Philip K. Dick: A Whole New Can of Worms" by Brian Aldiss; "Philip K. Dick and the Movies" by Philip Strick; "Understanding the Grasshopper; Leitmotifs and the Moral Dilemma in the Novels of Philip K. Dick" by David Wingrove; "Philip K. Dick and the Metaphysics of American Politics" by Brian Burden

"Science Fiction Eye" vol. 1 no. 2, August 1987 (USA) Contents: "Introduction to Fawn, Look Back" by



Paul Williams; “Fawn Look Back” by Philip K Dick; “Richard Lupoff Interviews PKD”; “Only Apparently...” by Ted White

“Science Fiction Studies” no. 45, July 1988 (USA) text available at <http://www.depauw.edu/sfs/covers/cov45.htm>

“Denebola” no. 9, January 1990 (Germany)

“New York Review of Science Fiction” no. 70 June 1994 (USA) Contents available at: http://ebbs.english.vt.edu/olp/nyrsf/Issue_70.html

“Great Cosmic Donut of Life” no. 30, June 2001 (Australia) text available at <http://www.efanzines.com/SFC/ScratchPad/scrat044.pdf>

“Gigamesh” no. 39, April 2005 (Spain) table of contents available at <http://www.gigamesh.com/gigamesh39.html>

“Libro Andromeda” [unnumbered] 2005 (Spain) table of contents available at <http://lafundacion.webcindario.com/not020.htm>

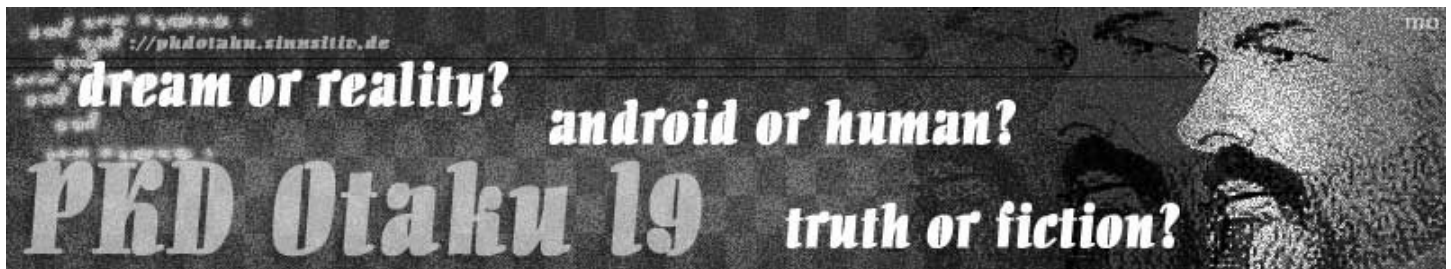
Also: “Locus” no. 256, May 1982 (USA) – not a special issue but this one has numerous comments and memoirs from within the SF community on the death of PKD

Note from Gerardo Acosta: I don't know if you are aware of the following titles in Spanish:

- 1) ¿Cuanto te asusta el caos?, by Aaron Barlow. Grupo Editorial Ajec. Grupo Albemuth (an infamous translation of the nice work of Aaron)
- 2) Idios Kosmos: Claves para Philip K. Dick, by Pablo Capanna, Grupo Editorial Ajec, 2005. This is a new version of an old book with the same title. It is the only book about the life and work of PKD published originally in Spanish.
- 3) Yo Estoy Vivo y Vosotros Estais Muertos, by Emanuelle Carrere, editorial Minotauro. The translation into Spanish of the bio-novel of Carrere.

If you go to www.tercerafundacion.net and then where it says "Buscador" (scroll down and then to the left) you type "Philip K. Dick" and in "Buscar Como" you click on "Autor" then you will get the full list of titles published in Spanish concerning PKD (both books and magazines, & even zines).

Those PKD movies – Carey Wilson said it best years ago: “I know I’ve said this here before but I can’t help but feel that the continuing co-opting and diluting of PKD’s work by Hollywood movie-makers is a grim fulfillment of the scene at the end of *Radio Free Albemuth* when Phil the writer is told by his prisoners that work will continue to be put out with his name on it but with the message altered to support the established regime rather than subvert.



"A little something for us numb skulls" by Andre Welling

When you read PKD stories one after another you really get tired of psis, mutes, and anti-psis; the whole x and y-men menagerie: telepaths (teeps), precogs, teleporters, parakinetics, domeheads, even animators and resurrectors. You get especially tired of the teeps and 'cogs and their constant scheming, probing, and quarreling. In the 50s it seems there wasn't a future world *imaginable* that hadn't any psi league or mutant corps (or at least euth death camps for 'radiation freaks'). There is lot bad analogical genetics like anti-psis "springing up" to counter or "prey on" psis (like spider build webs for flies"). There is constant fear that homo freakus or superioris will 'replace' us Norms and numbskulls. There is always genocide around the corner. You learn so much about 50s mentality from those stories if you read them *wholesale*.

"I hope it's not only staples"

Boy, ol' Phil didn't really trust the wisdom of anarchism. His Anarchist League keeps mankind down in the rubble (THE LAST OF THE MASTERS) as good as any hydrogen war could have managed. Do we like that half-fascist organized 'bubble' in the mountains? No. Do we understand the proud spirit of the AL in the view of the 'society' they created? Not at all. And what about syndicalism? But PKD's 50s future Americans are unable to decently cooperate and improve when infrastructure and central government is blasted away. They live in the rubble and there is nothing they can do, they live on left-overs, autofacs, or 'careboy' parcels and turn to depression or denial (PERKY PAT). There are so much 'low-life living in the rubble' shorts, sorta makes you tired, too, just like those rubble dwellers. (OK I admit in AUTOFAC they CAN DO achieve something, getting the autofacs to fight.)

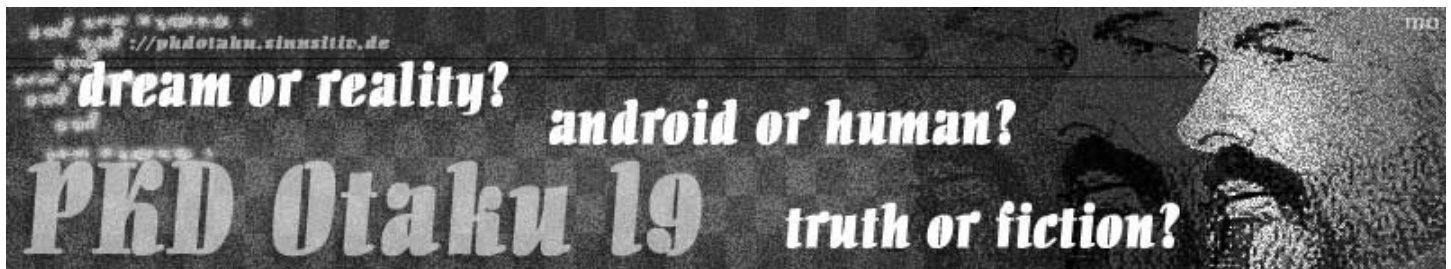
"FRY HIM! NOW!!!"

They are violent. I think there had not be any discussion of violence in Phil's work. Drugs, Philosophy, music.. but violence? But at least the shorts are fulla dissolving, ripped-open, charred, twisted, burned, blasted, and completely disintegrating bodies. There are ladies impaled on wood and gents cut in half, clean and unclean, there are countless blood-spattered dashboards, there is every way of murder: slug gun, blaster, knife, grenade, killer robots, poison pellet, gas, crowbar, acid, you name it - some are even digested.

"Kids are like that. Dirty and playing with dirty things, like themselves."

Sure "The Pre-Persons" is outrageously un-PC, even to the point of implicitly advocating hit man attacks targeting 'abortion doctors' (suck them up like they suck the li'l uns). But then it's so fucking creepy when the 'abortion truck' comes with its jolly Jack and Jill jingle and hauls in the 'stray kids', the 'undesirables', and all other 'Pre-Persons' and carries them to the 'child protection shelter' where they are 'put to sleep' when nobody adopts them in a month.

"What's wrong with that stove. It has been ten minutes already!"



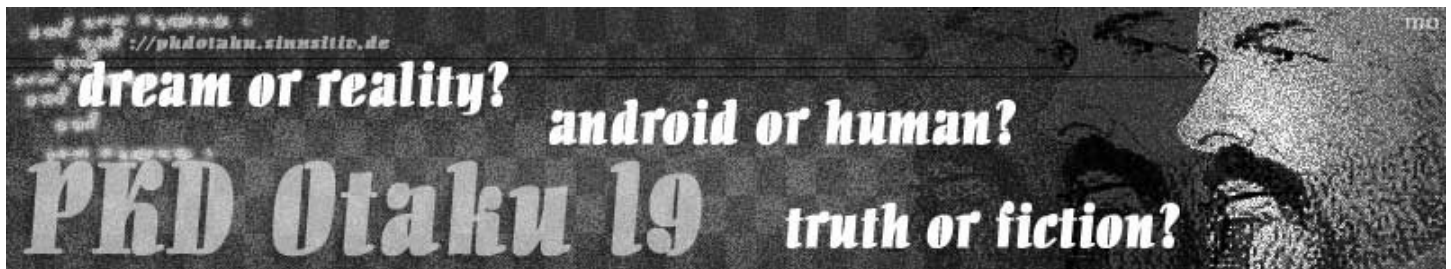
A really odd thing is the ever-recurring robotic 'stove' Mr. and Mrs Soundso have in every other story. It's basically the same model (sure from "General Electronics" who sell all the cool bomb shelters, too): You just touch buttons for the type of meal and then the 'stove' hums into action, sometimes you hear the belts carrying food from the underground storage lockers, the processing, and when it's finished normally a robot takes it and waits on the couple. So the housewife has got nothing to do in the kitchen when you think about it. Even so she seems to spend most of her time in that robotic kitchen (if only to 'program' the stove for next months meals) while her husband does toxicological research, scans clearance files, or sits on the porch. With all that imagined gadgetry, obviously it was impossible in the 50s to envision a future where the place of the 'housewife' is NOT the kitchen. New Worlds? Same as the old worlds, even if - or especially when - they wear half-transparent robes.

"But if that's Olham, then I must be--"

Many stories are almost comically illogical. Why on earth are the Proxmen creating a simulacra of a real guy fitted with an U-Bomb that is programmed to replace the real guy, forget about that, impersonate him fully and so infiltrate the 'project' and blast it eventually when a catch phrase is uttered that is of all things an uttered doubt of the guy if he is himself -- all that when the Proxmen must anyway penetrate the protective bubble around earth in order to disembark the bomb robot near its target: They could just have bombed the project or the whole world with a coupla U-Bombs in their needleship without all that fuzz and risk-taking. But then maybe that's alien logic. But nobody comments on it so its story logic. Anyway what remains is the good parts and bits. My unmentioned (when I recall the list discussion) faves of both vols are THE MOLD OF YANCY (one of the great stories about advertisement, accurately forecasting or precogging the rise of internet avatars), HUMAN IS (50s middle class marriage is such a drag for women -- alone with that stove -- that any alien might be a better husband), and FOSTER, YOU'RE DEAD (I liked it back when I read the translation and I do now. And it is another uncanny precognition of recent US American homeland security machinations and propaganda. The scene when the prez -- and his description of looks and manners recalls Bush eerily, "sunburned" and "not embarrassed": "He knew a lot of first names. Told a funny joke" -- visits the village on his national tour to hand over the green "Flag of Preparedness", someone should show that to 'Dick' or 'Karl'). But there are good bits in almost every one. Today I also read A WORLD OF TALENT in another volume, one of those tiring psi/anti-psi stories but then the briefly appearing character of 'Big Noodle' was really a hoot. When reading those few lines about one of PKD's most strange and tragic heroes, I vowed that, if I ever owned a space ship -- "in touch with every object in the universe" --, I would call it the "Big Noodle".

**“The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch” from *Philip K. Dick (Starmount Reader’s Guide)*
by Hazel Pierce, 1982**

While the *Man in the High Castle* lends itself to political and social investigation, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1964) invites quite another response. Before even turning to page one a reader must face up to the title. It pulls a heavy freight of associations, both direct and allusive. This



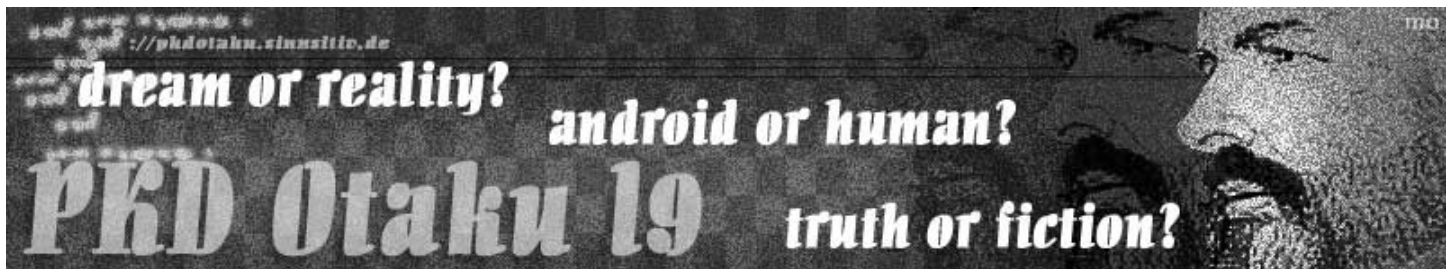
weight gives fair warning that the contents may take time to sort out and distribute for usage. At the end of the book, one is nagged by the thought that he has not handled it at all. "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet," Romeo reminds us. Had Romeo read the *Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* he could not paraphrase himself to say "This book under any other title could promise as much." Whether the novel fulfills the promise of the title depends on the effort exerted in untangling the web of interlocking realities experienced by the major characters and following the tenuous threads of the initial associations to the vital connections.

The major words in the title draw together three traditions of thought in uneasy coexistence. *Stigmata* invokes the immediate image of the physical wounds of Christ; then it widens by connotation to include all wounds, marks, or signs of great suffering, be they physical, mental, psychological, or spiritual. There are overtones of shame or guilt of some magnitude. The term *Palmer*, more precise in denotation, summons up those devout pilgrims returning from the holy land and wearing two crossed Palm leaves to attest to their spiritual experience. Even though they are linked in Christian tradition, *stigmata* and *palmer* carry emotional connotations so disparate that they set up a semantic tension within the title. *Eldritch* further compounds the tension by intimations of the occult and magical. Taken as a unit, the title carries the burden of meaning from myth and religion.

Who is Palmer Eldritch, the person able to carry all the promise of the title? Upon that question, Philip Dick has built the novel. Major events offer clues to his identity; illogical and unreal situations add details of his appearance and personality. Information about him comes from business rivals on Terra and customers on Mars. Even the drug induced worlds of his product to Chew-Z and the mundane world of his origin contribute some pieces to the puzzle of Palmer Eldritch. As each major character tries to solve the puzzle in turn, the network of individual perspectives only make it more complex. Just when all data seems to be in on Palmer Eldritch, he satisfies the demands of his last name to shift phantasm-like into another representation.

The first report on Palmer Eldritch comes in the morning homeopape read by Richard Hnatt en route to P – P Layouts to market his wife's ceramics for miniaturization. The big story reports a crash on Pluto of a spaceship, tentatively identified as belonging to Palmer Eldritch, well-known industrialist absent from Terra for a decade. Periodically engaged in wide flung space enterprises (not always efficient but always dramatic), Eldritch had gone to Proxima to modernize their manufacturing complexes. Since his reputation is built on the combination of business acumen and unbridled enthusiasm, a sense of drama envelops anything Eldritch does, even this tragic re-entry from space. Eldritch has not communicated with Terra for the decade, but speculation spins out of the myth his career has made of him. With each succeeding account, the story builds, gaining credence and authority. Yes, Palmer Eldritch was in the ship; he has survived; he is hospitalized on a nearby planet. Most noteworthy is the rumor that he has brought back a substance which will assure a happier, easier existence for the people on Terra and Mars.

The citizens of Terra do have problems. Witness the case of Barney Mayerson, Pre-Fash-- -- consultant for Perky – Pat layouts in New York. suffering all the classic symptoms of a hangover, he wakes up in a strange bedroom with an unfamiliar girl beside him. Soon, however, we realize that this is another world but one well – furnished by Philip Dick with automatic taxis, wub fur clothing, conapts, truffle skins as the local medium of exchange. Barney, a pre-cog, is worried about his job and his future. On one hand, his bed – partner is ambitious to take over his job. On the other hand, he is threatened by the draft. Not the usual conscription for war, this draft is really an impressment,



the bureaucratic machinery for moving large segments of the population to colonies on Mars. Attempting to avoid the draft, Barney hopes to establish his inability to withstand stress by carrying around with him a psychiatrist in a suitcase, Doctor Smile.

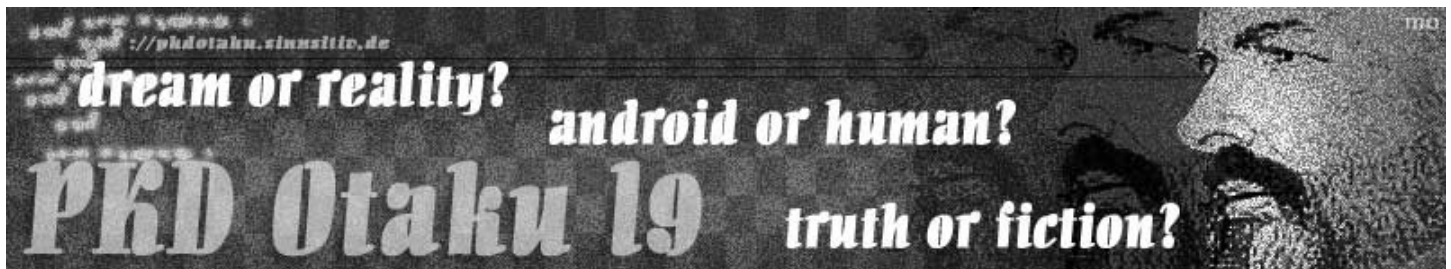
The Terra of Barney Mayerson is far along in the entropic process. The dying sun makes New York City almost unendurable with 180° daytime temperatures. The inhabitants cope as best they can; specialized engineering techniques have developed powerful cooling units for buildings and portable ones similar to backpacks for individual use. Some fortunate people live at the two poles, escaping the unbearable heat for a few more centuries. A few wealthy persons resort to E-Therapy, a speeded up evolutionary process resulting in both an enlarged brain and a hard shelled brain case. A more drastic political measure to save the population is the draft, forcing people to emigrate to other planets.

On Terra, however, not all has changed. As human beings adapt to the environmental and climatic inconveniences, their nature remains constant in other ways. Ambition still motivates them. Barney eyes an executive position as head of all the Pre-Fash consultants; at the same time Rondinella Fugate, his temporary bed partner, would take his job on the slightest notice. Their boss, Leo Bulero, jealously guards his business empire, especially his monopoly of the Can-D market on Mars.

By contrast, for those who of lost their ambition, accommodations dictate their daily lives. The colonists choose Can – D. and a drugged withdrawal over the unremitting and unrewarding work required by the new harsh environment. In New York City Richard and Emily Hnatt, Barney's ex-wife, live narrow, rather unimaginative lives of imitation. Even her small spark of creativity disappears when her husband seeks to emulate those who have turned to E – therapy. This future world in The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch lacks joy and brightness and any real hope for a fulfilling existence. In the midst of the ambition and the accommodation, a few characters wonder if there could be more to life than what they have.

Into the drabness and sadness of the natural and human landscapes comes the news of Palmer Eldritch returning with the new drug Chew—Z to compete with Leo Bulero's Can—D. At this point the novel could turn into a surrealistic, yet satiric look at the trials and tribulations of Big Business but it offers more than this. The market over which Bulero and Eldritch will battle exists on the forbidding landscape of Mars, which offers little in the way of comfort for the approximately one million colonists. Even though the home planet provides basic supplies, such as food, tools with which to farm, and seeds for planting, there is little incentive to do more than necessary. The soil is inhospitable and the seeds cannot resist the disease or the predators of the planet (obviously this is not the verified Mars of recent space landings but a Dickian Mars). Indicative of the general feeling about Martian life is the word *hovel* by which the colonists refer to their living units. They use it not with overtones of black humor but in a realistic expression of the depth of their despair.

If there is no rational or custom-honored mode of escape from such an untenable position, how do these people avoid insanity? With the willing help of Leo Bulero, the society has made an irrational escape the honored one. First, Leo's firm provides the colonists with Perky-Pat Layouts, adult size doll houses, complete with furnishings and fittings in the latest Terran fashions. The layouts house two tenants, Perky Pat and her boyfriend Walt. Everything the colonists recall of their homeland existence finds its way into the lives of Perky Pat and Walt, even such minor items as



dimes for the parking meters and a magazine in a waiting room – miniaturized, of course. It is this very lucrative business prepares to defend.

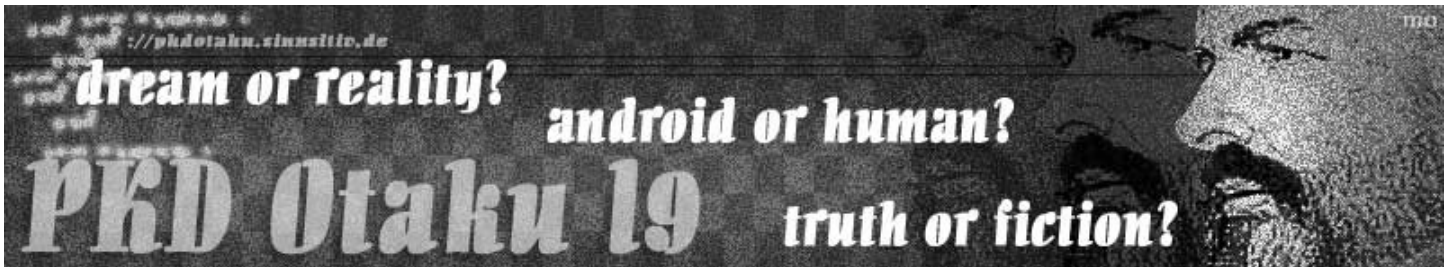
Philip Dick had used this idea in an early short story, “The Days of Perky Pat,” first published in *Amazing Stories* in December 1953. In adapting the story for the novel, Dick makes two significant changes. The setting shifts from a nuclear – wasted earth to an equally desolate Mars; the caretaker group, from a Martian version of benevolent social workers to a utilitarian UN agency providing necessities for the colonists and the extras of life for Leo Bulero. In both novel and story, the layouts are substantially the same, both in physical construction and in function. They provide a material, though miniaturized, representation of the “good old days” gone forever for those drafted for life on Mars. In the short story the survivors of the nuclear holocaust use the layouts as a perpetual monopoly game, encouraging continuance of the competitive spirit. In the novel the layouts, used in conjunction with the hallucinogenic substance, become the arena for a mystical experience, a translation in the theological sense of the work but with limited spiritual benefit.

Can – D, Bulero’s product, allows either solitary or communal experience in the artificial pattern of living built into the structure of the layout and the figures of the two dolls, perky pat and her boyfriend Walt. The Perky Pat world is one common to readers of advertisements in popular magazines, a pleasantly hedonistic world free of demanding responsibilities. It is one of the easy effort. The fused doll – human personalities acquire and drive new, fast cars; they stroll sunny beaches in new swimsuits; they date each other in antiseptically fashionable places. Ironically the layout world differs as much from the Terran world of Barney Mayerson and Leo Bulero as it does from the Martian world it is a realm of pure fantasy.

But even fantasies have benefits. Brief though the reality shift be, it does provide respite from the deadening emptiness of the methane-laden environment, the restraint of the cramped living quarters, and the unvarying routine of daily existence. Eventually even the emigrants on Mars realize the shallowness of the experience. They cannot return to edenic place in their memories; they only indulge themselves in a static event. In the world of Perky Pat nothing new or unexpected can happen, for the variation of the basic pattern is limited by the material objects in the layout. As they fail to achieve expanded consciousness even in the communal participation, they begin to notice irritating patterns of thought and behavior intruding from the “real” life. The ability to live in each other’s minds begets censorship rather than liberation. Satiety and unhappiness set in. The Martian customers of Bulero’s Can D yearn for less materialistic effect. This need makes them vulnerable to the claims of the new Eldritch – sponsored drug.

To protect his business empire, Leo Bulero pulls strings and initiates power plays to uncover Eldritch’s plan for the manufacture, distribution, and tacit governmental support for the new product. So serious is this threat that he personally seeks Eldritch in the hospital to offer a one-to-one deal. For his pains he receives a dose of Chew –Z, there by learning firsthand of its powerful and insidious effect. While it fails to fulfill completely its promise of eternal life, it does bestow upon the user the power to create his own subjective world, even to the point of entrapping others in that world.

Leo finds himself a phantasmic prisoner in one of Palmer Eldritch’s created worlds. As he suffers through the shifting realities of Eldritch’s mind, he learns many things. He views a monument commemorating him as slayer of the enemy Eldritch. At another point he strangles a small girl, a temporary form assumed by Eldritch. He watches a dog, also a shadow of the mind of Eldritch, defecate on the monument, a symbol of disdain for the prophetic message on it. Effective so the



product is, Bulero realizes that Chew-Z fails to negate the energy of evil inclinations in the individual psyche. A predilection toward evil in some people can render their experience a horror rather than a pleasure. But Leo is an evolved man with great foresight; he also realizes that acceptance of the product ultimately means acceptance of the Palmer Eldritch within us all.

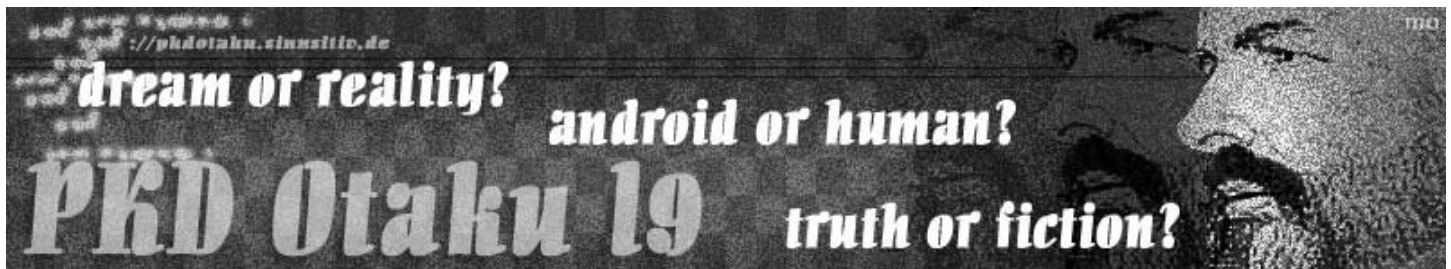
In the others taking Chew-Z, realization does not match expectation. The hallucinations of the less imaginative colonists turn into reruns of the past, even a replaying of old mistakes. Barney Mayerson goes both to the past where he tries to undo the mistake of his divorce and also to the future where he meets his two-year-old self only to discover that one cannot unmake old choices. All the users are ill-prepared for the utter solitude of the new reality, since those who populate that reality are merely figments of the subjective mind. The self created, egocentric worlds lack the warmth of genuine human sharing. Replacing it is the disquieting sense of an unseen presence invading and pervading the dream worlds. Those with more insight notice marks of Eldritch everywhere: in a business associate, an airline hostess, a husband talking to his wife. Even Leo suffers metamorphosis into a Palmer the Eldritch form. It is as if Eldritch is all-powerful, all pervasive, threatening to all human beings.

In a "Letter of Comment" in *S. F. Commentary* (February 1970), Philip Dick identified the origin of the Palmer Eldritch appearance. In a vision (not drug-induced), he "saw" a machine man combination covering the land, an ominous manifestation of evil. Dick's experience has an intriguing precedent in English literature. In the 18th century, William Blake described to a friend his vision – a figure of "splendid grandeur" that "hovered over his head at the top of his staircase," as the friend reports. It so inflamed his imagination that he that he transformed vision into a painting (the "Ancient of Days" frontispiece of Europe) and later transmogrified it into the gray bearded figures of Urizen symbol of tyrannical reason. These two products of the valid visionary events, Palmer Eldritch and Urizen, share a common meaning: both operate in the literary world not as evil incarnate but as good imperfect.

The images and references Philip Dick strews throughout *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* bear out this paradox. Early in the story one of Bulero's employees wistfully confides that she had once wondered if Palmer Eldritch might meet God as he traveled to Proxima. Later, Dick presents the Eldritch consciousness as a vast, nonhuman entity spreading itself throughout the cosmos, gizmo we alone, yearning for some vital association to fill the emptiness within it. Utterly gone is the personality of the knowledgeable Terran entrepreneur.

As experienced by Barney, Leo and the others, Eldritch or whatever has assumed his identity operates as omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. But Eldritch fits no conventional image of God. Across cultures, men have anthropomorphized their gods. The Judeo-Christian tradition incorporates a loving father, a wise ancient, but also a vengeful antagonist, all three in the God figure. Eldritch at first glance, tall, gray, stooped, hollowed out by the combination of height and boniness, might fit into that tradition, except for his three unique features or stigmata: an artificial hand, metallic and cold; the horizontal, slotted eyes, pupil less and soulless; and the steel teeth, light splintering and faceted. This is not the image of the God of love and compassion, nor of vengeance.

Other alternatives arise in the speculations of Terrans in the wake of the crash and Eldritch's subsequent seclusion. Perhaps he has been taken over by the alien Proximans to serve as a means of infiltration of Terra. This alternative seems only to be Philip Dick's nod to the conventions of science fiction. The alien power is giving short shrift in favor of more metaphysical considerations.



Events and descriptions pile up to substantiate a claim that Eldritch is possessed by a dynamic entity striving to complete itself. Perhaps Palmer Eldritch on the return from Proxima met something other than God. Perhaps he met that restless one who periodically appears “from going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down upon it.”

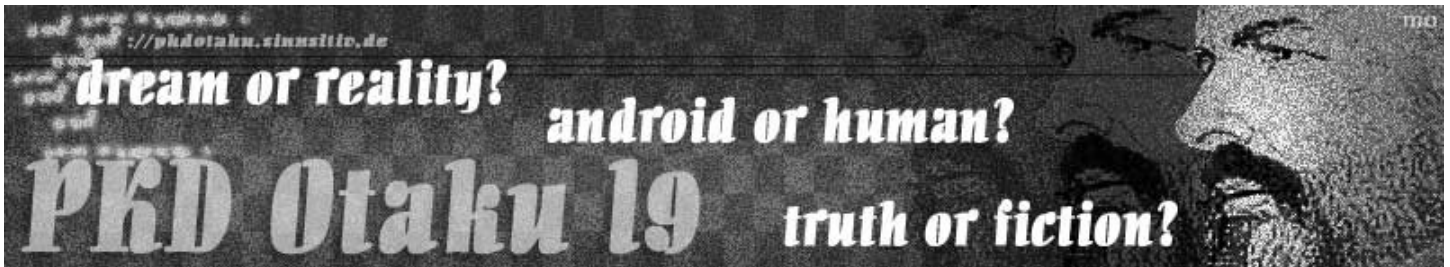
As mentioned above, one might read *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* as a parody on Big Business or as an aesthetic reenactment of the supreme acid trip. A third alternative suggests itself. We can read it as a futuristic science-fiction rerun of that ancient, ever new confrontation of the Powers over the human spirit. If so, who serves as the Job figure? Leo Bulero who suffers severe dislocation of reality, disloyalty of employees, loss of business? But Leo, unlike Job, does not place his faith in anything but his own powers of intellect. He is the sole character to recognize the external stigmata of Eldritch as symbols of a more fundamental malady: “alienation, blurred reality, and despair.” The recognition comes even as he accepts his own metamorphosis into an Eldritch. Certain that he can absorb and neutralize that which strives to erase an old failure by re-creation, Bulero fails when he begins to fancy himself Redeemer and protector of all – another Eldritch self-woven fantasy.

If not Bulero, who or what will save and protect men? Barney Mayerson comes closest to the answer. By choosing not to continue helping Bulero in this struggle against Eldritch, he dooms himself to exile on Mars for the rest of his life. His free choice is based on objective knowledge, not on subjective dreams. He understands the nature of the struggle within the thing that is now Eldritch. He has met the ancient friend – enemy and accepted its paradox. It is a multifold power of creation, destruction, and re-creation, but one subject to a higher determinant not unlike the Greek concept of *moira*.

With its power of eternal life, the Palmer Eldritch power cannot save mankind; Leo Bulero will fail as mankind's champion. Only human beings can save themselves by understanding both their inner selves and the metaphysical context of those selves. All things are possible within the human mind. As Milton's Satan prophesied, “the mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.” In *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, Philip Dick's characters have done both. They have constructed an imaginary world for escape like the P-P Layouts or the mental worlds containing terrors like the gluck or the physically decayed Ronnie Fugate. There is hope that a mind can recognize its own inherent weakness and then, as does Barney Mayerson, tend its own garden or fall back on its own resources to create, destroy, and re-create in the toils of its individual *moira*.

Philip Dick, in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, has accomplished a tour de force in his verbal manipulation of rapidly shifting perspectives. Without sacrificing a semblance of logical continuity within illogical situations, he blends the unknown and speculative with traditional and conventional knowledge. The paradox of the title is explored, even though it cannot be reconciled. Through all runs a major Dickian concern: what is important is the human spirit in the core of each of us. To make certain that we do not miss this central idea, Dick has focused on this sentiment in the unsentimental language of one of Leo Bulero's interoffice memos, serving the novel as the epigraph.

Thanks to Laura for the transcription!



"Short Note Cypher" by Marc Oberst

Recently I went to the cinemas with some tickets free of charge left in my pocket. Still having this unpleasing headache for days. But at the first sight all pictures running were the boring family crap or senseless action titles with the usual suspects. Only in cinema #12 was a movie reminding me on my favorite topic the last years, the matrix. The poster was simple grey letters on black ground with huge gaps in between saying just "C Y P H E R". Might be better then the rest, I thought and went in.

Nice production design, lovely grey color scaling on the titles. And directly a nearly brilliant playing on the screen by Jeremy Northam. The time is now it seems and its all about industry spy games. Could be quite relaxing and maybe a bit thrilling...

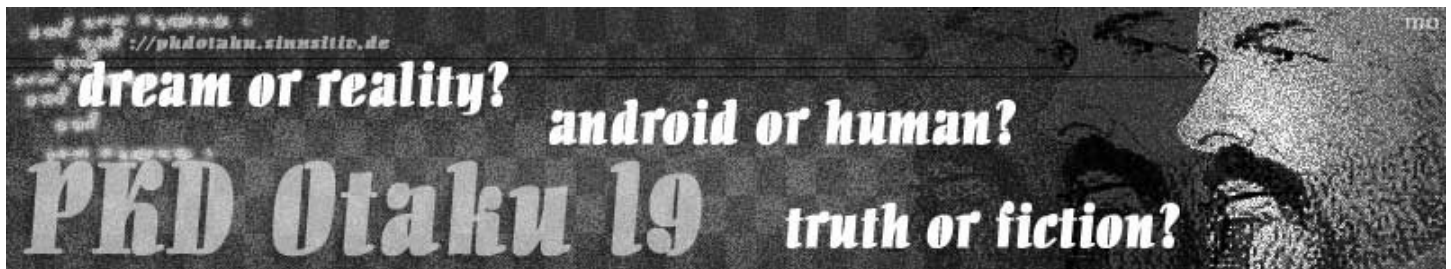
But then, suddenly – not really suddenly as the feeling about it had been knocking inside before – it gets phildickian. The conspiracy begins. with headaches and bad dreams. A reaction caused by a single word on an envelope. A beautiful woman involved in some way is showing up. she looks like my dear Lucy Liu. The main character changes. The strangely normal meetings and conventions strike your mind and now you know as well that the part that represents the real world, the good world, is a fake world.

Remember who you are, she says. But have you ever been the one she thinks or tells you who you are? And so I am inside a phildickian world, questioning myself what parts I see are false and what part is real? I have to write about this, I think. This is not based on phil, but it is as if he had done the screenplay not brian king. The typical normality of abnormality. The slowly rising paranoia. The two corporate players versus the one from the working class. the small details. The implanted memories. The envelopes. Even the style of filming looks like his books in my head. Great. just a few scenes, as when flesh meets chrome, is the style different.

And up and down it goes, twirling around truth, changing identities. And I have no clue at all. This is more than a thriller. This is good sci-fi, but not typical. No stereotypes and clichés as in so many other sf-movies at the cinemas the last years – even pkd ones. An innovative production design and a story that keeps you awake but does not burn out your brain.

When the credits start I breathe out and lean back. The headache makes the colors of the cinema room look quite unreal. Beginning to stand up a hand unexpectedly holds me in the seat and a friendly smiling man sits down the row in front of me. "I am your director Vincenzo Natali" he says. "Here... Take them every six hours" he gives me a handful of red pills. "Its for the headaches and the bad dreams." I feel my head nodding. "And do not forget who you are. You are Marc Oberst, you are not Bernhard Pain." And while I hear him leaving the cinema behind me, I wonder if I am...

Marc Oberst or Bernhard Pain or anybody else



Book Reviews

A Scanner Darkly

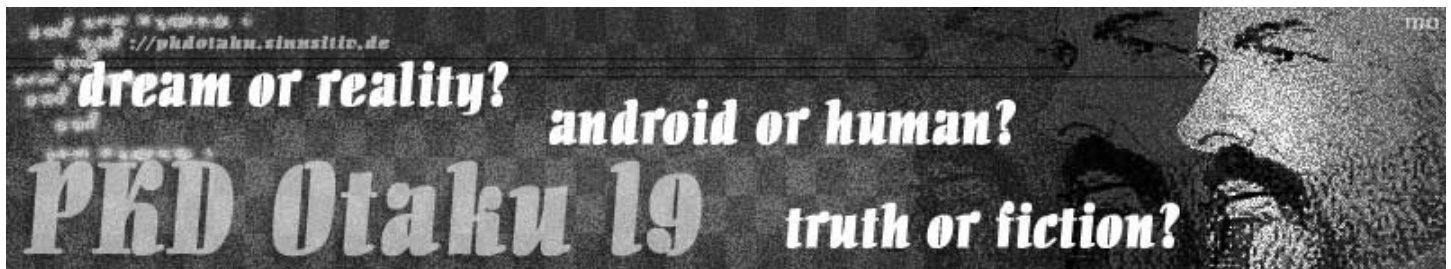
David Wingrove: *Vector* no. 84 (Nov.-Dec. 1977), pp. 54-56

In a recent interview, Bob Silverberg concluded that this was a “not...very successful novel” (*Cosmos*, Vol. 1, No. 3), although a “stunning failure”. In a sense this sympathetic dismissal is a grave injustice, for this is probably the most complete Dick novel yet; bitterly ironic in a manner that only Dick, amongst our modern sf writers, can manage. Silverberg’s comments evidence a failure to understand Phil Dick’s chosen idiom of expression. The delusions and fantasies within the book – the manifestations of paranoia and cerebral dissolution – are deliberate impositions by the author. Much of this book is not to be taken literally, for if it were to be taken so it would seem a poorly woven garment of contradictory statements. But Dick is writing about the process of mental disintegration in drug users, and his narrative (because we see thorough the eyes of the disintegrated) reflects this distortion of reality. The characters change radically as our protagonist, Bob Arctor, begins his rapid degeneration, as his perception alters and he loses his hold on reality.

These same characters have appeared – in fragmentary form – in other Dick novels. They are simple, understandable and pitiable souls, up against “the system”, and Dick makes the idea of “the system” very real indeed. He transfers his paranoia intact, if you like. But there is a greater maturity and homogeneity about this work that places it with *THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE*, *FLOW MY TEARS*, and *DO ANDROIDS DREAM* as works of philosophical import. There is a certain ambivalence about Dick’s vision. We are never presented with pure allegory; some of his villains are possessed of conscience whilst we often find the heroes callous and uncaring. The barriers are even less clear in this case and it is only in the last few chapters that the complex patterns of events can be unraveled and discerned. It is not a new device within Dick’s work to discover sudden reversals of role, crises of identity and obtuseness of motive, but here there is a frightening credibility of events, as if Dick had stopped playing with cosmological semantics and brought us down to Earth – only to show us that reality and “reality” (the Dick variety) are one and the same. Which is all to say that the atmosphere of the novel is not basically different from any other Dick novel; merely heightened.

It would be unfair to give more than a basic idea of the events in this book, because much of the irony hinges on the reader’s discoveries in the last few chapters; confirmations and subtle twists. But it is worthwhile discussing the moods Dick evokes and the ideas he raises, because *SCANNER* is probably the most lucid expression of Dick’s ethos yet.

“Item. What an undercover narcotics agent fears most is not that he will be shot or beaten up but that he will be slipped a great hit of some psychedelic that will roll an endless horror feature film in his head for the remainder of his life, or that he will be shot up with a mex hit, half-heroin and half Substance D, or both of the above plus a poison, such as strychnine, which will nearly kill him but not completely, so that the above can occur: lifelong addiction, lifelong horror film. He will sink into a needle-and-spoon existence, or bound off the walls in a psychiatric hospital, or, worst of all, a federal clinic. He will try to shake the aphids off him day and night or puzzle forever over why he cannot any longer wax a floor.” (Page 67)



The sf content of the novel is small. The above fragment reflects the core of this book. Arctor is a narc, a narcotics agent in 1992. Substance D is a new narcotic, rotting away the brains of the community. It is his job to discover evidence to lead them to the top, to the distributors. That, in essence, is the story. But it is far from simple exposition. Arctor the user of drugs is also Fred the narc. As his corpus callosum disintegrates the two become separate entities in the same body (left hemisphere and right hemisphere). He begins to malfunction, becoming paranoid and confused. We are led right in there with him, suspecting and analyzing, making all the wrong conclusions from partial data until we too are brought into the light and must realize that our narrator has become a non-functioning zombie. And while this all goes on we are allowed to witness the relationships within the small dope colony; absurd and funny, horrific and deeply touching.

“Suppose everybody in California and parts of Oregon run out the same day, he thought. Wow. This was the all-time running horror fantasy that he ran in his head, that every doper ran. The whole western part of the United States simultaneously running out and everybody crashing on the same day, probably about 6 A.M. Sunday morning while the straights were getting dressed up to go fucking pray.

‘Holy parishioners, let us call on God now at this time to request His intervention in the agonies of those who are thrashing about on their beds withdrawing.’

‘Yeah, yeah.’ The congregation agreeing with the priest.

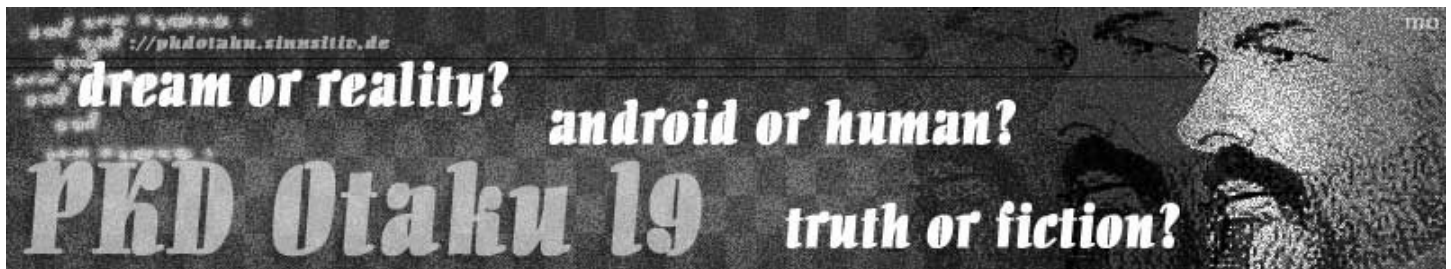
But before he intervenes with a fresh supply of –“(Page 5)

The book is riddled with such fantasies, funny only because humour is our way of handling the horrific, of accepting its meaning. Dick’s language and style have a precision often lacking elsewhere in this work, and this clarity gives these acid-dreams a potency they would otherwise not possess. All the malfunctions and errors and accidents we see cannot be accepted by the characters as their failings and through their slurred perceptions are interpreted as plots and schemes, the bread and meat of paranoia. Friendship becomes suspicion becomes accusation and finally persecution – and then someone gets ‘burned’. It is sad because (although this is set in 1992) the language is one we are familiar with; that of the sixties drug culture. All this has happened, as Dick himself says in his author’s afterword. This book is a memorial to that culture.

“In wretched lives like that, someone must intervene. Or at least mark their sad comings and goings. Mark and if possible record, so they’ll be remembered. For a better day, later on, when people will understand. (Page 176)

After the specifics of plot and theme there are other elements in this book that make it the masterpiece that Dick claims it is. There is the relationship of Bob Arctor and Donna, the child-like drug pusher. She is yet another aspect of the single feminine character Dick uses throughout his books. But here there is an added futility to the relationship, and additional poignancy.

“But the actual touch of her lingered, inside his heart. That remained. In all the years of his life ahead, the long years without her, with never seeing her or hearing from her or knowing anything



about her, if she was alive or dead or what, that touch stayed locked within him, sealed in himself, and never went away. That one touch of her hand.” (Page 123)

Amongst the hallucinatory fears there is genuine warmth and love, and because it is so carefully nurtured amongst the other hideous growth (another episode comes to mind here; where two spaced-out dopers carefully take an injured cat off the jagged glass of a window) it is a powerfully moving element. There are few books that successfully blend the callous and the gentle without imbalances, but *A SCANNER DARKLY* manages that balance. If this book doesn't make you care deeply then it is worth considering that a flaw in your own basic humanity. This is not just a dope novel.

“Later, at the Game one night, when they gave credit in turn to each person for what he had brought to New-Path, such as Concepts, they credited him with bringing humour there. He had brought with him an ability to see things as funny no matter how bad he felt. Everybody in the circle clapped, and glancing up, startled, he saw a ring of smiles, everyone's eyes warm with approval, and the noise of their applause remained with him for quite a period, inside his heart,” (Page 212)

VALIS

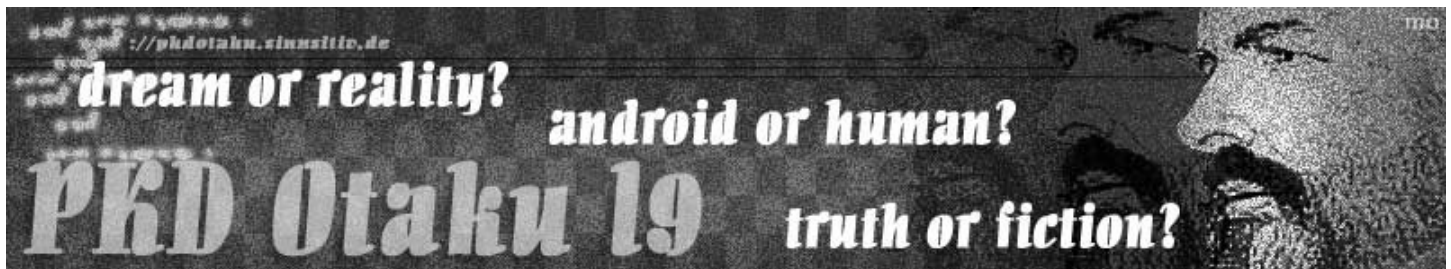
Paul Kincaid: *Vector* no. 102 (June 1981), pp. 40-42

My reaction to *Valis* is mixed, even paradoxical: it is boring, thrilling, infuriating, a major work, self-indulgent, confused, a clarification of Dick's ideas... and so on. My reaction changes with every page but, mostly, I am puzzled.

In a way, it substantiates my long-standing argument that SF must have literary merits as well as ideas. It is crammed full of exciting ideas, but for the most part lacks even basic literary technique (except in brief but dazzlingly good bursts, as in the first couple of chapters and the scene where Dick dreams that he is his own father). Then, about halfway through, the mishmash of ideas suddenly takes shape and becomes an archetypal Philip K. Dick story; but up to this point it is boring.

Yet I feel that it is an important work, the first half perhaps even more than the second. Dick is laying down the theoretical basis for his novels; read as this, as a book on Dick, and you begin to see something of what it may be. What Dick has done, or has attempted, is to create an entire cosmogony, bringing together Christianity, Gnosticism, Buddhism, race memory, science fiction, pre-Socratic philosophy, Greek mythology, Wagner's *Parsifal*, synthesized music and more to form a unified whole. It is a grandiose project, and it is hardly surprising that it doesn't come off; but it is his most ambitious work to date, and as such deserves respect.

The book would perhaps be more welcome in the mainstream, where the readership is sometimes willing to work, and where ideas – as is so often the case in SF – are not always predigested. But my concern lies more with the fact that it is not a novel. At least, it breaks away from many of the traditional attributes of fiction. Or perhaps it would be better to say that it dresses reality in some of the attributes of fiction. There is a feeling of truth in *Valis*, an air of autobiography, but this is part of the confusion. Early on, Dick identifies himself with the main character, Horselover Fat. In a telephone conversation later, this is made explicit:



'The information was fired at my friend Horselover Fat.'

'But that's you. "Philip" means "Horselover" in Greek, lover of horses. "Fat" is the German translation of "Dick". So you've translated your name.'" (p. 156)

Throughout *Valis* Dick himself is a prominent character. Toward the end, Horselover Fat disappears:

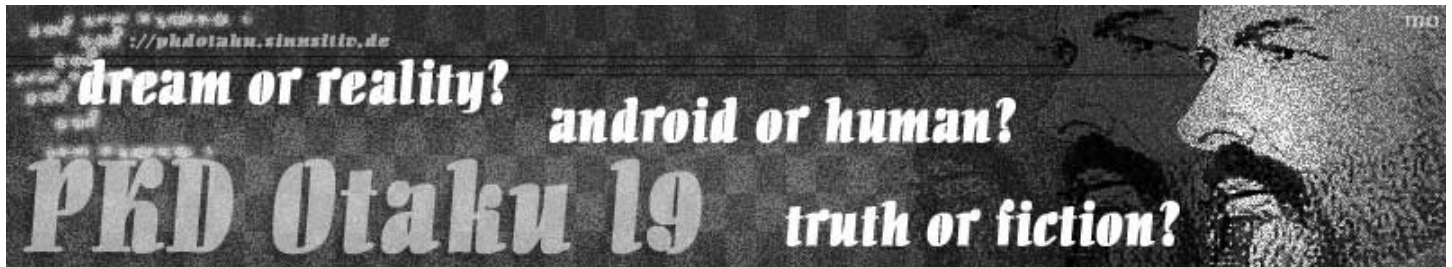
"Kevin put his hand on my shoulder. 'I'm sorry to say this like this, Phil, but we really have the big clue already. I one instant that child cleared up your mind. You stopped believing you were two people. You stopped believing in Horselover Fat as a separate person. And no therapist and no therapy over the years...has been able to accomplish that.'" (p. 182)

Dick's last novel, the brilliant *A Scanner Darkly*, also had an autobiographical element, including a specific reference to himself in the final note. Now he is even more explicit; the book, if anything, is even more painful. How far, then, is it a record of genuine psychosis?

There are those who see it as evidence that Dick has finally flipped. Perhaps they are ill-disposed towards the book because of the tedium of the first half, perhaps they are taking Dick too much at his word. My own feeling is that it bears as much similarity to Dick's state of mind as *A Scanner Darkly* did to the details of his drug abuse. He has called upon autobiographical experience, but fictionalized it in the time-honoured manner, taking the commonplace notion of the insane man who believes that he alone is sane, and exploding it by suggesting that the whole universe is insane or, rather, the product of an insane Mind. The resultant quest for the truth has, as it should, several red herrings and even, perhaps less satisfactorily, a few loose ends. It would be a mistake to let oneself be misled by these red herrings, and that is all I think lies behind the naming of one character Philip K. Dick.

One reason he may have done this is to emphasize the immediacy and personal importance of his search for God – a search that is of necessity part intellectual and part physical. Here I think Dick's sense of balance has deserted him – the intellectual need not have occupied just over half the book, it need not have been decked out with heavyweight quotations and mystical agonizing or been presented separately from the physical quest sparked by the film 'Valis'. This has been written by someone named Eric Lampton, who has achieved fame as the rock star Mother Goose and stars in the picture as a character named...Eric Lampton. The correlation between Lampton/Mother Goose and Dick/Horselover Fat is surely intended. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that neither the film nor the encounters that follow it would have made much sense without this philosophical underpinning.

Dick has always been a very philosophical writer, always questioning our most basic assumptions of reality, time, power and identity, seasoning his speculations with a dash of lunacy; when these preoccupations are brought together, we have such excellent novels as *Martian Timeslip*, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldrich* and *A Scanner Darkly*. *Valis* should belong in this exalted company; the reason it doesn't, I feel, is because Dick has taken on too much; to treat the nature of God in novel form as thoroughly as he attempts would require something akin to Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*. In 227 pages we are lucky that the ratio of fiction and tract is so nearly fifty-fifty.



My overall reaction to the book, then, is favorable. Dick completists will buy it as a matter of course, but it might be worthwhile for a few others with adventurous minds to pick it off the shelf. In the admitted dross, there is a lot that is worthy of serious consideration – because I foresee that, one day, someone will write a scholarly work setting Dick’s novels within the universe of *Valis*.

“Just a thought” by Marc Oberst

In every single publication I read so far Philip K. Dick is said to be crazy. Well what if all we dickheads believe really is just coming from the mind of a man gone nuts?

I mean if your neighbor would tell you, "I have seen a fish and then I was back in the time after Christ’s death" and "a pink beam from an eye in the sky hit me and then I wrote about a 100,000 words exegesis" you would probably say, "Fuck, you need a psychiatrist!"

Of course your neighbor is also able to see behind what we call “reality.” If this is so it is also possible that - how ingenious he was in writing! - Philip K. Dick had simply gone mad. Not totally; still keeping his left hemisphere straight to write brilliant books, but at least mad enough to get those hallucinations he claimed to be “true” in the first place.

Well, just a thought...